

Montana State Fire Chiefs Association



Resolution 10-01

Title: Support for adoption of codes and ordinances for installation of residential fire sprinkler systems.

Description: A resolution that all new construction, including one and two-family dwellings and townhomes, should be built with fire sprinklers installed to protect the public, fire service personnel, the structure, its contents, the economy and the environment.

WHEREAS, the Montana State Fire Chiefs Association (MSFCA) is an organization dedicated to public safety, and considers it unacceptable that in the 21st century, more than 4,000 people in the United States are killed in fires each year (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2009), with about 80% of these deaths occurring in residential fires (Emergency Preparedness Innovations Corporation, 2007), and

WHEREAS, the MSFCA understands that if a person has reported a fire in their home the presence of sprinklers paired with smoke alarms cut the risk of dying in a home fire by 82% (Hall, 2009), and

WHEREAS, the MSFCA understands that sprinklers protect against significant property loss—sprinklers reduce the average property loss by 71% per fire, and flame damage was confined to the room of origin in 94% of fires in sprinklered properties versus 74% in fires with no automatic extinguishing equipment (Hall, 2009) and that fire sprinklers are now more affordable with a lowest cost estimate \$0.38 and a National average of \$1.61 per square foot of new construction (Fire Protection Research Foundation, 2008), and

WHEREAS, the MSFCA knows that home fire sprinklers can significantly reduce the risk of injury and death to responding firefighters at home fires, and

WHEREAS, the MSFCA knows that fire sprinklers represent a proven, reliable, affordable, efficient and effective method of protecting life and property in both commercial and residential occupancies, and

WHEREAS, the MSFCA desires to have a positive and consequential impact on reducing the nation's losses due to fire, and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana State Fire Chiefs Association supports the adoption of codes and ordinances at the state and local level to require the installation of fire sprinkler systems in all newly constructed one- and two- family dwellings and townhomes.

APPROVED and ADOPTED this 17th day of February 2010.

Richard Cowger
MSFCA Chairperson

Montana State Fire Chiefs Association



Residential Fire Sprinkler Position Statement

The Montana State Fire Chiefs Association adopts the position that all new construction, including one and two-family dwellings, should be built with fire sprinklers installed to protect the public, fire service personnel, the structure, its contents, the economy and the environment.

In an effort to reduce the number of deaths from an average of 4,000 citizens and 100 firefighters annually and to avert an estimated \$8.6 billion in direct property loss due to fires annually (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2009), we must include residential fire sprinklers as an integral part of a community's fire protection. The increased demands made today on local fire departments, and the changes in building materials and home contents, increase the risk to firefighters and the public. It's time to add in-home active fire protection as a baseline in all new building construction.

Properly installed and maintained automatic fire sprinkler systems help save lives. Because fire sprinkler systems respond so quickly to reduce heat, flames, and smoke from a fire, they give residents valuable time to get out safely and can significantly reduce property loss and damage. Fire sprinklers have been around for more than a century, protecting commercial and industrial properties and public buildings. What most people don't realize is that the same life-saving technology is also available for homes. On average, eight people die in home fires every day in the United States – a total of 2,865 deaths. Home fires accounted for 84% of all civilian fire deaths and resulted in 13,600 injuries (Ahrens, 2009). By installing these life-saving devices in new homes a large number of residents are ensured that they can enjoy the same level of safety found in many offices, schools, apartments, and public buildings.

Now is the time for the fire service to adapt to the changes in construction techniques; new technologies have become the norm in construction (engineered light-weight construction materials and design), and building contents have become more flammable and more toxic. We must meet these changes and protect our communities in proactive, rather than reactive, approaches. The current built environment and furnishings necessitate the addition of built-in fire protection. Fire sprinklers reduce the risk associated with these new building components to citizens and firefighters.

We further state that we do not support and will oppose regulations that prevent or discourage the installation of fire sprinklers. We also stand against fees and charges that create economic barriers to the installation of fire sprinklers. We support incentives for business owners and citizens to protect their buildings, thus protecting our citizens, their property and fire service personnel.

This position statement supports the priorities of the Montana State Fire Chiefs Association and we pledge to work with the Western Fire Chiefs Association (WFCA), the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), other IAFC divisions and states, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and other organizations which are interested in being proactive in providing community fire protection. We welcome partners and collaborative efforts that support similar goals. It is time for us all to take action and work together to protect lives, property and the environment.

APPROVED and ADOPTED this 17th day of February 2010.

Richard Cowger
MSFCA Chairperson

Sources

- Ahrens, Marty (2009). *Home Structure Fires*. Quincy, MA: National Fire Protection Agency.
- Emergency Preparedness Innovations Corporation. (2007). *Facts About House Fires*. Retrieved February 10, 2010, from <http://epicicorp.com/House%20Fire.htm>
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- Fire Protection Research Foundation. (2008). *Home Fire Sprinkler Cost Assessment*. Quincy, MA.
- Hall, John R. Jr. (2009). *U.S. Experience with Sprinklers and Other Automatic Fire Extinguishing Equipment*. Quincy, MA: National Fire Protection Agency.
- Madrzykowski, Daniel (2008). *Impact of a Residential Sprinkler on the Heat Release Rate of a Christmas Tree Fire*. Gaithersburg, MD: National Institute of Standards and Technology.