



**HOME BUILDERS & REMODELERS ASSOCIATION
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A Solution to Fire Deaths and Injuries – Far Better Than Mandatory Sprinklers

The National and Connecticut Sprinkler Coalitions (made up primarily of fire service personnel, sprinkler manufacturers and sprinkler installers) has long sought to mandate the installation of fire sprinklers in 1&2 family homes (and townhomes built under the same 1&2 family building code).

We have opposed this mandate for many reasons, including the fact that the vast majority of residential fire deaths and serious injuries occur in homes built before 1985. Since then, the state's building codes have substantially changed to require many fire safe construction practices, including interconnected, hard-wired and battery backup smoke detectors, better egress requirements, much safer electrical systems, fire stopping for all wall and floor penetrations, and most recently (2017) - to address the so-called "light weight" construction practice that has existed for fifty years – CT requires fire proofing of floor joist assemblies. Other reasons include the huge cost of installation, much higher than sprinkler proponents claim, and numerous technical and logistical issues still not properly addressed.

The constant barrage of efforts by the sprinkler coalition to impose this costly requirement on new home owners ignores well-known facts that make the 1&2 family and townhouse sprinkler mandate defy common sense. Ask professionals who study fire science if the following is true:

- Medical calls makeup greater than 80% of all calls to fire departments
- Of the fire calls responded to, less than 10% are active fires
- Fire deaths occur in CT homes at a rate of about 1 in every 92,000 homes, and almost all are older homes (i.e., built pre-1985). CT builders currently are building 2,050 1&2 family homes per year.
- The lack of smoke detectors causes many more deaths than sprinklers will ever save. It's very common to find smoke alarms missing or disabled.
- Increased inspections of smoke alarms would reduce deaths and serious injuries. Thus, greater education of home owners about the need to inspect smoke detectors and about fire safe practices in the home would produce far better outcomes.
- Firefighting itself is changing. It is now focused on saving people and not the structure. Once it is confirmed that the building is unoccupied, fire fighters pull back and fight the fire from the exterior. There is much less risk to fire fighters being harmed by collapsing buildings using this technique.
- The design of entire fire departments is changing. Staffing, equipment, volunteer vs paid fire fighters all impact safety. The money proponents want society to spend on fire sprinklers in residential homes could be spent in these different areas of fire safety, as well as home owner education, and would save far more lives.
- Technology changes in the home are constantly improving home fire safety, making sprinklers even more irrelevant. These include smart stoves that auto shut off if left unattended or overheat, and induction cooktops that greatly reduce stovetop fires as flammable materials will not ignite if placed on the stovetop. Finally, if furnishings today are more of a fire hazard than older furniture, doesn't that call for regulating furniture manufacturing to target this hazard source?

Mandating fire sprinklers in 1&2 family homes and townhouses is chasing the wrong solution to the fire safety problem. Please, say NO to the sprinkler coalition and work on better solutions.