



FIRE SPRINKLER INITIATIVE<sup>®</sup>  
Bringing Safety Home

## Home Fire Sprinklers: A Media Guide

Fire service members and safety advocates can play a major role in communicating home fire sprinklers to the public. This guide offers advice on how to craft key sprinkler messages to the media.

### Key points to highlight

- **Identify the home fire problem—and make it local!**
  - Obtain data from your state fire marshal's office or other local fire service organization that can quantify fire deaths, injuries, and dollar amount of property damage over a series of years. (Aim to highlight fire deaths and property loss over a 10-to-15-year period.) If your state has a fire sprinkler coalition, that information might be on its webpage ([www.FireSprinklerInitiative.org/Coalitions](http://www.FireSprinklerInitiative.org/Coalitions))
  - If local information can't be obtained, note that more than 350,000 home fires occur every year in the U.S., killing approximately 3,000 people
- **Promote the solution**
  - Home fire sprinklers can reduce the risk of dying in a fire by 80 percent and can reduce property loss by 70 percent.
- **Express that smoke alarms aren't enough**
  - Smoke alarms are necessary devices that alert residents to a fire, but they do nothing to suppress a fire. Residents may have as little as one to two minutes to safely escape a burning home, and only fire sprinklers have the ability to contain and possibly extinguish a fire in less time than it would take the fire department to arrive.
- **Counter the myths with facts**
  - Only the sprinkler closest to the fire—not all sprinklers—will activate.
  - Newer homes are not safer homes. Today's new homes are crafted with "lightweight" materials that allow fire to spread faster and cause structural failure sooner. Furthermore, newer homes often contain modern furnishings made of mainly synthetic materials that can create a greater fuel load.
- **Note ease and affordability of installation**
  - Home fire sprinklers are designed to be simple, and require minimal piping and labor.
  - The average cost to install sprinklers in new homes is \$1.35 per sprinklered square foot.

### Seek opportunities to promote fire sprinklers

- For decades, the fire service has noted the existence or lack of working smoke alarms at fire scenes. Equally important is mentioning the presence or lack of home fire sprinklers. More and

more safety advocates are now noting which, if any, of the two technologies exist in homes affected by fire and their impact in saving lives.

- Side-by-side burn demonstrations are effective, highly visual ways of showcasing the fierceness of home fires and rapid response of sprinklers. Use the free kit created by the Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition to produce a demo in your community. Don't forget to invite the media! Download the free kit at [HomeFireSprinkler.org/fire-sprinkler-demonstration-kit](http://HomeFireSprinkler.org/fire-sprinkler-demonstration-kit).
- Seek out and highlight sprinkler successes. While it is common to hear about lives being saved by smoke alarms, the same cannot be said about home fire sprinklers. Every successful "sprinkler save" should be promoted to increase public awareness of the importance of fire sprinklers in homes. When sprinklers activate, alert the media.

## Sample sound bites

News outlets will likely use only a small portion of your interview, so make sure your comments are to the point and compelling. Here are some example sound bites for fires involving fire sprinklers:

- "The fire sprinklers gave the family precious time to escape unharmed."
- "The fire sprinklers kept the fire small, allowing the family to escape safely and minimizing the risk to firefighters."

For home fires without sprinklers (with possible injury or death):

- "This tragedy is another unfortunate reminder that fire knows no bounds and can impact anyone. We have the power to stop these tragedies from occurring. Fire sprinklers are the key to eliminating these senseless deaths."
- "The devastating damage caused by this fire could have been minimized had fire sprinklers been present."

**For more information on home fire sprinklers, visit NFPA's Fire Sprinkler Initiative site, [www.FireSprinklerInitiative.org](http://www.FireSprinklerInitiative.org).**

*This document was inspired by a similar guide created by the California Fire Sprinkler Coalition, "Home Fire Sprinklers: Media Guide for Firefighters."*