



HOME FIRE SPRINKLER DAY

A project of NFPA's Fire Sprinkler Initiative
and the Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition

Illinois Communities and Retired Fire Chief Recognized during First Ever Home Fire Sprinkler Day

More than 100 Illinois communities that adopted ordinances requiring home fire sprinklers in all new homes were recognized at the first ever Home Fire Sprinkler Day held at the Barrington Countryside Fire station. Dave Grupp, former Long Grove fire chief, also was recognized for passing the first home fire sprinkler ordinance in Illinois in 1988.

The Illinois event was one of 50 held across the U.S. and Canada. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition (HFSC) initiated this North America-wide campaign to raise awareness of the growing dangers of home fires and the life-saving benefits of installing fire sprinklers in new homes.

The two organizations also held an event in Maryland where U.S. Fire Administrator Chief Keith Bryant and NFPA President Jim Pauley talked about the important role home fire sprinklers play to protect residents and first responders, and they discussed the challenges fire departments often face when they try to pass codes that require sprinklers in all new homes.

“Powerful sprinkler opponents have convinced uninformed legislators and decision-makers that requirements for home sprinkler technology are not necessary,” Pauley said. “Fire sprinklers are a vital component to ending our nation’s home fire problem. Jurisdictions allowing new homes to be built without sprinklers are allowing substandard housing.”

The event held in Barrington was supported by the Illinois Fire Chiefs Association (IFCA), the Illinois Fire Inspectors Association (IFIA) and the Illinois Fire Services Association (IFSA). It included a fire and sprinkler side-by-side demonstration where two furnished rooms were set on fire; only one had a fire sprinkler. People could see how quickly flashover occurred, where everything in the room ignited, compared to the room with a home fire sprinkler. Heat from the fire activated the sprinkler in less than a minute, and kept the fire from becoming deadly. There was a dramatic difference between the two rooms after the fires. Everything was destroyed in the unsprinklered room, and there was very little damage in the sprinklered room.

“Home fires can become deadly in as little as two minutes,” said Jim Kreher, fire chief, Barrington-Countryside Fire Protection District. “That is not much time for people to escape, especially families with small children, older adults or people with disabilities.”

Kreher said last year 114 people died in home fires in Illinois. This year, 61 people have died and hundreds were injured.

According to Dan Riordan, president, IFIA, fires are more deadly and spread quicker because of the contents of our homes.

“Our furniture, carpeting and most of the contents in our homes are made out of synthetic material

that causes fire to spread quickly producing toxic smoke,” he said. “Home fires also put our firefighters at risk through exposure that can lead to cancer and other health concerns.”

IFSA Chair Mike Mavrogeorge and Riordan read a proclamation that addressed today’s home fire problem, people who are at highest risk, survivors that have to endure lifelong physical and emotional hardships, and the cost to communities. Phil Zaleski, executive director of the Illinois Fire Safety Alliance, talked about the challenges burn survivors must face for the rest of their lives. Zaleski also reminded people about the importance of all homes having a working smoke alarm. He said the 10-year tamper proof battery smoke alarms allow a long-lasting battery to power the device without having to change the battery. He said smoke alarms and home fire sprinklers save lives.

Tom Lia, executive director, Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board (NIFSAB,) said home fire sprinklers have been in national model codes since 2006.

“Unfortunately there are builder and real estate groups that fight to keep sprinklers out of codes and try to prevent towns from passing ordinances,” Lia said. “That is why it is important to recognize the towns and districts that do require home fire sprinklers. We are pleased to acknowledge Chief Dave Grupp, the first to pass an ordinance 30 years ago. He paved the way for others to educate decision makers and their communities to understand the importance of protecting their citizens and firefighters.”

Each town that has a home fire sprinkler ordinance was recognized and received a certificate. All the speakers agreed that protecting new homes with fire sprinklers will make the future safer for residents, first responders and entire communities for generations to come.

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