



## Kriss Worthington

Councilmember, City of Berkeley, District 7  
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### ACTION CALENDAR

December 17, 2013

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
From: Councilmember Kriss Worthington

Subject: City Manager Referral: Require 10-year Long Life Batteries in Smoke Alarms  
(and Carbon Monoxide Detectors) in all Rental Units

### RECOMMENDATION

Refer to the City Manager to review the legality of requiring all rental properties in Berkeley to install a 10-year life battery for smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors and send letters to the City's representatives in the State Legislature urging them to introduce a 10-year long life batteries state bill.

### BACKGROUND

Requiring 10-year long life smoke alarms is not without precedent. Other jurisdictions have required their installation, such as Prince George's County in suburban Washington, D.C.<sup>1</sup> and the state of Louisiana<sup>2</sup>. When properly installed and maintained, smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors are valuable life-saving tools. Deaths from home fires have been reduced from 5,200 in 1980 to 2,565 in 2009, a decline of 51% that is mostly attributed to the wide-spread introduction of in-home fire alert systems<sup>3</sup>.

When alarms fail to operate, it is often due to missing or dead batteries (73%)<sup>4</sup>. People dislike replacing batteries and often disable the alarms themselves due to nuisance alarms from cooking or hot showers. Requiring the installation of tamper-proof sealed alarms equipped with 10-year life batteries would address both of these issues and could reduce deaths in Berkeley by ensuring that homes and offices have proper working smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.

Many organizations - including the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, the City of Baltimore, the Public/Private Fire Safety Council, and the National Association of Fire

<sup>1</sup> NBC Washington. May 20, 2013. "New Law Requires Installation of 10-Year Smoke Alarms." <http://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/Prince-Georges-County--208133251.html>. Accessed November 21, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> United States Fire Administration. May 3, 2010. "State-by-State Residential Smoke Alarm Requirements." [http://www.ajfire.org/uploads/smoke\\_alarm\\_requirements.pdf](http://www.ajfire.org/uploads/smoke_alarm_requirements.pdf). Accessed November 21, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> National Association of Fire Marshalls, Science Advisory Committee. April 2012. "Recommendation on Updates to the NASFM Smoke Alarm Guidance Document Regarding the Use of 10-Year Long-Life Batteries." [http://www.firemarshalls.org/pdf/SAC\\_White\\_paper\\_on\\_10-year\\_battery\\_FINAL\\_April\\_2012.pdf](http://www.firemarshalls.org/pdf/SAC_White_paper_on_10-year_battery_FINAL_April_2012.pdf). Accessed November 21, 2013. p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 4.

Marshals – have advocated their installation<sup>5</sup>. California’s own State Fire Marshal Smoke Alarm Task Force has recommended revising state regulations to require 10-year batteries<sup>6</sup>.

A summary of the state of Louisiana’s law can be found at <http://www.legis.la.gov/legis/ViewDocument.aspx?d=667160>.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

CONTACT PERSON

Kriss Worthington                      510-981-7170

Attachment:

1. Letters to Senator Loni Hancock and Assemblymember Nancy Skinner

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 5.

Dear Senator Loni Hancock,

The Berkeley City Council urges you to introduce or co-sponsor state legislation that requires 10-year life batteries statewide; doing so would be in line with other state legislatures around the country, including Maryland and Louisiana.

When properly installed and maintained smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors are valuable life-saving tools. Deaths from home fires have been reduced from 5,200 in 1980 to 2,565 in 2009, a decline of 51% that is mostly attributed to the wide-spread introduction of in-home fire alert systems<sup>7</sup>.

When alarms fail to operate, it is often due to missing or dead batteries (73%)<sup>8</sup>. People dislike replacing batteries and often disable the alarms themselves due to nuisance alarms from cooking or hot showers. Requiring the installation of tamper-proof sealed alarms equipped with 10-year life batteries would address both of these issues and could reduce deaths in California by ensuring that homes and offices have proper working smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.

Many organizations - including the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, the City of Baltimore, the Public/Private Fire Safety Council, and the National Association of Fire Marshals – have advocated their installation<sup>9</sup>. California's own State Fire Marshal Smoke Alarm Task Force has recommended revising state regulations to require 10-year batteries<sup>10</sup>.

A summary of the state of Louisiana's law can be found at <http://www.legis.la.gov/legis/ViewDocument.aspx?d=667160>.

Your support on this issue is of great value to the City of Berkeley. We urge you to introduce or co-sponsor this important law.

Sincerely,

The Berkeley City Council

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<sup>7</sup> National Association of Fire Marshalls, Science Advisory Committee. April 2012. "Recommendation on Updates to the NASFM Smoke Alarm Guidance Document Regarding the Use of 10-Year Long-Life Batteries." [http://www.firemarshals.org/pdf/SAC\\_White\\_paper\\_on\\_10-year\\_battery\\_FINAL\\_April\\_2012.pdf](http://www.firemarshals.org/pdf/SAC_White_paper_on_10-year_battery_FINAL_April_2012.pdf). Accessed November 21, 2013. p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 5.

Dear Assemblymember Nancy Skinner,

The Berkeley City Council urges you to introduce or co-sponsor state legislation that requires 10-year life batteries statewide; doing so would be in line with other state legislatures around the country, including Maryland and Louisiana.

When properly installed and maintained smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors are valuable life-saving tools. Deaths from home fires have been reduced from 5,200 in 1980 to 2,565 in 2009, a decline of 51% that is mostly attributed to the wide-spread introduction of in-home fire alert systems<sup>11</sup>.

When alarms fail to operate, it is often due to missing or dead batteries (73%)<sup>12</sup>. People dislike replacing batteries and often disable the alarms themselves due to nuisance alarms from cooking or hot showers. Requiring the installation of tamper-proof sealed alarms equipped with 10-year life batteries would address both of these issues and could reduce deaths in California by ensuring that homes and offices have proper working smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.

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<sup>11</sup> National Association of Fire Marshalls, Science Advisory Committee. April 2012. "Recommendation on Updates to the NASFM Smoke Alarm Guidance Document Regarding the Use of 10-Year Long-Life Batteries." [http://www.firemarshals.org/pdf/SAC\\_White\\_paper\\_on\\_10-year\\_battery\\_FINAL\\_April\\_2012.pdf](http://www.firemarshals.org/pdf/SAC_White_paper_on_10-year_battery_FINAL_April_2012.pdf). Accessed November 21, 2013. p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p. 5.