

# The truth about home fire sprinklers

Fires in the home pose one of the biggest threats to the people of your community. In 2013, U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated 1,240,000 fires. These fires caused 3,240 civilian deaths. Of those deaths, 83% occurred in the home, the very place people feel most safe.

All national model safety codes include fire sprinklers as a minimum safety requirement for new home construction. Homes built without sprinklers lack a crucial element of fire protection.

Because sprinklers have been around for so long, the evidence is clear that they are a proven way to protect lives and property against fires at home – responding quickly and effectively to the presence of a nearby fire, and requiring minimal maintenance by homeowners.

## Fast Facts

- In 2013, there was a civilian fire death every 2 hours and 42 minutes in the United States.
- The risk of dying in a home fire decreases by about 80% if sprinklers are present.
- Home fire sprinklers reduce direct property damage by about 70%.
- The cost of installation averages \$1.35 per sprinklered square foot for new construction.

**MYTH: “A smoke alarm provides enough protection.”**

**FACT:** Smoke alarms alert occupants to the presence of danger, but do nothing to extinguish the fire. In a fire, sprinklers can control and may even extinguish a fire in less time than it would take the fire department to arrive.

**MYTH: “Newer homes are safer homes.”**

**FACT:** In a fire, lightweight construction materials, used in many modern homes, burn quicker and fail faster. New homes often contain modern furnishings made of synthetic materials which, in a fire, can create a highly toxic environment, greater fuel load, and faster fire propagation.

**MYTH: “Home fire sprinklers often leak or activate accidentally.”**

**FACT:** Leaks are very rare, and are no more likely than leaks from a home’s plumbing system. A sprinkler is calibrated to activate when it senses a significant heat change. They don’t operate in response to smoke, cooking vapors, steam, or the sound of a smoke alarm.

**MYTH: “When a fire occurs, every sprinkler will activate and everything in the house will be ruined.”**

**FACT:** In the event of a fire, typically only the sprinkler closest to the fire will activate, spraying water directly on the fire, leaving the rest of the house dry and secure. Roughly 85% of the time, just one sprinkler operates.

**MYTH: “Sprinklers are unattractive and will ruin the aesthetics of the home.”**

**FACT:** New home fire sprinkler models are very unobtrusive, can be mounted flush with walls or ceilings, and can be concealed behind decorative covers.

**MYTH: “Sprinklers are not practical in colder climates, as the pipes will freeze and cause water damage.”**

**FACT:** With proper installation, sprinklers will not freeze. NFPA 13D, *Standard for the Installation of Sprinkler Systems in One- and Two-Family Dwellings and Manufactured Homes*, includes guidelines on proper insulation to prevent pipes from freezing.

**MYTH: “The water damage caused by sprinklers will be more extensive than fire damage.”**

**FACT:** In a fire, sprinklers quickly control heat and smoke. Any water damage from the sprinkler will be much less severe than the damage caused by water from firefighting hose lines. Fire departments use up to 10 times as much water to extinguish a home fire as fire sprinklers would use to extinguish the same fire.

## Free information about home fire sprinklers



The Fire Sprinkler Initiative (FSI), a project of the National Fire Protection Association, aims to increase the number of new, one- and two-family homes protected by sprinklers. The FSI website offers free research and resources to help advocates promote the fact that sprinklers are necessary in new construction.  
[www.firesprinklerinitiative.org](http://www.firesprinklerinitiative.org)



The Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition (HFSC) is a leading resource for accurate, noncommercial information and materials about home fire sprinklers for consumers, the fire service, builders, and other professionals. HFSC offers free educational materials about sprinklers and how they provide affordable protection to your community.  
[www.homefiresprinkler.org](http://www.homefiresprinkler.org)