

Captain Peter Huf Upper Darby Fire Department

Good morning, my name is Peter Huf. I would like to thank this committee for the opportunity to speak today in support of House Bill 2031 and the subject of carbon monoxide detectors.

I am a 25 year veteran of the Upper Darby Fire Department. I was promoted to the rank of Captain in 2000 and currently work at Upper Darby Station 37, the busiest of five stations, protecting the 69th Street area. I am a graduate of Villanova University with a BS in Biology, Pre-med. I am also a graduate of Mercer County Community College in New Jersey, graduating with a Mortuary Science degree resulting in a funeral director license here in Pennsylvania.

I am certified as a Fire Officer IV, the top level in the National Certification process. I also have extensive training in hazardous materials, weapons of mass destruction, incident command and fire inspector. I currently serve as the President of the Upper Darby Professional Fire Fighters Assoc and the Vice President for the Pennsylvania Professional Fire Fighters Assoc., representing 10,000 officers and fire fighters.

As you are well aware, carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless gas that can be very dangerous to humans. Its presence can only be found through technology in the use of detectors or meters.

As a licensed funeral director and partner in a family business, I see too often, the impact death has on loved ones, especially a death that could have been prevented. In Upper Darby, over the past year, the Fire Department has seen firsthand what this deadly gas is capable of doing. On April 29, 2011, a half block from my fire station, two men died as a result of carbon monoxide poisoning. They died in their second floor apartments after the first floor shop owner ran a gas powered generator inside to supplement the loss of power to his store. The generator ran through the night and the men were found by myself and the medics answering a check on the wellbeing call after family members could not reach them. The first male must have been sick and was found collapsed in the bathroom. The second male was found dead in his bed. No CO detectors were present in the building. Fire Department meters peaked at 1000 ppm. Any readings over 35 ppm are considered dangerous.

On October 30, 2011 04:44 hrs, the Fire Department was dispatched to 7228 Bradford Rd for a CO detector activation. Our departmental procedure requires us to remove occupants, meter the dwelling and try to determine the origin of the CO, if present in the dwelling. We also must check any adjoining structures, in this case, the dwellings on both sides. The crews discovered higher readings in the attached row to the left. A thorough search revealed a 22 year old female dead in the basement bedroom and numerous sick family members on the second floor. The

next row home to the left revealed more sick people. In all, 1 dead, 9 transported to the hospital. PECO determined a blocked heater flu pipe in the dwelling where the girl had died. Again, levels of over 1000 ppm were present in this home. Of the 7 homes that had some level of CO only 1 had a CO detector, the original caller. Potentially 15 people could easily have died if not for this lone detector. But truthfully no one would have even been sick had all the homes been equipped with operating CO detectors.

Most recently on December 30, 2011, the Fire Department was dispatched to 3814 Albemarle Ave for possible CO inside the dwelling. Fortunately, a sick dog and a sick family member passing out, resulted in a 911 call that sent 7 people to the hospital for extensive treatment. Luckily no one died, but again no CO detectors were present. A week later we had the same incident at the same dwelling. Only this time a recently installed CO detector alerted the family. PECO found a second more serious problem this time that only occurred when the gas heater and hot water heater ran at the same time resulting in back pressure that sent exhaust into the dwelling.

These are some of the more serious responses our department has recently been involved with. We also respond to many calls where CO detectors are present. The early detection results in a quick resolve to the incident with no injuries or deaths and little impact to the people involved.

I would ask that you support HB2031. I realize that every bill has some financial impact on someone. But I think we have to ask ourselves what is the cost of a human being? Does the price of a CO detector out way a life or lives? I don't think so, and I doubt anyone here would think so. This is the same argument that occurred about 20 years ago concerning smoke detectors. I could not even begin to guess how many lives they have saved. Hopefully, the same will be true 20 years from now when CO detectors are a common fixture in our homes.

Again, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak today.