

Chicago Association of REALTORS Speaks Out Against Home Fire Safety Measures

Orland Park, IL (May 21, 2013) – Last night on May 20, CBS Chicago (WBBM-TV) [aired a news segment about home fire sprinklers](#) in which Brian Bernardoni, Chicago Government Affairs Director for the Illinois Association of REALTORS®, strongly voiced his opposition to life safety in the form of fire sprinklers. Bernardoni stated that he and his organization will fight the adoption of codes that require fire sprinklers in new one- and two-family homes, noting that smoke alarms, fire extinguishers or better construction materials are enough.

“It’s frightening that the Illinois Association of REALTORS doesn’t place a higher value on saving the lives of its own customers and our firefighters,” says Tom Lia, executive director of the nonprofit Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board. “Smoke alarms are important because they alert homeowners of smoke. Fire and deadly smoke spread in minutes, so even with the warning, there’s not a lot of time to escape a home fire, especially for those at high risk like young children, older adults and people with disabilities.”

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), 84% of all civilian fire deaths in U.S. occur in homes¹ — the place where people tend to feel the safest. Over 50 people have already died this year in residential fires in Illinois.² These staggering statistics are a few of the many reasons why 91 communities in Illinois now require fire sprinklers in one- and two-family homes, making it the leading state for the number of communities that have such requirements. Throughout the U.S., communities have passed similar ordinances, and California and Maryland having even adopted statewide codes for home fire sprinklers.

“Here in Illinois, communities have been adopting home fire sprinkler ordinances for the last 25 years, beginning in 1988 when Long Grove passed the first requirement. Now, home fire sprinklers are present in national model codes,” states Lia. “National research shows fire sprinklers do not affect home sales and people view fire sprinklers as an added value in homes. The national average price is \$1.61 per sprinklered square foot in new homes, which approximates to one-and-a-half to two percent of the construction cost,” states Lia, citing a study by the NFPA’s nonprofit Fire Protection Research Foundation.”

“It doesn’t make sense for the Illinois Association of REALTORS to strongly oppose a system that saves lives. If this is the association’s stance on fire safety, I’m afraid of what other important safety measures the organization does not care about?”

Requiring home fire sprinklers in communities not only make sense in terms of life safety, but also financially for residents and the communities themselves. Due to the protection they provide, home fire sprinklers reduce insurance rates for homeowners. Communities that do not stay current with new editions of national model codes that include home fire sprinklers begin losing grading points from the Insurance Services Office (ISO) and pay more for insurance.

“It has become evident from this news segment that homeowners must be careful to choose the right real estate agent. Be sure to choose one that cares about you and your family and is able to note the fire- and life-safety features, such as fire sprinklers, smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors, and other safety devices, in the homes he/she is marketing,” Lia stresses.

About the Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board (NIFSAB)

NIFSAB is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting progressive legislation, raising public awareness, and educating code officials and governmental policy makers by demonstrating the proven performance of fire sprinklers in saving both lives and property. For more info, visit www.firesprinklerassoc.org.

¹ Karter, Jr., Michael J., *Fire Loss in the United States During 2011*, National Fire Protection Association, September 2012.

² [“Residential Fire Fatalities in the News - Illinois,”](#) U.S. Fire Administration.

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