



To: Mayor and Council

Agenda Item #: V. B.

From: Jordan Gilgenbach, Communications Coordinator

Action

Discussion

Date: Dec. 16, 2014

Information

Subject: November "Speak Up, Edina" Report

Action Requested:

Receive report on November 2014 "Speak Up, Edina" discussion about residential fire sprinklers.

Information / Background:

Since June 2012, the City of Edina has used the online engagement website, www.SpeakUpEdina.org, to collect ideas and opinions from residents. One of the City Council's six strategic priorities for 2014-2015 is Communication and Engagement: "To clearly understand community needs, expectations and opinions, the City will consistently seek the input of a broad range of stakeholders in meaningful and interactive communication." A goal of that is to host a monthly discussion on www.SpeakUp.Edina.org. In November 2014, the discussion topic centered on residential fire sprinklers. In this online discussion, the City posed the following questions:

- Given research on the effectiveness of sprinklers, should the City of Edina require all new single-unit residential construction have fire sprinklers installed, regardless of size? Why or why not?
- According to the NFPA, the cost of installing a home fire sprinkler systems averages \$1.35 per sprinkled square foot. Oftentimes, homeowners' can receive a discount on their homeowners insurance when a system is present. Do you think the potential benefit outweighs the cost of the system? Why or why not?
- In 2013, the Edina Fire Department responded to nearly 900 fire calls, a 19 percent decrease from 10 years prior. Ten or fewer fires per year, on average, are medium to major structure fires. Do you think sprinklers would help further decrease calls and major fires? Why or why not?

The discussion was open for comments between Oct. 28 and Dec. 1. During that time, 33 comments were made. Additionally, 1,951 users visited the site 2,782 times, garnering 10,243 page views. Note, during this same period, discussions on the CIP, Indigenous Peoples' Day, the Redevelopment of the Former Public Works Site, the Sidewalk Facility Map, Wooddale/Valley View and Vision Edina were also active. All commenters in this discussion were from Edina.

Attached are the comments on this topic.

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Discussion: Fire Sprinklers

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In October, State Law was changed to require fire sprinklers in all new homes larger than 4,500 square feet. Eighty-five percent of all fire deaths occur in homes, according to the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA). Automatic fire sprinklers cut the risk of dying in a house fire by 80 pe...

3 Topics 33 Answers Closed 2014-12-01

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Topic: [Required for All?](#)

Given research on the effectiveness of sprinklers, should the City of Edina require all new single-unit residential construction have fire sprinklers installed, regardless of size? Why or why not?

20 Responses

20 Responses



[David Frenkel](#) about 1 month ago

Yes, but its a political hot potato. Residential sprinklers have been in the national building codes for years but only a compromise with the residential building industry allowed the large houses to be required to have sprinklers. New houses with 2 story atrium's are a fire chimney which endanger everybody in a fire including fire fighters. The national assoc of fire fighter chiefs has been pushing for all new residential construction to have sprinklers.

1 Support

comment...

 Reply to David Frenkel



[Paul Nelson](#) 21 days ago

I believe that Edina should stay within the code used for the State of Mn. For homes built that are less than 4,500sf, I believe this should be left up to the individual (and their insurance company) that is building or remodeling the home.

3 Supports

comment...

 Reply to Paul Nelson



[David Frenkel](#) 21 days ago

It would be interesting to see some general cost estimates for putting sprinklers into various sizes of homes.

1 Support

comment...

 Reply to David Frenkel



[Donald James](#) 21 days ago

No! Cost of construction is high. Sprinklers add additional costs with little proven benefits. Most home fires are small and localized in a small part of the home. Most of today's building materials are less flammable. There are fewer smokers (a source of home fires). If most homes were equipped with properly installed and operating smoke detectors and had a hand fire extinguisher or two this would take care of most home fire dangers.

3 Supports

comment...

 Reply to Donald James



[Joel Stegner](#), Community volunteer 21 days ago

For an informed discussion, you need to look at death and injury rates (for residents and firefighters) in homes with and without sprinkler, because what happens to people is more important than cost benefits just based on expenditures vs. property losses. I would put a very high value on preventing a death or person sustaining major burns, which is likely to cost hundreds of thousands in medical bills and a lifetime of suffering.

2 Supports

comment...

Reply to Joel Stegner



Patrick Finley 21 days ago

I concur with comments from Donald James. A new owner always has the option to add sprinklers. I would not support a policy that is more imposing than what state law requires. Maybe a city code requirement that an owner must sign off if they do not want to install sprinklers.

1 Support

comment...

Reply to Patrick Finley



Matt Tourangeau 21 days ago

Here's where they want to take this, build support for all structures, implement and then require it for all remodels. Keep it elective across the board which means rescind the existing law. The sprinkler heads are ugly, they are prone to be inadvertently damaged and set off and stop determining what goes on in my house. I can see twin homes, condo's & townhomes and any other forms of multifamily projects. But get out of the single family homes.

2 Supports

comment...

Reply to Matt Tourangeau



Jim Stromberg 21 days ago

Before moving to Edina, I had a newer home that was "sprinkled". I probably would not have ordered it installed, but living with it as I did, I became a fan. Someone indicated that there was no data that proved it had value. I disagree - there's plenty of info out there, if you look. Even the intro to the topic in this discussion has helpful info in promoting sprinklers. And, to those who want it as an "elective" or only on multi or large homes, I'd suggest that any building - large or small, multi or single family - can catch fire. Sprinklers put out fires, period. And if we start picking and choosing which codes we want our individual homes to have or not have, we eliminate the whole idea of building codes. They are established to protect us, whether they be electrical codes, plumbing codes, general building requirements, or sprinkler codes. Finally, how do we put a price on a human life? Build 'em, 'sprinkle' 'em, and add value to your home.

2 Supports

comment...

Reply to Jim Stromberg



[Scott Busyn](#) 21 days ago

Here are the facts on Dayton's sprinkler mandate upon the homeowners of Minnesota. The Mandate estimated to increase home-buying costs for Minnesota consumers by \$10,000 - \$20,000 per home. Rejecting the advice of the state-appointed Residential Code Advisory Committee and multiple bipartisan legislative efforts to block its implementation, Governor Mark Dayton included a home indoor sprinkler system mandate for many new homes as part of a relatively controversy-free update to the state's building code that was released today.

"Governor Dayton has ignored the facts, the advice of industry experts and the will of Minnesotans by imposing this unnecessary mandate upon Minnesota homeowners trying to build their dream home", said Shawn Nelson, President of the Builders Association of the Twin Cities. "Home sprinkler manufacturers will certainly benefit from this mandate, but it is likely to have an impact on how families purchase homes beginning next year.

The new mandate will require the installation of home indoor sprinkler systems in all newly built single-family homes 4,500-square-feet and above. This mandate threshold includes unfinished basements and is expected to directly impact 30-40 percent of new homes built in the MSP region alone over the next decade.

Newly built homes in Minnesota are a national model for safety. In fact, since the requirement for inter-connected, hard-wired smoke alarms in newly built homes has been in place, there have been zero fire deaths in Minnesota. However, sprinkler mandate supporters have stated their goal is to require home indoor sprinklers in all single-family homes, most recently in an interview on KSTP-TV and during a public administrative hearing reviewing the state building code. Nelson added, "This isn't a case of unintended consequences or an issue slipping through the cracks of government regulation. Governor Dayton has consistently heard from small business people, consumers and legislators who are opposed to this unnecessary mandate. Instead of trusting families to make their own decisions, Governor Dayton has decided to raise the price of their dream home for them."

FACTS ABOUT THE MINNESOTA HOME INDOOR SPRINKLER MANDATE • The 1309 Residential Code Advisory Committee met nine times from October 2011 through February 2012 and voted twice against requiring fire sprinklers in single-family homes. On December 14, 2011 the advisory committee vote was 10-2, and on February 14, 2012 the vote was 8-4 against requiring fire sprinklers in single-family homes.

- Based on a recent review of subcontractor costs, a home indoor sprinkler system mandate would increase the costs of a new four-bedroom, three-bathroom home by at least \$9,000. If the home uses private well water, as many communities in the Twin Cities still do, the costs can rise to \$13,000 to \$20,000 once water pump and well improvements are considered. This cost does not include infrastructure, overhead, profit, taxes, commissions, and mortgage amortization, annual maintenance, higher property taxes, or the cost if the home indoor sprinkler system were to malfunction. With these costs added the mandate price rises to \$10,000-\$20,000 for all homeowners. All costs here reflect a voluntary, competitive market, not costs when a service or product is mandated through government action.
- Of the 43 states that have taken action to update the residential advisory code, 41 have rejected home indoor sprinkler system mandates. Minnesota joins California as one of only two states to adopt this mandate.
- In both 2011 and 2012, the Minnesota Legislature voted by wide and bipartisan margins to reject the home indoor sprinkler mandate – Governor Dayton vetoed the legislation each year. In 2013 and 2014, Governor Dayton refused to negotiate a solution after the Minnesota Senate included similar language in its bonding bills.
- A 2011 statewide survey sponsored by St. Cloud State University found that 87 percent of Minnesotans opposed the home indoor sprinkler system mandate.

2 Supports

comment...

Reply to Scott Busyn



[Scott Busyn](#) 21 days ago

Since interconnected smoke detectors were mandated in 1980, there have been no citizen nor firefighter deaths in a newly constructed home in Minnesota. Excuse me, why do we need sprinklers? Dayton ignored the facts and bi-partisan opposition to his sprinkler mandate. This was a pure play to appease his Big Union lobby. No!!! Edina doesn't want sprinklers in new homes!!! Guess what folks, the next step by Dayton will be to require them in existing older homes as well. Support sprinklers and you will create a \$15K bill for Grandma's older home when she gets her siding replaced.

1 Support

comment...

Reply to Scott Busyn



[Lee Heckenlaible](#) 21 days ago

In 34 years, I've witnessed 1 house fire. The owner of that particular fire did it intentionally. I strongly believe it should be left up to the home owner.

0 Supports

comment...

Reply to Lee Heckenlaible



[Scott Busyn](#) 21 days ago

This topic is another effort by the city of Edina to increase the cost of home ownership in Edina. Over the past two years, the powers to be at Edina have increased your home construction costs by:

+\$2500 demolition escorw costs +\$1500 demoliton permit +\$3000-5000 engineering/survey costs +\$1000-\$1500 temporary ground cover costs +\$15000-\$20000 sprinkler costs +\$10000-\$15000 street repair costs +\$12000 Watershed bonds

Almost \$60,000 in added costs to the homeowners of Edina! Thanks Planning Commission, Fity Council, and City Manager!

1 Support

comment...

Reply to Scott Busyn



[Tim Hutchens](#) 21 days ago

This is gross- Here are the fire death stats and while it doesn;t track new and old construction, there are far from none, and one persons experience does not make that a universal truth. [tps://dps.mn.gov/divisions/sfm/Pages/Fire%20Deaths%20Page.aspx](https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/sfm/Pages/Fire%20Deaths%20Page.aspx).

Cost vs. human life, the size of homes mentioned is sickingly wasteful. Why someone thinks that need a home that large when family sizes are decreasing should be the question.

0 Supports

comment...

Reply to Tim Hutchens



[Gordon Charles](#) 20 days ago

Question: If I remodeled my home to extend it's size to greater than 4,500 sf, would I be required to retrofit the entire home with sprinklers, or just the addition, or not at all since it would not be considered "new construction"? If required, it could get much more costly than the \$10 to 20K estimated.

0 Supports

comment...

Reply to Gordon Charles



[Tom x](#) 20 days ago

The question is for ALL homes to have sprinklers installed--ABSOLUTELY NOT. The safety statistics that have been used to justify this are based on age old data when people smoked in their family homes--this has decreased substantially in recent years. I sold a home in Richfield many years ago. When they came to do the inspection I learned that I had to do a few things to my home before I could sell it--things that had been changed to the law while I had occupied the house--like fire door to a breezeway porch and non-metallic light pulls, etc. Can you imagine having to install sprinkler system in your house when you are trying to sell and may not even be in the area at the time???

0 Supports

comment...

Reply to Tom x



[Jane Hendrickson](#) 20 days ago

My opinion is that we should stick with the state law and that is all (4,500 sq ft and larger homes only), but not extend a requirement for all new construction single unit homes to have sprinkler systems installed. Why would we do more than what is required by Minnesota state law?

0 Supports

comment...

Reply to Jane Hendrickson



[Frank Thomas](#) 20 days ago

The state law is a compromise at best and should be used. We can make just about anything safer by adding cost or rules or regulations. It is cost vs

benefit. Why would this state require sprinklers at a cost of thousands when we don't require motorcyclist to wear a \$100 helmet. Let the homeowner decide.

1 Support

comment...

Reply to Frank Thomas



[Shea Huston](#) 19 days ago

Ridiculous. That pretty much sums it up. Obviously the sprinkler companies (and probably more likely insurance companies) have better lobbyists. I've heard firefighters and other experts comment on this topic and they were all in agreement that sprinklers do nothing to save lives. This does nothing but add cost to the public...like every other government boondoggle.

0 Supports

comment...

Reply to Shea Huston



[Dave Bender](#) 18 days ago

Yes, sprinklers should be required in all buildings. The cost of installation during construction seems small for the benefits -- putting out fires when there is nobody around, reducing the chance that a firefighter or resident being killed.

I think it will also increase the value of the housing stock in Edina, which will benefit all homeowners. Any action that benefits the city as a whole should be explored by the city government.

0 Supports

comment...

Reply to Dave Bender



[William David](#) 15 days ago

Fire sprinklers should be optional. Working smoke detectors and properly maintained furnaces and chimneys are far more cost effective in reducing deaths and property damage. If anything, the City could encourage new construction to have sprinklers by reducing the permit fee, but to mandate fire sprinklers in every new house simple makes housing less affordable for all.

1 Support

comment...

Reply to William David

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Discussion: [Fire Sprinklers](#)

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In October, State Law was changed to require fire sprinklers in all new homes larger than 4,500 square feet. Eighty-five percent of all fire deaths occur in homes, according to the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA). Automatic fire sprinklers cut the risk of dying in a house fire by 80 pe...

3 Topics

33 Answers

Closed 2014-12-01

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Topic: [Cost/Benefit](#)

According to the NFPA, the cost of installing a home fire sprinkler systems averages \$1.35 per sprinklered square foot. Oftentimes, homeowners' can receive a discount on their homeowners insurance when a system is present. Do you think the potential benefit outweighs the cost of the system? Why or why not?

7 Responses

7 Responses



[David Frenkel](#) about 1 month ago

The question should have a little clearer. Is this for new construction or retro? New construction should be required. It is a safety issue just like smoke alarms.

1 Support

comment...

Reply to David Frenkel



[Joel Stegner](#), Community volunteer 21 days ago

If the cost savings calculations don't include prevention of injury and death with sprinklers, it is going to be very short of the truth. Insurance savings get at this issue, but don't necessarily entirely cover it.

0 Supports

comment...

Reply to Joel Stegner



[Jim Stromberg](#) 21 days ago

Someone can always answer this question by stating that it cost them an extra \$1.35 per square foot to build their home, and they lived in it for ten years, and NEVER had a fire - what a waste of money! But I venture to say that their story would be different if their home caught fire, and the sprinkler system saved most of their property, and all of their lives. I know from experience that insurance companies will discount premiums when your home is "sprinkled". Over the years, even without a fire, that initial cost diminishes with those savings. Plus - a "sprinkled" house has more resale value.

1 Support

comment...

Reply to Jim Stromberg



[Scott Busyn](#) 20 days ago

The NFPA is biased and thus quotes a ridiculously low number. The cost for a 4500 sf home will be a minimum of \$12,000 plus added cost for inspections and permits. The new Minnesota code will also require sprinklers over front entries, garages, and covered decks. Watch for a big Union play here by Dayton to implement forced use of sprinkler fitters union installers, further jacking up the cost. Plus, don't forget mandatory annual inspection costs.

0 Supports

comment...

Reply to Scott Busyn



[Scott Busyn](#) 20 days ago

Dayton's ultimate goal is to start with homes over 4500 square feet and then soon add all new construction. Ultimately all new and old homes will be required to have sprinklers if we allow our state an local government to force this initiative down our throats. Again, there have been ZERO deaths (residents or fire fighters) since interconnected sprinklers were required in 1980.

0 Supports

Reply to Scott Busyn



[Shea Huston](#) 19 days ago

Ridiculous. That pretty much sums it up. Obviously the sprinkler companies (and probably more likely insurance companies) have better lobbyists. I've heard firefighters and other experts comment on this topic and they were all in agreement that sprinklers do nothing to save lives. This does nothing but add cost to the public...like every other government boondoggle.

0 Supports

Reply to Shea Huston



[Bill Strait](#) 19 days ago

My home has a sprinkler system. As far as I know it dispenses water. I'd prefer if I could choose my own fire suppression system, so I could have one that takes into account the probable sources of flame in a given room. As it stands, if my computers ever catch on fire, I'll help the situation by pouring water over the electronics. What does the NFPA say about doing that?

0 Supports

Reply to Bill Strait

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3 Topics 33 Answers Closed 2014-12-01

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Topic: [Edina's Fire Calls](#)

In 2013, the Edina Fire Department responded to nearly 900 fire calls, a 19 percent decrease from 10 years prior. 26 fires were in private dwellings (1 or 2 family homes). Additionally, 3 fires were exposure fires (the fire started in another dwelling and spread) Ten or fewer fires per year, on average, are medium to major structure fires. Do you think sprinklers would help further decrease calls and major fires? Why or why not?

6 Responses

6 Responses



[David Frenkel](#) about 1 month ago

Sprinklers do not prevent fires but can help diminish damage and put out fires. This is not a question for the general public. It is a question for a fire fighting expert who has more information about these fires or sprinklers in general. If fires are in non-sprinkled houses then there would be no impact.

1 Support

comment...

Reply to David Frenkel



[Joel Stegner](#), Community volunteer 21 days ago

You should ask your firefighters and/or your chief to answer this one. If they favor sprinkling all residential construction, the City should listen.

0 Supports

comment...

Reply to Joel Stegner



[Jim Stromberg](#) 21 days ago

I agree with both David and Joel - your firefighters are your best source of input here. I would add that it SEEMS to me that "sprinkled" dwellings - large and small - would stand a better chance of being 'minor' fires rather than 'major' fires. But the number of 'calls' to the fire department would probably not change: even "sprinkled", if I've got a fire, I'm calling 911.

1 Support

comment...

Reply to Jim Stromberg



[Scott Busyn](#) 20 days ago

A simple and cost effective way protect a new homeowner from a fire is to install 1/2" type x drywall in the garage and a heat sensing fire detector in the garage. A large percent of house fires start in the garage. This will provide one hour fire protection and homeowner will know there is a fire. Much cheaper than sprinklers.

0 Supports

comment...

Reply to Scott Busyn



[Scott Busyn](#) 20 days ago

Since the main topic is should Edina require sprinklers in all NEW homes, this question is a red herring as it references ALL fire calls and doesn't provide statistics in how many NEW CONSTRUCTION fire calls Edina receives. I am guessing the relevant statistics would not fit the conclusion the Fire Chief is trying to reach by posting this topic.

0 Supports

comment...

[Reply to Scott Busyn](#)



[Shea Huston](#) 19 days ago

Ridiculous. That pretty much sums it up. Obviously the sprinkler companies (and probably more likely insurance companies) have better lobbyists. I've heard firefighters and other experts comment on this topic and they were all in agreement that sprinklers do nothing to save lives. This does nothing but add cost to the public...like every other government boondoggle.

0 Supports

comment...

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