

IS LESS-THAN-MINIMUM FIRE PROTECTION ACCEPTABLE?

As the movement continues in various states to modify national consensus codes below the minimum standards, fire and life safety is being jeopardized. Will this become a trend and expand into other areas of consensus codes based upon the concern of affordable housing and a poor economy? Will the future of fire safety be compromised in your state?

The International Code Council (ICC) is the largest building and safety code organization dedicated to protecting the property, health and safety of people worldwide. After an extensive research and debate through a consensus process, the ICC joined the National Fire Protection Association and now requires residential sprinklers in all one and two-family homes effective January 2011. The ICC standards are not nationally mandated and are adopted by individual states and local jurisdictions. Adopting anything less than the minimum standards of the national consensus codes places the public, property and first responders at risk.

Why Should a Sprinkler System be Required?

- Fire Sprinkler systems save lives and property. The fire is being controlled while the fire department is responding to the call. Over 3,000 civilian fire fatalities occur annually (almost all in residential occupancies) and over 12 billion in dollar loss is reported
- Less water damage – Sprinklers discharge an average of 341 gallons of water/fire vs. an average of 2,935 gallons released by firefighter hoses
- Less fire damage – Average fire loss in a sprinklered home: \$2,166 vs. \$45,019 in a home without sprinklers; therefore, preserving the tax base, preventing the loss of businesses and jobs, preventing civilian fire deaths and injury, as well as preventing firefighter deaths and injury.

Opponents of residential sprinklers have suggested that the general public would oppose residential sprinklers, but a recent national poll conducted by Harns Interactive indicates that this claim misrepresents public opinion. A survey of over 1,000 adults revealed that:

- 45% of homeowners said that a sprinklered home is more desirable than an un-sprinklered home
- 69% of homeowners said that having a fire sprinkler system increases the value of a home
- 38% of homeowners said that they would be more likely to purchase a home with fire sprinklers than without.

The cost of installing a residential sprinkler system in new construction is relatively inexpensive, costing around \$2 per square foot. Having working smoke alarms and a prepared and practiced emergency escape plan are important, but many informed consumers in the United States are taking fire safety seriously and are installing home fire sprinkler systems. The combination of fire sprinklers and smoke alarms increase your chances of surviving a fire to 82%.

Do not accept anything less than the minimum national consensus codes. Support the adoption of the 2009 International Codes or the National Fire Prevention Code 101 or NFPA 1 in their entirety. Our future is dependent on our actions today.