

Matteson Becomes 15th Chicago Area Community to Pass Single-Family Fire Sprinkler Ordinance

Orland Park, March 4, 2004 – In an effort to increase fire safety and protect its citizens, the Matteson Village Board passed an ordinance requiring installation of automatic fire sprinkler systems in all new construction homes.

Under the direction of Fire Chief Robert Wilcox, the ordinance requires all new, single-family homes and townhouses to have home fire sprinklers installed according to NFPA 13D.

“Village President Mark Stricker and all village board trustees realized that this is the single most important thing they could do to provide a fire safe community,” Wilcox said.

According to Wilcox, the ordinance is important because Matteson continues to experience steady growth. Some of those developments are high-density, while others have large homes.

“Our board is focusing on quality of life, Wilcox said. "They want Matteson to be a safe place to live, work and visit."

"Each member understood that passing this ordinance would clearly set themselves apart because they are the 15th municipality in the entire state to require fire sprinklers in homes," he added. "It's also exciting to be the first community in the south suburbs to pass this ordinance."

Wilcox believes ordinances that require residential fire sprinklers are the wave of the future because sprinklers help save lives, reduce fire-related property damage and protect firefighters who respond to house fires.

Other municipalities that require residential fire sprinklers include: Barrington, Berkeley, Clarendon Hills, Glen Ellyn, Hoffman Estates, LaGrange Park, Lake Barrington, Long Grove, Mount Prospect, Park Ridge, Round Lake Beach, Streamwood, West Dundee and Wheeling. Several other communities are also progressing toward this goal.

Wilcox said many people played a major role during the education process. Lt. Jim Grosche from the Fire Prevention Bureau helped dispel myths associated with fire sprinklers. Village Administrator David Mekarski was also very supportive.

“I’ve never been more proud of any board like I am of this one,” Wilcox said. “Village President Stricker and every trustee had a supportive commentary at the board meeting after they passed the ordinance. It took a great deal of courage for them to pass this ordinance.”

Wilcox also worked closely with the Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board.

Two years ago, while his own home was under construction, Wilcox held an open house. Working with NIFSAB, he invited city and village officials, planners, builders, developers and members of area fire departments to show how a residential fire sprinkler system is installed in a new home. NIFSAB supplied the educational material along with the fire sprinkler demonstration trailer to show how a fire sprinkler activates.

NIFSAB also provided national reports, PowerPoint programs, cost comparisons, insurance research, and other audio/visual support materials used to educate the elected officials.

For a copy of the presentation materials and ordinance used in Matteson, contact NIFSAB at (708) 403-4468 or email sprinktoml@aol.com.

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