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Statistics

On September 9, 2005, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) released an updated report with new evidence on the tremendous value of automatic fire sprinkler systems. The report found sprinklers to be even more reliable than previously estimated in reducing U.S. fire deaths.

It also confirms that the century-old technology remains underused, especially in the place where the risk of fire death is greatest, the American home.

The report states that when sprinklers are installed, the chances of dying in a fire are reduced by one-half to three-fourths, compared to fires where sprinklers are not present. Sprinklers are now estimated to operate in 93 percent of fires large enough to activate them. And for the first time, it is possible to document that nearly all sprinkler failures involve errors of human judgment, including 65 percent that occurred because the systems had been shut off prior to the fire.

Now here are some national stats for 2003 gathered from the International Fire Marshal's Association.

- Public fire departments responded to over one and a half million fires.
- A third of these were structure fires, and 75% of those were home fires.
- Nationwide, a home fire caused a death every 134 minutes.
- Structure fires caused over 15,000 reported civilian fire injuries, of which 14,075 occurred in residential properties, and 1,525 occurred in non-residential structures.
- Home fires caused 13,650 civilian fire injuries.
- Structure fires caused 8.7 billion dollars in property damage, of which 5.9 billion occurred from fires in the home.
- There were an estimated 37,500 intentionally set structure fires.
- About 79,000 firefighters were injured in the line of duty, and 105 died in the line of duty.
- There were 3,925 civilian deaths, of which 80% were from home fires.
- Forty-four home fires are reported every hour.

When you stand back and look at the forest of statistics, the pattern is evident that in terms of fire safety the place that needs to get fire sprinkler protection is the private home. The most economical way to prevent fire deaths in the home is not more hydrants, fire ponds or fire stations. Smoke detection will provide early warning, and fire sprinkler systems will minimize the fire threat and property damage. Many towns throughout the state are coming to this realization, and as a result are requiring fire sprinkler systems for all new homes in new subdivisions. Now 1 in 2 fire sprinkler plans reviewed by our office are for private homes. Our office expects the trend for home fire sprinkler systems to continue.

I hope to update this page soon with more current statistics...Eric J Ellis.

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