Residential Fire Sprinklers

Last year 3,225 people died in residential fires in the United States and 14,175 were injured. Affordable technology has been available to fix this problem since the 1970s, but little has been done to implement it, yet these “statistics” repeat year after year.

Lake Oswego Fire Department has experienced fire deaths in past years in single family and multi-family residents. This is a part of the reason that the Fire Department and City Council support the use of fire sprinklers in all types of buildings.

Lake Oswego has promoted the use of life saving fire sprinklers and now has them in all public schools, most adult foster care homes, living quarters of fire stations, new multi-family homes, and some single family homes.

For the same cost as upgrading carpet fire sprinklers can be added to most new homes. Scottsdale, AZ has required fire sprinklers in all new homes for the past 15 years and not one person has died in any fire sprinklered homes but there were 13 deaths in homes without.

What are the arguments against residential fire sprinklers?

- “SPRINKLERS OPERATE ALL AT ONCE FLOODING EVERY ROOM IN THE HOUSE.”

Answer: Only the sprinkler directly affected by a fire will operate, other sprinklers in the system will not go off.

- “SPRINKLERS WILL LEAK.”

Answer: The likelihood that a sprinkler will accidentally discharge because of a manufacturing defect is extremely rare. Sprinkler mishaps are generally less likely and severe than home plumbing system problems.

- “SMOKE ALARMS ARE ALL YOU NEED.”

Answer: Fire sprinklers are the only technology that can automatically control or extinguish a fire. Smoke alarms are essential for every home – including homes with sprinklers. But smoke alarms are only designed to detect a fire, not extinguish it.

- “SPRINKLERS COST TOO MUCH.”

Answer: Increasing demand for home fire sprinklers is driving down cost; in some areas well below $1 per square foot in new construction. Nationally, a conservative estimate is 1-1 ½ % of the total building cost. Homeowner’s

insurance discounts, ranging from 5% to 30% off premiums, may help pay for sprinkler installation.

- “WATER DAMAGE FROM SPRINKLERS IS WORSE THAN THE FIRE.”

Answer: A sprinkler controls a fire with only a tiny fraction of the water used by the fire department hoses. Sprinklers detect fires early, automatically controlling flames and smoke, and typically limiting damage to a single area. In about 90% of home fires, only one sprinkler was necessary to control the fire.

- “SPRINKLERS ARE UGLY”

Answer: Today’s home fire sprinklers are inconspicuous—smaller than recessed lighting or smoke alarms. They can be painted by the manufacturer to blend in with custom interiors. In ceilings, sprinklers can even be completely concealed beneath color-matched plates.

For more information go to the websites listed below or call us and ask for the Fire Chief or anyone in the Fire Marshal’s Office.

Shouldn’t you consider fire sprinklers for your home?

Web Links

National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA)National Fire Sprinkler Association (NFSA)Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition (HFSC)Firesprinkler.org (AFSA)International Fire Sprinkler Association (IFSA)Sfpe.org (SFPE)Factory Mutual (FM)

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