

Misconceptions Regarding Residential Sprinkler Systems

According to the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA), over half of structure fires that occurred in 2005 were in one- or two-family dwellings. Home fires caused 3,030 deaths - over 80 percent of all civilian fire deaths. However, most of these lives would have been prevented if a home fire sprinkler system had been installed. Combining a smoke alarm with a sprinkler system reduces the chances of dying in a fire by 82 percent.

It seems strange given these figures that most people will install a sprinkler system to water their lawns before installing one to protect their family. Yet, the NFPA estimates that sprinkler systems are present in less than 1 percent of all one- and two-family dwellings and less than 8 percent of apartments. In fact, most often sprinklers are only installed because they were required by ordinances or mandates.

Why aren't people installing home fire sprinkler systems? Usually it is because of the misconceptions people have about sprinkler systems. Yet, the reality of the home sprinkler systems is quite different from what most people believe. Home sprinkler systems are often discounted as being too costly, too damaging, too ugly, or too likely to go off accidentally. However, these beliefs are simply not true.

Costs

A home fire sprinkler system might seem like an expensive addition. True, systems will add about \$0.50 to \$2.50 per square foot to new construction depending on the market where you live. In existing homes, the costs are at least double that of a new system because installation often requires removing and replacing existing drywall. However, these costs can be reduced if you have the sprinkler system installed when doing other home renovations.

Once they are installed, sprinkler systems will actually save money because they will reduce your home insurance rates by 5 to 15 percent. In the event that there is a fire, they will also save money in potential damages. The average cost of damages in homes with sprinkler systems was about \$2,100. In comparison, the average cost of damages in homes without sprinkler systems was about \$45,000.

Of course, what cannot be factored into this equation is the loss of items with sentimental value. However, it is easy to figure that if less damage was done to the home, less damage was done to the home's contents.

Water Damage

Most people worry that the water damage done by the sprinkler systems would be more extensive than the damage done by the fire and smoke. This is not true. First, sprinklers will only go off in rooms where they are triggered. If there is a fire in the kitchen, a sprinkler in the bedroom will not activate. This myth is usually perpetuated in the movies and on television. Nevertheless, it is only a myth. In fact, experts estimate that 95 percent of the time home fires are controlled by one sprinkler head.

In addition, sprinklers will act long before fire fighters are capable of getting there. The combination of the fire going unabated for several minutes combined with the water from the fire fighters' hoses is likely to cause much more damage to your home than a sprinkler system. Considering that a fire fighter's hose sprays about 175 gallons a minute while a residential sprinkler only sprays about 15 gallons of water per minute, your sprinkler system would have to run 12 times longer than a fire fighter's hose before it caused the same amount of damage.

Accidental Triggering

Most people worry that a sprinkler system will go off accidentally or before they are necessary. After all, most people have accidentally set off their smoke detectors at one time or another. Why wouldn't sprinkler systems be the same way? Well, sprinkler systems require temperatures of about 165°F to be triggered. They are not set off by smoke. More importantly, home sprinkler systems rarely go off accidentally. The odds of you being killed by an asteroid are 32 times greater than the odds of your sprinkler system going off accidentally - about one in 16 million.

Ugly Sprinkler Heads

If the only reason you do not want a sprinkler system in your home is that you think sprinkler heads are too ugly, then you are being a little fussy. You are also probably incorrect in this assumption. Home fire sprinkler systems can look a lot different from the types installed in businesses. In fact, most come with sprinkler heads that are nearly invisible. Some can even recess into the ceiling behind metal plates when they are not in use. These plates can even be coordinated to match your decor. Others have heads that only protrude about 1/2 inch from the ceiling or are mounted onto the wall.

Moreover, home sprinkler systems are designed to respond differently than the ones found in commercial buildings. Home sprinklers spray more outwardly than commercial models and are capable of covering between 150 to 400 square feet, thus requiring fewer sprinkler heads.

Of course, having a good sprinkler system does not mean you can start smoking in bed, leaving candles unsupervised, or finally give your kids those matches they have been wanting. The best way to prevent fire is common sense. However, the best way to save lives and property once the fire has begun is a good home fire sprinkler system. There is no real reason not to do it.

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<http://www.doityourself.com/stry/firesprinklersystem>