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# California State Senate

## BILL DODD

SENATOR, THIRD DISTRICT



CHAIR: SENATE GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION COMMITTEE

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November 24, 2020

Mary Nichols, Chair  
California Air Resources Board  
1001 I Street  
P.O. Box 2815  
Sacramento, California 95814

**Subject:** HFC Stationary Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Rulemaking Comments

Dear Chair Nichols:

It has been brought to my attention that CARB staff have proposed regulations for adoption at its December 10<sup>th</sup> meeting to require residential HVAC systems use refrigerants that are flammable. I have serious concerns about this proposal. My understanding is that the fire safety community has expressed concern to your staff that the appropriate building code work and fire safety measures for handling these new, flammable refrigerants have not been fully developed. I also understand that while this information has been brought to the attention of CARB staff, to date, staff has been non-responsive.

As you may be aware, much of my Senate District is in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). Parts of the WUI are heavily populated. Many homes have HVAC systems that use refrigerants and without proper and trained handling, the flammability risk of igniting more wildfires increases. While the work CARB is doing to reduce the impacts of climate change is important, it is no more important than fire safety. It is imperative that CARB consider the collateral danger created by adopting these regulations prematurely.

The dedicated people in our fire safety community work tirelessly every day to reduce the impact of wildfires and protect the lives of Californians living in wildfire risk areas. Their work is a critical public safety function that must not be ignored and their important work can also reduce the devastating environmental impacts and greenhouse gases emitted by those fires. California has suffered terribly in both loss of life and environmental impact due to wildfires. I am at a loss to understand why CARB has to date ignored the comments from the fire safety community, including, among others, objections from the California Fire Protection Officers.

I also understand that the California State Fire Marshal's Office declined to revise the California building codes to allow the use of flammable refrigerants in residential HVAC units because ongoing critical fire testing of these refrigerants would not be done in time to create regulations to comply with the proposed 2023 mandate, and your staff knew this as well. If these wildfires are California's new normal, CARB should adopt regulations which allow enough time to develop proper handling protocols for these new refrigerants.

For these reasons, I urge you to direct your staff to work in partnership with the fire services community, and act on their fire safety direction, if you plan to propose changes to residential HVAC systems that include the use of flammable refrigerants. I look forward to hearing from you on this important fire safety issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bill Dodd". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".

BILL DODD  
Senator, 3<sup>rd</sup> District