

Dr. Steve Gallon III, Board Member

**SUBJECT: REVIEW AND INSPECTION OF CARBON MONOXIDE
DETECTION DEVICES AND RELATED SAFETY
PROCEDURES**

COMMITTEE: FACILITIES CONSTRUCTION

**LINK TO STRATEGIC SAFE, HEALTHY & SUPPORTIVE LEARNING
ENVIRONMENT
BLUEPRINT:**

The School Board of Miami-Dade County is responsible for the operation, control, and supervision of all public schools within Miami-Dade County, and is committed to the adoption and implementation of policies and practices that ensure the safety of students, employees, and all stakeholders that enter its facilities. In fact, Florida Statute 1001.42 and School Board *Policy 7410, Maintenance* address the Board's authority, duty, and responsibility to *"provide adequately for the proper maintenance and upkeep of school plants, so that students may attend school without sanitary or physical hazards..."* and to *"conduct a continuous program of inspection, maintenance, and rehabilitation for the preservation of all school building and equipment."* The Superintendent is charged with its program development, implementation, and monitoring.

Although the danger and threat posed from fire may be readily detectable or visible due to the smoke caused by the fire, physical threats from other sources, such as carbon monoxide, with the extreme danger of death posed by carbon monoxide poisoning, are not as noticeable or as readily detected as the danger posed by other threats. Safeguards that protect students, employees, and the community from hazards while in schools and district facilities include the utilization of alarms and detection devices that provide advanced notice and issue a warning that an imminent hazard or threat exists, such as those resulting from smoke, fire or carbon monoxide.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is the second most common cause of non-medicinal poisonings death. According to the CDC, over 10,000 people are poisoned by carbon monoxide needing medical treatment each year and more than 438 people in the U.S. die annually from carbon monoxide poisoning. In 2007, after a series of deaths resulting from carbon monoxide poisoning, Florida Statute 553.885 was adopted which required that *"every separate building or addition to an existing building, other than a hospital, an inpatient hospice facility, or a nursing home facility licensed by the Agency for Health Care Administration, constructed on or after July 1, 2008, and having a fossil-fuel-burning heater or appliance, a fireplace, an attached garage, or other feature, fixture, or element that emits carbon monoxide as a byproduct of combustion shall have an approved operational carbon monoxide alarm installed within 10 feet of each room used for sleeping purposes in the new building or addition, or at such other locations as required by the Florida Building Code."*

Even with the adoption of this law, Florida still remains one of the states that does not require the installation of carbon monoxide detectors in schools, although schools must comply with other applicable building and fire codes. Yet, despite the fact that carbon monoxide detectors are not required in schools in Florida, the District has taken a positive, proactive approach by installing carbon monoxide detectors in its school cafeterias.

However, in spite of this installation, an incident occurred on September 19, 2018 at Carol City Elementary School in which five persons, including three children were hospitalized as a result of a reported carbon monoxide leak. Three additional persons were reported to have been affected but not transported to the hospital for treatment. Although there were reports of some persons being unconscious, this incident did not result in any serious injuries or even worse, a loss of life.

Furthermore, conflicting accounts which have been reported suggested that the carbon monoxide detectors may not have gone off *“until firefighters walked into the school that their own devices started alerting them which was how they first became aware of the hazmat situation.”* Any failure on the part of the school’s carbon monoxide detection system and/or staff reporting of the “hazmat” situation warrants a further review and inspection of carbon monoxide detection devices and evaluation of school staff’s training and preparedness to respond to and report such an incident.

This item seeks to direct the Superintendent to review and inspect the operability of carbon monoxide detection devices in schools and district facilities, as well as training and preparedness of schools and related staff to report and respond to a hazmat occurrence.

This item has been reviewed and approved by the School Board Attorney’s Office as to form and legal sufficiency.

ACTION PROPOSED BY

DR. STEVE GALLON III:

That the School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, direct the Superintendent to:

1. conduct an inspection of carbon monoxide detection devices in schools and district facilities, where installed, to ensure proper functioning and operability and determine if additional installations in other locations are warranted;
2. review procedures with related and responsible school and district staff regarding procedures for reporting and responding to a hazmat incidence;
3. provide appropriate information and training, where needed; and
4. provide an update to the Board no later than November 30, 2018.