Effectiveness of Fire Sprinkler Education is Emphasized by Fire Departments

Fire departments across the state are continually becoming aware of the life-saving benefits of fire sprinklers and are now including fire sprinkler education as part of their community events. Last year, more than 2,000 people viewed firsthand how fire sprinklers work during live demonstrations at various safety events, fire department open houses and other venues.

The Wisconsin Chapter of the National Fire Sprinkler Association (NFSA-WI) recognizes the following fire departments for including fire sprinkler education demonstrations as part of their community events last year: Fond du Lac, Grafton, Germantown, Greenfield, Kimberly, La Crosse, Menomonee Falls, Mequon, Muskego, New Berlin, Onalaska, St. Francis, Sussex, Tess Corners, Watertown, Waukesha and West Allis.

“Hosting a side-by-side fire sprinkler demonstration in your community shows a proactive approach to fire prevention and education. We can always dry out a home after a fire, but I still haven’t found a way to un-burn one,” said Assistant Fire Chief Troy Gudie of the Onalaska Fire Department.

TOP: A firefighter tackles the fire in an unprotected side-by-side unit during a demonstration in Sussex.

BOTTOM: An audience watches as a fire sprinkler activates after a fire was set in the protected unit during a side-by-side demonstration in Sussex.

NFSA-WI, along with Sprinkler Fitters Local 183 and 669, assists fire departments with live fire sprinkler demonstrations that show the effectiveness of fire sprinklers and how they work, and also dispel common misconceptions of fire sprinklers. Demonstrations are conducted via a sprinklered room in a trailer or by building two similar eight-by-eight-foot...
It’s a new year and we’ve sprung into action on one of the most pressing issues on the Wisconsin forefront: the International Code Council’s International Residential Code (IRC).

The push to adopt the IRC is in its beginning stages and is working closely with organizations preparing to form a coalition, which will authorize a sub-committee to further encourage IRC adoption.

It has been a challenge to get to this point after last September’s International Code Council (ICC) hearings in Minnesota. It is encouraging to see and hear the number of people that want the IRC adoption to go through in Wisconsin.

The current battle is being fought at the state and local levels across the country. Quite a few states have legislation in process to stop or restrict the adoption, however, movement from supporters has been encouraging. They are doing all they can to stay on course and push the adoption through. To track individual states’ legislative activities, go to http://nfsa.org/NFSAStateMap.xls.

On the topic of residential fire sprinkler codes, more than 170 fire and building officials and community leaders from Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin and other states attended the Fire Team USA’s fire protection information and training conference in Addison, Illinois, this past February.

Funded through a FEMA Fire Prevention and Safety Grant, the conference was an initiative to bring fire chiefs and marshals, elected officials, building officials and other stakeholders together to learn and share fire prevention methods and alternatives that affect quality of life and improve public policy on fire protection.

Topics included fire protection priorities and codes, the politics of life safety, mobilizing the community stakeholders, and the various resources available to educate and improve public policy. Speakers provided details behind NFPA 13D, the standard for the installation of fire sprinklers in one- and two-family homes.

Guests who attended the conference’s first day withstood 20-degree weather to watch a live burn demonstration outside of the building (see fire sprinkler education article for information about side-by-side burn demonstrations).

The second day ended the Fire Team USA program, but also included an outstanding forum on fire sprinkler education (Residential Fire Sprinkler Summit). In attendance were more than 300 fire service members, building officials, municipal servants and elected officials.

The session included keynote speakers NFPA President Jim Shannon and NFSA President John A. Viniello. Shannon addressed the progressive efforts made by the Illinois fire service and the Northern Illinois Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board in getting nearly 60 municipalities to adopt 13D ordinances. He spoke of the NFPA’s new campaign, "Bringing Safety Home," and encouraged working together with the NFPA for a safer America.

Viniello addressed the audience with similar acknowledgements and spoke about why it is important for the fire sprinkler industry to support the fire service in their efforts to pass ordinances that result in safer communities.

If you have the opportunity to participate in a Fire Team USA and/or Residential Fire Sprinkler Summit in Illinois, it is well worth it.

On a national level, there is not only a push to protect new homes from fires, but also to retrofit existing commercial buildings with fire sprinklers. Representative Jim Langevin (D-RI) introduced the Fire Sprinkler Incentive Act to the 111th U.S. Congress this past February. As of now there are 84 co-sponsors including Wisconsin Representatives Tammy Baldwin, Steve Kagen and Ron Kind, will become the Fire Sprinkler Incentive Act of 2009; HR1194.

The Fire Sprinkler Incentive Act of 2009 would amend the 1986 Internal Revenue Code to classify fire sprinkler retrofits as five-year property for purposes of depreciation. The current depreciation schedule does not provide an economic incentive for installing fire sprinklers in the many unprotected buildings across the country.

The passage of the Fire Sprinkler Incentive Act will significantly reduce the loss of life by fire and provides a more rapid recovery of cost in the U.S. annually. For more information about the Fire Sprinkler Incentive Act and how you can support it, please visit www.NFSA.org.
Fire Sprinklers at Work

SUCCESSFUL ACTIVATIONS

OCTOBER 2008

Apartment Fire
Hudson
At 8:48 p.m. on October 30, the Hudson Fire Department was called to respond to sounding alarms and smoke at the Arbor's of Hudson apartment complex. Upon arrival, Chief Jim Frye noticed dark gray smoke coming from one of the garages and also observed an activated fire sprinkler.

The cause of the fire was a stack of supplies and paper in the front of the garage in which a car was parked. According to City of Hudson Fire Inspector Dave Krupich, “If it would not have been for fire sprinklers, this would have been a more serious and damaging fire.”

Dave Krupich, Fire Marshal
Hudson Fire Department

November 2008

Machinery Systems Co.
Brookfield
The Brookfield Fire Department responded to an automatic alarm sounded at 7:54 p.m. from the Machinery Systems Company. While en route, firefighters received a telephone alarm of smoke in the building.

The fire started in a toaster in the kitchen and spread to cabinets when a single sprinkler activated to put it out before the firemen arrived.

Ron Mager, president and CEO of the company, told Fire Inspector Dennis Hibbard that it could have been worse. The initial phones and computers remained in working condition and the business continued in operation.

Dennis Hibbard, Fire Inspector
City of Brookfield Fire Department

January 2009

Madison Area Technical College
Madison
Firefighters responded to a fire reported at 6:44 a.m. at the MATC Truax campus where they were met with heavy smoke after a fire sprinkler system had extinguished the fire.

The fire was contained to the automotive shop where firefighters believe the fire source may have been an automotive engine used for classes. Damages were estimated at $4,000.

The Capital Times

Warehouse
Eau Claire
The Eau Claire Fire Department responded to a fire alarm at Banbury Place. The fire was in a large area on the second floor where a workbench and cabinets were located, along with power tools and a shop vacuum full of saw dust. The Chippewa Valley Theatre Guild also occupied the same floor and stored stage props and equipment in the area.

Two sprinklers contained and put out most of the fire by the time firefighters arrived to fully extinguish the flames.

The power saw was burnt from the fire, but no injuries were reported. Damage amounted to about $1,000. No apparent cause of the fire was determined.

“Nothing else was damaged from this fire except the items mentioned and a couple of cabinets,” said Inspector Puljas. “The sprinkler systems did what they were installed for and saved lives and property damage.”

Gary A. Puljas, Fire Inspector
Eau Claire Fire Department

Capital Newspapers
Madison
Firefighters were called to an early morning fire at the Capital Newspapers building. When they arrived, the fire sprinkler system had activated to extinguish the fire.

According to an employee, the fire started in a compressor in a mechanical room. Another employee noticed the fire and pulled the alarm. The fire sprinkler system activated shortly thereafter.

Approximately 40 employees were working inside the building at the time. All escaped without injury. Damage was estimated around $52,000.

Wisconsin State Journal

February 2009

Burlington Coat Factory
Brookfield
More than a dozen area fire departments responded to a three-alarm call at 11:25 a.m. at the Burlington Coat Factory located on Capitol Drive in Brookfield.

Fire Chief Charlie Myers said smoke damage was apparent inside the store, but sprinklers likely saved more extensive fire damage.

The store is located in a strip mall alongside two other stores, neither of which sustained more than minor smoke damage, Myers added.

No injuries were reported.

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Habanero’s Restaurant
Wauwatosa
Wauwatosa firefighters responded to an automatic fire alarm at the Promenade Mall, 837 N. Mayfair Road. Upon arrival, they were directed to respond to Habanero’s Restaurant. When crews entered the building, they found one activated sprinkler in the kitchen.

Food cooking on a natural gas burner had spilled over and ignited. The fire was controlled and extinguished in less than one minute, according to the kitchen staff. The loss was estimated at no greater than $1,500.

Jeffrey S. Hevey, Chief
Menomonee Falls Fire Department
(Former Assistant Chief of Wauwatosa)

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WE WANT YOUR SUCCESSFUL ACTIVATIONS! Send your “Successful Activation” stories to: Dan Gengler, NFSA North Central Regional Manager (MN, WI); P.O. Box 280, Williams Bay, WI 53191; by telephone: 262-245-5255; or via e-mail: DanNFSA@aol.com

www.nfsawi.org
NFSA and IAFC Partner to Update Sprinkler Community Resources

The second edition of the “Residential Fire Sprinklers ... A Step-By-Step Approach for Communities” guide and its updated companion, the “Look Up For Safety” CD/DVD set, are now available to fire service professionals and community leaders.

The revised programs combine all of the latest information for community leaders wanting to pass fire sprinkler legislation or adopt a national code that includes fire sprinklers. Success stories highlighting specific steps and how-to advice are shared from across the nation.

“We are pleased to once again partner with the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) to bring these important documents to both fire service and community leaders across America,” says John Viniello, President, National Fire Sprinkler Association.

Fire and emergency services have made great strides to make sure residential fire sprinklers become an integral part of the national risk-reduction strategy. As national policies evolve, it will take the leadership of local fire departments to ensure that life-saving changes take place at the local level.

Fully supporting this informative and resourceful tool, “Residential Fire Sprinklers ... A Step-By-Step Approach for Communities,” the IAFC strongly believes that, as the primary life-safety leaders in your community, it is critical that fire service leaders have the tools needed to succeed.

The IAFC and the NFSA are proud to partner in offering this updated resource package. Undoubtedly, the environment will continue to change, and the IAFC will continue to work with the NFSA and others to ensure that fire service and community leaders have the tools needed to move from change to opportunity.

By presenting these documents jointly, the IAFC and NFSA hope to impress upon local leaders the criticality of working collaboratively to address the immediate need, as well as convey their long-term commitment to enhancing local firefighter and life safety efforts.

“The importance of being involved in the code process has never been more critical,” says Chief Larry J. Grorud, CFO, MIFireE, President of IAFC. “We hope these updated tools provide the motivation, inspiration and resources for fire departments to lead change and implementation efforts in the community, and I challenge you to share them with partners in your department and community who share your commitment.”

A copy of the “Residential Fire Sprinklers” and “Look Up for Safety” guides may be obtained by visiting www.nfsa.org or www.iafc.org.

NFPA Launches New Initiative to “Bring Safety Home”

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) kicked off the New Year by launching its Fire Sprinkler Initiative: “Bringing Safety Home.”

The initiative provides helpful materials and resources to people and organizations, encouraging the adoption of requirements for automatic fire sprinklers in new one- and two-family homes.

Nearly 3,000 people die in house fires annually. However, homes with automatic fire sprinklers and working smoke alarms reduce the risk of an occupant dying in a fire by 82 percent.

The NFPA’s Fire Sprinkler Initiative is dedicated to saving lives through the use of this proven technology. “Bringing Safety Home” provides home fire sprinkler advocates a number of ways they can communicate the impact and importance of sprinkler requirements.

The Fire Sprinkler Initiative’s Web site – www.firesprinklerinitiative.org – is the source for materials that advocates can use when talking to community leaders, elected officials and others to get home sprinkler requirements in place, either through ordinances or the adoption of model safety codes.
Effectiveness of Fire Sprinkler Education is Emphasized by Fire Departments

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rooms adjacent to each other — one sprinklered and the other unsprinklered.

The fire sprinkler trailer demonstrations provide the opportunity to perform multiple presentations throughout a one-day event. Demonstrations begin by setting a fire in a trash can in the trailer. The fire ignites a curtain, heating the single fire sprinkler to the necessary temperature to activate and ultimately extinguish or control the fire. Water is removed through drains in the floor, the curtain and trash cans are replaced and a new sprinkler is quickly installed for simple turnaround and a new demonstration.

The side-by-side fire demonstration is featured only once during a community event, but shows an even more realistic fire situation through the use of two similar rooms furnished with typical household furniture. One room is protected with a fire sprinkler system and the other room is unprotected. The room with the fire sprinkler system shows how quickly a fire sprinkler responds to heat from a fire with little damage to the room. Even more important is the ability for the demonstration to show people how fire sprinklers allow them to make an easier and safer escape from a building in the case of a fire. The unprotected side exhibits the quick development of a fire into flashover, which is the point at which no one can survive, endangering the lives of firefighters who respond.

The West Allis Fire Department includes both the trailer and side-by-side demonstrations at their department’s “open house” events.

“People may have some idea of fire sprinklers’ capabilities, but a demonstration really shows them the impact of what sprinklers can do to control a fire and save people’s lives. In a side-by-side demonstration, they are able to see that the furniture is still intact in the protected side while there is complete devastation in the unprotected side. Both the trailer and side-by-side demonstrations are great educational tools,” states Lt. Keith Pirlot, Bureau of Training and Safety, West Allis Fire Department.

In 2007, NFSA-WI purchased another fire sprinkler demonstration trailer, which has provided more opportunities to educate the public through live presentations across the state. Over this past winter, a number of renovations enhanced the trailer’s effectiveness to educate people on the life-saving benefits of fire sprinklers. Upgrades included a flat-screened television used to play fire sprinkler education videos in-between demonstrations and new wood paneling inside the trailer to provide a more home-like feel.

A number of fire departments have requested assistance in hosting fire sprinkler presentations already this year. Fire professionals wishing to host a demonstration should call Kathy at (262) 376-0270.

Members of the media take a few moments to ask questions prior to the demonstration in Onalaska.

The reconditioned trailer, which was purchased in late 2007, has provided more demonstration opportunities throughout the state in 2008. Renovations to enhance the educational experience include a television and a more home-like setting.

Viewers gather inside the trailer to see firsthand how a fire sprinkler activates from heat.

The La Crosse Tribune newspaper covered a side-by-side demonstration at a student fire safety event at the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse.

Members of the Germantown Fire Department prepare to host a side-by-side fire demonstration.
New NFSA-WI Link Makes Web Info Easy

Making fire sprinkler information accessible is a priority of the Wisconsin Chapter of the National Fire Sprinkler Association (NFSA-WI).

So to make the process easier for Web visitors, NFSA-WI has spelled out its “fire sprinklers save lives” message with a new Internet link: www.firesprinklerssavlives.org.

Typing in the new link will automatically lead visitors directly to the NFSA-WI Web site at www.nfsawi.org. In addition, it will be an easier link to recall, especially when it’s read or heard in educational or promotional materials.

Give www.firesprinklerssavlives.org a try . . . it’s easy to remember!
HFSC Fire and Sprinkler Burn Demonstration Kit: A Complete Resource for Fire Departments

Wisconsin fire departments wishing to perform a live fire and sprinkler burn demonstration using side-by-side units (please see education article) now have a free tool available from the Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition (HFSC).

HFSC’s model demonstration involves building two eight-by-eight-foot rooms. Both rooms are furnished similarly, but one room contains a fire sprinkler and the other does not. Fires can be set in both rooms at the same time or separately to demonstrate how flashover occurs and how effectively a sprinkler controls or extinguishes a fire. Viewers get a close-up view of flashover and firefighters in action.

The DVD is broken down into various segments so that those people building the units can pick up where they left off with building the units. HFSC spokesperson Ron Hazleton walks the viewers through the preparation and performance of the demonstration step by step.

The CD-ROM supports fire service professionals with written information and easy-to-use checklists of materials and tools needed to build the side-by-side units. Step-by-step instructions to construct and assemble the units, which supplement the DVD’s instructions, along with other information on how to present the demonstration can easily be printed from the CD-ROM to distribute to everyone involved with the project.

In order to find assistance with the donation of materials and furnishings, the CD-ROM also contains a sample sponsorship request letter. Guidance to involve local officials and attract the media’s attention is included in the sample letters that are provided, which allow for local fire department information to be inserted.

“We believe the fire and sprinkler burn demonstration is the most effective way to help residents understand how dangerous home fires truly are and to inform them of the steps they can take to stay safe,” says Gary Keith, HFSC Chairperson. “This live presentation is dramatic, as it shows how quickly a fire spreads and the rapid reaction and effectiveness of a fire sprinkler system in protecting families.”

To order a fire and sprinkler burn demonstration kit or for further information about residential fire sprinklers, please visit www.homefiresprinkler.org or call 1-888-635-7222.

Sprinklerman® Set to Make Appearances at Minor League Baseball Games

Sprinklerman® is set to make appearances at minor league ballpark over the summer. The new and improved Sprinklerman® will spread goodwill and educate fans at the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers game in Appleton, Wisconsin on August 21st. Mark your calendars!

IAFC President Shares Fire Sprinkler Message

The Wisconsin Chapter of the National Fire Sprinkler Association has developed a fourth “Ask the Expert” ad featuring a fire sprinkler protection message from a fire service professional. The message from Larry Gruod, Fire Chief, Janesville Fire Department and the current president of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), first appeared in the May edition of the Wisconsin Fire Chief magazine.

In the ad, Fire Chief Gruod states that as a fire chief and president of the IAFC, residential fire sprinklers are quite simply a way to save lives. The cost is reasonable and the benefits immeasurable. Chief Gruod expressed that he strongly supports fire sprinklers like other leaders in the fire and emergency service and encourages all fire professionals to do the same.

Dan Gengler, NFSA North Central Regional Manager said that Chief Gruod was a good choice for the ad because his role as the president of the International Association of Fire Chiefs is magnified by his dedication to community and firefighter safety. The fact that he appeared and eloquently testified the importance of residential fire sprinklers before the International Code Council delegates at the International Residential Code Final Action Hearings in September 2008, exemplifies the attitude and motivation of his beliefs that should be echoed by all fire service personnel.

www.nfsawi.org
For more information about fire sprinklers, contact Dan Gengler, National Fire Sprinkler Association, 262-245-5255. You can also contact Dan via e-mail: DanNFSA@aol.com

Please print legibly in ink

NAME

TITLE

COMPANY

ADDRESS

CITY    STATE    ZIP

PHONE    FAX

E-MAIL

If you don’t have access to a FAX, return form to:

The Wisconsin Chapter of
The National Fire Sprinkler Association, Inc.
Kathy Meulemans
PO Box 614
Cedarburg, WI 53012-0614

NFSA-WI INFORMATION & MATERIAL REQUEST

If you are interested in any of the following materials or information, please call the contact listed below:

☐ HFSC “Built for Life” Kit

☐ HFSC “Living with Sprinklers” Kit

☐ Fire Sprinkler Side-By-Side Live Burn Demonstration Information

☐ Home Fire Sprinkler, Public Education Kit

Please be sure to view the NFSA-WI Web site for information at www.NFSAWI.org or www.firesprinklerssavlives.com.

Materials can be ordered via fax at (262) 376-0228 or call Kathy Meulemans at (262) 376-0270.