



STATE OF MAINE
Department of Public Safety
Office of State Fire Marshal
52 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0052

JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR
MICHAEL SAUSCHUCK
COMMISSIONER
SHAWN ESLER
STATE FIRE MARSHAL

January 8, 2025

LD 2100 – An Act to Update the Laws Regarding Fuel Gas Detector Requirements

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, my name is Shawn Esler, and I am honored to serve as Maine's State Fire Marshal.

I am here today on behalf of the Department of Public Safety and the Office of the State Fire Marshal to testify **in support of LD 2100**. LD 2100 is a proposed update to Maine's fuel gas detector statute. Its purpose is to strengthen life safety by expanding fuel gas detection requirements in a phased, predictable manner, while aligning Maine law with nationally recognized definitions found in life safety code.

Fuel-burning appliances that use propane or natural gas are common across Maine in homes, businesses, and institutional occupancies. When those systems fail, whether due to leaks, equipment malfunction, or damaged piping, the results can be catastrophic often affecting adjacent property and causing serious injury or death. Early detection remains one of the most effective tools we have to prevent explosions, fires, and tragic events.

Unfortunately, this risk is not theoretical. Within the past year, Maine has experienced multiple serious explosions linked to suspected fuel gas releases. In July 2025, two people were killed in a camper explosion in Old Orchard Beach, where leaking propane occurred. In November 2025, a home in Oakland was destroyed by an explosion believed to involve propane, seriously injuring the occupant. In December 2025, a house explosion in Palermo resulted in one fatality and another individual hospitalized with severe injuries. These incidents underscore that undetected fuel gas leaks continue to pose a real and ongoing risk to Maine residents, visitors, and first responders.

Recently we conducted an internal review, only to find the statute left out some of our most vulnerable populations such as educational facilities, daycares, and other places where there is similar risk. While we believe the original statute has served its intended purpose, we recognize the statute was written in direct response to the Farmington tragedy in 2019 that claimed the life of Captain Terry Bell and severely injured Larry Lord. Since that time, our understanding of fuel gas hazards, detection technology, and best practices has evolved, and this legislation reflects a careful, forward-looking update that builds on that foundation rather than replacing it.

I feel, based upon my experience, I am obligated to identify areas of concern as I see them in statute and submit those changes to be evaluated by the Criminal Justice Committee.

First, the bill aligns Maine statute with the occupancy classifications used in the National Fire Protection Association Life Safety Code.

Second, it phases in requirements to allow building owners and operators adequate notice and flexibility. Business, mercantile, and assembly occupancies are delayed until 2027, while institutional occupancies, such as day care, educational, health care, and detention facilities are not required until 2028. This approach balances public safety with cost awareness and implementation practicality.

Third, LD 2100 clarifies enforcement authority, ensuring that the Office of the State Fire Marshal, municipal fire inspectors, code enforcement officers, have clear statutory authority to enforce these requirements. This avoids ambiguity and supports consistent statewide application.

For these reasons, the Department of Public Safety and the Office of the State Fire Marshal respectfully recommend that the Committee support LD 2100.

Thank you for your time, and I would be happy to answer any questions.



Shawn Esler, State Fire Marshal