Maryland State Fire Marshal

News Release

Larry Hogan
Governor

Brian S. Geraci
State Fire Marshal

STATE FIRE MARSHAL PROVIDES FACTS ABOUT HOME FIRE SPRINKLERS

STATEWIDE (February 12, 2015) – More than 2,500 fire deaths occur throughout the U.S. each year. Eight out of ten of those fire deaths resulted from home fires. In Maryland, during 2014, 49 fire deaths occurred in one and two family homes out of the reported 63 total fire deaths recorded in the state. ***"Most home fire deaths can be eliminated with the installation of residential fire sprinklers,"*** stated State Fire Marshal Brian S. Geraci. "***The advantage of having fire sprinklers in your home far surpasses the ability of a working smoke alarm alone. A smoke alarm will notify you of a fire; however, a fire sprinkler can react and in most cases extinguish a fire before it reaches excessive heat and lethal doses of carbon monoxide and other toxins that are released during a fire".*** Fire sprinklers are designed to allow more time for escape during an uncontrolled blaze inside the living area of your home. The added benefit in most cases is a single fire sprinkler operates and either controls the fire or extinguishes it entirely before excessive irreparable fire damage occurs.

Many myths and falsehoods about fire sprinklers exist in the minds of Marylanders. The following facts and safety tips are provided to provide the public with factual information about residential fire sprinklers.

- Home fire sprinklers save lives and property by reacting during the early stages of the fires occurrence.
- Smoke does not affect fire sprinklers. Home fire sprinklers react to high heat temperatures of 135° - 165°.
- The risk of dying in a home fire decreases significantly when the home is equipped with a fire sprinkler system. To date no one has died from an accidental fire in a home protected by residential fire sprinklers.
- Home sprinklers are easy to maintain by ensuring nothing is hanging from or blocking individual sprinkler heads. A simple test by the homeowner or a contractor can be performed annually to ensure proper water flow.
- Only the sprinkler closest to the fire operates and sprays water directly on the fire. Due to the quick response of the fire sprinkler, the fire is almost always controlled and/or extinguished prior to the fire departments arrival.

- Homeowners experience lower insurance premiums with installed fire sprinkler systems. Insurance companies offer discounts from 5% to 30% off the fire portion coverage of the home.
- Fire sprinklers are environmentally friendly. The amount of water run-off, pollution and fire damage is reduced by as much as 71%. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), water usage to fight a home fire can be reduced by as much as 91%.
- Materials placed in homes today burn faster and at a higher heat release rate as compared to furnishings and small appliances made twenty or more years ago. Fires tend to grow much faster, which allows even less time to escape the deadly heat and toxins produced during a fire.
- On average, a fire doubles in size every 60 seconds. Occupants have roughly three minutes from the sounding of the smoke alarm to escape the effects of fire.
- Some new building methods call for the use of lightweight construction materials. These materials are an outstanding product, unless exposed to fire. Direct comparisons of dimensional lumber as floor joists to manufactured joists reveal a much quicker burn through that allows for faster collapse, which places first responders in jeopardy for serious injury or death during the early stages of an uncontrolled fire.
- In 2014, 62% of the fatal home fires in Maryland occurred between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. when Marylanders are most vulnerable – while sleeping.

It has been brought to the attention of the Office of the State Fire Marshal that improperly informed legislators are being misled by false statements regarding unproven research stating residential fire sprinklers are for property protection and not as lifesaving devices. This is an obvious attempt to garner support under false pretense. The sole purpose and design of the residential fire sprinkler system is to provide occupants the additional time needed to escape the harmful effects of an uncontrolled fire inside the home. Factual data can be located at the websites listed below.

Additional information for residential fire sprinklers may be found at these websites:

www.nfpa.org
www.homefiresprinkler.org
www.firesafehome.org
http://mdsp.org/firemarshal

When considering moving into a home or when having a new home constructed, be sure to demand residential fire sprinklers as a requirement to protect your family, friends, pets and property.

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The Office of the State Fire Marshal is an agency of the Department of State Police dedicated to helping protect citizens from fire and explosion through a comprehensive program of education, inspection, investigation and fire protection engineering. For more information on fire safety call 1-800-525-3124, log onto our website at: www.mdsp.org/firemarshal and/or http://facebook.com/MarylandStateFireMarshal.

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