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AB-1411 Fire protection: type 1 clothes dryers. (2015-2016)

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Assembly Bill No. 1411

CHAPTER 530

An act to add and repeal Section 13113.95 of the Health and Safety Code, relating to fire protection.

[Approved by Governor October 06, 2015. Filed with Secretary of State October 06, 2015.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1411, Eduardo Garcia. Fire protection: type 1 clothes dryers.

Existing law establishes the Office of the State Fire Marshal in the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and requires the office to foster, promote, and develop ways and means of protecting life and property against fire and panic. Existing law requires the State Fire Marshal to adopt regulations and standards necessary to control the quality and installation of fire alarm systems and devices marketed, distributed, offered for sale, or sold in this state.

This bill would require, on or before December 31, 2016, the State Fire Marshal to work with fire service entities, the appliance industry, disability advocates, and related stakeholders to accomplish certain things, including gathering information, and providing findings and recommendations to the Legislature, regarding fires related to type 1 clothes dryers, as defined, and the dangers of excessive lint.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) Fire safety experts identify excess dryer lint as a potential contributing factor in residential fires in California each year.

A 2011 report released by the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission identified fires originating in dryers as nearly 5 percent of all residential fires occurring annually in the country. Some experts believe that this number is grossly underestimated, however, because nearly one-half of all fires that originate in dryers are identified as "electrical fires" rather than being reported as fires that began in dryers. It is more likely that 10 percent of all national home fires begin in washers and dryers.

(b) The National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA) reported that in 2006-2010, there were 16,950 home structure fires per year reported to fire departments throughout the country where clothes dryers or washing machines were the equipment involved in ignition, with associated annual losses of 34 civilian deaths, 430 civilian injuries, and \$209 million in direct property damage. Dryers alone accounted for 92 percent of these fires and 87 percent of the reported deaths. The leading factor contributing to ignition was failure to clean out the lint buildup.

(c) Across the United States, nearly 70 percent of households own or have access to a clothes dryer. These appliances are relied upon and are used largely without incident. Clothes dryer manufacturers have continually worked to improve safety standards based on new innovations, including work on a recent fire containment standard, and will continue to do so to reduce potential risks and further improve consumer safety.

(d) The Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers (AHAM) has developed a clothes dryer safety brochure titled "Helpful hints for using your clothes dryer safely and effectively," which has been distributed to more than one million appliance owners in the United States. AHAM makes this important resource available to fire educators and consumers for free.

(e) Lint is a fire hazard. The UL standard, UL2158, specifies in Section 7.1.2. relating to appliance marking, that an appliance shall be permanently marked as follows:

(1) At or near the exhaust opening of the appliance with the word "CAUTION" and the following statement or the equivalent:

"Risk of Fire. A clothes dryer produces combustible lint. The dryer must be connected to an exhaust to the outdoors. See Installation Instructions."

(2) On a surface readily visible to the user after installation of the appliance with the word "CAUTION" and the following statement or the equivalent:

"Risk of Fire. A clothes dryer produces combustible lint."

(f) Technology may exist today that could indirectly monitor the buildup of highly combustible lint in some locations inside the dryer, and alert consumers when the technology predicts the accumulation reaches dangerous levels and the dryer interior requires servicing. Unfortunately, no regulations or standards currently exist regarding clothes dryers and the notification of the user when dangerous and excessive lint has built up in a clothes dryer.

(g) If standards for excessive lint notification systems in clothes dryers are established, it is the intent of the Legislature to encourage the adoption of the standards and encourage that all dryers sold in California conform to those standards.

SEC. 2. Section 13113.95 is added to the Health and Safety Code, to read:

13113.95. (a) On or before December 31, 2016, the State Fire Marshal shall work with fire service entities, the appliance industry, disability advocates, and related stakeholders to accomplish all of the following:

(1) Gather information regarding type 1 clothes dryer-related fires and the dangers of excessive lint.

(2) Provide findings and recommendations to the Legislature, pursuant to Section 9795 of the Government Code, regarding the information gathered pursuant to paragraph (1).

(3) Encourage the appropriate clothes dryer fire prevention standard setting entity to amend an appropriate voluntary national safety standard to improve fire safety, and to include provisions based on any recommendations pursuant to paragraph (2) that will reduce the likelihood of lint-related clothes dryer fires.

(b) For purposes of this section, "type 1 clothes dryer" means an appliance used in a residential living environment, including one that is coin-operated for public use in a residential living environment. "Type 1 clothes dryer" does not include dryers used for commercial purposes.

(c) This section shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2017, and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that is enacted before January 1, 2017, deletes or extends that date.