



FEMA's U.S. Fire Administration endorses residential fire sprinklers

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After 30 years of testing, research and development, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) has announced its support of the 2009 International Residential Code (IRC), which mandates the installation of fire sprinklers in all new homes beginning in 2011.

"Every day firefighters bravely enter homes to rescue people from fire and risk their lives under collapsing roofs and floors, because of the lightweight construction that's so prevalent these days in home building. This endorsement by the USFA comes as great news to fire service professionals across the country, who are supporting the IRC to include residential fire sprinklers as a critical component in fire protection in the home," said John Viniello, president of the National Fire Sprinkler Association, the longest-tenured fire sprinkler advocacy organization in the U.S.

The new IRC mandate, a response to the growing fire problem in the U.S., is an initiative that could prevent more than 3,000 fire-related deaths and 60,000 serious fire-related injuries across the nation each year. About 90% of all fires occur in the home, fueled by new lightweight construction and more flammable home contents. In fact, the new sprinkler regulations are being endorsed by fire service professionals across the country, such as the U.S. Fire Administration, the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, and the International Association of Firefighters. Groups including these agree smoke detectors are no longer enough in residential fire protection, as lightweight construction has become more prevalent, house contents are more flammable than ever, and the time available to escape a house fire has reduced from 17 minutes 20 years ago to three minutes today, according to a cost-benefit analysis by FEMA.

"It is the position of the U.S. Fire Administration that all Americans should be protected from death, injury and property loss resulting from fire in their residences. All homes should be equipped with both smoke alarms and residential fire sprinklers, and all families should have and practice an emergency escape plan. The U.S. Fire Administration supports all efforts to reduce the tragic toll of fire losses in this nation, including the recently adopted changes to the International Residential Code that require residential fire sprinklers in all new residential construction. The time has come to use this affordable, simple and effective technology to save lives and property where it matters most - in our homes," said Glenn Gaines, acting assistant administrator for the U.S. Fire Administration. USFA's research regarding residential fire sprinkler systems has indisputably demonstrated that residential fire sprinklers can save the lives of civilians and firefighters and can reduce property loss as well as offset the risk of premature building collapse by lightweight construction when involved in a fire.