

Every home should have working smoke alarms.

That's the best way to help prevent injury and death from house fires.

In the last 20 years, the number of people who have died as a result of a fire in their homes has plummeted. Why? Experts in the fire protection and building industries agree: The increasing use of smoke alarms, now required in all building codes, is the biggest reason. Technological advances in home construction and better fire safety education are two others.

That's the good news. But we can do more. Even though new homes are significantly safer, there is still plenty of older housing stock in our country that was constructed back in the days when building codes weren't enforced as they are today – or that didn't include today's stringent requirements for electrical safety, heating systems, building materials, construction techniques and emergency escape. Most importantly, everyone would be a lot safer if every house had **working** smoke alarms.

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Think Safety – Today.

The importance of operational smoke alarms in preventing residential fire deaths is indisputable. The National Association of Home Builders encourages all home owners to check their own alarms regularly and to support community initiatives to install and maintain smoke alarms in all homes.

Today's Home is Safer.

New homes are built to be more fire-safe than ever before. Technological advancements in construction, more knowledge about how fires start and spread and significant improvements in building science protect today's homes without the need for fire sprinklers. The most significant life-saving advance is the requirement for the installation of sensitive smoke and fire detection systems that are hardwired, interconnected, and have battery back-up. When smoke is detected in any room, every alarm in the home is set off. These systems are in all new homes.



SMOKE ALARMS WORK.

Learn the truth about new homes and fire sprinklers.

Some public safety officials and the sprinkler industry have stepped up their campaign to require fire sprinklers in all new single-family homes and townhouses. They say installing sprinklers is cost effective, affordable, and a proven way of making homes safer. They say that the experts are on their side.



They aren't telling you the whole story.

The goal for all public safety officials is to protect against injury and loss of life. In fact, that's a goal we all have in common: fire fighters, sprinkler installers, and home builders, too. But installing fire sprinklers is expensive, and there exists no legitimate study showing that overall, they do a better job of saving lives in home fires.

Most importantly, installing fire sprinkler systems in new homes does not prevent death and injury from fires in older homes. Fire sprinklers may be a solution for those who want them, but they are not a solution for reducing fire deaths where they commonly occur.

Alarms work. Here's why.

Studies show that the risk of fire death is greatest in cases of "delayed discovery," typically when the home's occupants are asleep or when there's a smoldering fire, like one started by an unattended cigarette. Smoke alarms work because they alert occupants in time to react.

Alarms also work because they are cheaper and easier to install – \$200-\$400 will fully protect a 2,000-square-foot home, while a sprinkler system likely will cost \$3,000 and even \$4,000 or more for a home of that size. And that's before you take into account the special tanks and pumps the sprinkler system will need if the house is on well water. These estimates are for new construction: Retrofitting an existing home with sprinklers costs significantly more.

Thanks to widespread installation of residential smoke alarm systems in recent years, Americans are safer than they've ever been. In fact, according to an August 2006 U.S. Fire Administration study, only 3.7% of all residential fire deaths from 2001-2004 were reported as occurring in homes with working smoke alarms.

Price Does Matter

For each additional \$1,000 added to the price of a home, 250,000 potential home buyers are priced out of the market. Using a very conservative estimate of \$3,000 for a fire sprinkler system in the average home, 750,000 homebuyers must remain on the sidelines – and not enjoy the safety benefits of a new home.

We also know what it costs to keep fire departments staffed and ready to respond to emergencies. As new homes are built and more families move into a community, it's natural for those costs to rise.

But mandating sprinklers doesn't halt the cost increase. A fire department does lots more than fight fires. Fire fighters field emergency medical requests, respond to traffic accidents, and constantly train and prepare for emergencies. Actual time spent fighting fires? About 3 percent, nationally. Installing sprinklers isn't likely to bring down these fire prevention costs.