

Fire Sprinklers Save More Than You Think.

In response to your March 28th article, “Are sprinklers worth paying for in homes?” I felt compelled to respond. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) reported over 3,380 people died from fire during 2002, seventy-nine percent in home fires. Over 18,000 more were injured and now daily cope with their burn injuries. In addition to those deaths and injuries 97 firefighters died in the line of duty and 80,000 more sustained injuries. The NFPA reports 85 percent of fire deaths occur in homes, most are our elderly and very young. Working smoke alarms can alert people to a fire, but can not stop a fire as it continues to grow filling the home with toxic smoke. Fire sprinklers can alert people to a fire, control or stop it, saving lives and preventing injuries.

Fire sprinklers do not falsely activate due to smoke, but activate when the ceiling temperature reaches 135 degrees or greater, sensing a fire before it can reach a flash over stage. At flash over, everything in a burning room explodes in an intense fire ball that can blow out windows and spread heat and toxic smoke throughout a home in seconds. Fire sprinklers usually activate one at a time and to control or extinguish a fire with less water than a single fire hose leading to significantly less water, smoke and fire damage. Insurance companies provide discounts for homes protected by fire sprinklers.

As a firefighter I have held lifeless children in my arms working to breathe life back into them. I have witnessed the agony of parents who have lost little ones. I have watched firefighters and others risk their lives to rescue people trapped in their homes by fire. One such rescue occurred this past Christmas Day when a resident had to flee their home from the second floor. The first fire engine arrived just in time to place a ladder and assist the resident as the fire exploded out the doors and windows of the home. Over the past three years fire sprinklers in the Countryside Fire District extinguished four home fires safeguarding the lives of the occupants, not to mention the four million dollars in property. The media did not consider these fires newsworthy events as no lives were lost, firefighters injured, or family heirlooms lost. Firefighters responded to these homes and most were returned to their stations before they ever arrived because these four fires were already put out by a fire sprinkler. The fire sprinklers allowed those firefighters to respond to next call

instead of spending hours controlling a home fire. Fire sprinklers save lives and operating costs.

At a time when villages and fire districts are challenged by double digit increases in personnel health costs, revenue sources are capped by the State and routine failure of tax referendum questions, now more than ever is the time to install fire sprinklers in new homes. I encourage officials to support the installation of fire sprinkler systems in new homes so we can prevent future loss of life of our residents and firefighters while reducing operating costs.

James D. Spiegel, CFO
Countryside Fire District

NFPA Fact Sheets

Home fires

Eighty-five percent of fire deaths occur in the home (one- or two-family dwellings, apartments or manufactured housing). 72% of all fire deaths result from fires in one- and two-family dwellings, including manufactured homes.

Facts & Figures*

- In 2000, there were 368,000 home fires in the United States, resulting in 3,420 deaths, 16,975 injuries and \$5.5 billion in direct property damage.
- Home fire deaths have fallen 34% from 5,200 in 1980 to 3,420 in 2000.
- The statistics below are based on annual averages for the five-year period from 1994 through 1998:
 - Half of all home fire deaths resulted from fires that were reported between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. Only one-fourth of the home fires occur during these hours.
 - January was the peak month for home fire deaths. February ranked second, and December was third.
 - Smoking was the leading cause of home fire deaths overall, but in the months of December, January and February, smoking and heating equipment caused similar shares of fire deaths. Cooking was the leading cause of home fires and home fire injuries year-round.
 - Although children five and under make up about 9% of the country's population, they accounted for 17% of the home fire deaths, assigning them a risk twice the national average. Adults 65 and older also face a risk twice the average, while people 85 and older have a risk that is almost four-and-a-half times more than average.
- Only one-fifth of the home fire deaths from 1989-1998 were caused by fires in which a smoke alarm was present and operated.
- Most fatal fires kill one or two people. In 2000, 18 home fires killed five or more people. These 18 fires resulted in 99 deaths, accounting for 3% of all home fire deaths.**

(* From national estimates reported to U.S. municipal fire departments based on NFIRS and NFPA survey. Excludes fires reported only to federal or state agencies or industrial fire brigades.)

(** From "Catastrophic fires of 2000" *NFPA Journal*, September/October 2001.)

Updated: 11/01

NFPA Fact Sheets

Automatic fire sprinkler systems

ALSO SEE

- [Home fires caused by candles peak in '98, double over decade](#)
- [NFPA advises caution when using supplemental heating sources](#)
- [Cooking fires drop in '98 to lowest level in two decades](#)
- **"U.S. Fire Problem Overview Report, Leading Causes and Other Patterns and Trends"**
Members: [Download this report for free.](#) (121 KB*)
Non-members: [Order this NFPA report.](#)

ALSO SEE

- "U.S. Experience With Sprinklers," Kimberly D. Rohr, November 2003.
Members: [Download this report for free.](#) (PDF, 170 KB)

Properly installed and maintained automatic fire sprinkler systems help save lives. Because fire sprinkler systems react so quickly, they can dramatically reduce the heat, flames and smoke produced in a fire.

Non-members: [Order this NFPA report.](#)

Facts & Figures*

- Sprinklers typically reduce chances of dying in a
- fire and the average property loss by one-half to two-thirds compared to where sprinklers are not present.
- NFPA has no record of a fire killing more than two people in a completely sprinklered public assembly, educational, institutional or residential building where the system was working properly.
- In 1999, 34% of public assembly properties where fires occurred in the U.S. were equipped with sprinklers, compared with 7% of residential properties.
- In 2002, 79% of fires occurred in the home, resulting in 2,670 fire deaths.

*From NFPA's *U.S. Experience with Sprinklers* and NFPA's *Fire Loss in the United States*, November 2003, Kimberly D. Rohr.)

Safety Tips:

- NFPA recommends installing fire sprinklers in your home. For more information on home fire sprinklers, visit www.homefiresprinkler.org
- Families should develop and practice a [home fire escape plan](#) and have working [smoke alarms](#).


NFPA Fact Sheets

Home fires

Facts & Figures*

- In 2002, there were 389,000 reported home fires in the United States, resulting in 2,670 deaths, 13,650 injuries and \$5.9 billion in direct property damage.
- The 2,670 home fire death total in 2002 was the lowest seen since NFPA began collecting this data in 1977. Since then, these deaths have fallen 54%, and the number of reported home fires has fallen 46% over the same period.
- Nationwide, there was a home fire death every 170 minutes.
- The statistics below are based on NFPA's most recent analyses:

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This in-depth sprinklers.



ALSO SEE

- "U.S. Fire Problem Overview Report, Leading Causes and Other Patterns and Trends, Homes Section," Marty Ahrens, June, 2003.
Members: [Download this report for free.](#) (PDF*, 176 KB)
Non-members: [Order this NFPA report.](#)
- [Download a printable summary](#) of fire in U.S. homes. (PDF*, 40 KB)
- [Home fire deaths down sharply in 2002.](#)



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[Candles with Care Brochures](#)

Take proper precautions when using candles.
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[Fire in Your Home Booklet](#)

This in-depth resource contains "how to" information on fire safety.

[NFPA Fire Drills at Home Brochure](#)

Educate people about fire drills so that they can be prepared in an emergency.
(Package of 100)

- Almost half of all home fire deaths in 1999 resulted from fires that were reported between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. Only one-fifth of the home fires occur during these hours.
- In 1999, January was the peak month for home fire deaths. December ranked second, and March was third.
- Smoking was the leading cause of home fire deaths overall, but in the months of December, January and February, smoking and heating equipment caused similar shares of fire deaths. Cooking was the leading cause of home fires and home fire injuries year-round.
- Although children five and under make up about 9% of the country's population, they accounted for 17% of the home fire deaths, assigning them a risk twice the national average. Based on 1994-1998 annual averages, adults 65 and older also face a risk twice the average, while people 85 and older have a risk that is almost four-and-a-half times more than average.
 - Only one-fifth of the home fire deaths from 1989-1998 were caused by fires in which a smoke alarm was present and operated.
 - Most fatal fires kill one or two people. In 2002, 15 home fires killed five or more people. These 15 fires resulted in 90 deaths (87 civilians and 3 firefighters).**

Home smoke alarms Brochure

Get sound advice on smoke alarm basics
Order *Home Smoke Alarms* today!
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* From national estimates reported to U.S. municipal fire departments based on NFIRS and NFPA survey. Excludes fires reported only to federal or state agencies or industrial fire brigades.

** From "The Catastrophic Multiple-Death Fires of 2002," September 2003.

Updated: 9/03