

Why should I install a sprinkler system in my house?

Residential sprinkler systems provide an added level of protection beyond smoke detectors and assist in providing extra time to vacate a residence in case of a fire. The City of Galesburg wants to make contractors and home owners in the process of building a new home aware of some myths and frequently asked questions about residential sprinklers. While the City does not require a sprinkler system to be installed, you are encouraged to research the costs and benefits of installing a sprinkler system in your new home.

Residential Sprinkler Myths

Myth: If one sprinkler goes off, they all go off.

Fact: Unlike scenes from Hollywood movies, sprinklers activate independently and only the sprinkler closest to the fire will spray water.

Myth: Sprinklers will leak.

Fact: Home sprinkler systems are just as reliable as the other plumbing systems in our homes.

Myth: Water damage from sprinklers is worse than fire damage.

Fact: The property loss in a sprinklered home fire is a small fraction of the typical loss in an unsprinklered home where a fire can spread much faster and cause substantial heat and smoke damage throughout the entire home.

Myth: Sprinklers will freeze in winter.

Fact: The national installation standard provides guidance for proper installation in cold regions. Home sprinkler piping is protected from freezing just as other home plumbing pipes are.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Is the fire sprinkler system a stand-alone system or is it part of the plumbing system?

A: The fire sprinkler system can either be separate from the domestic plumbing system, or it can be a multipurpose fire sprinkler system. A multipurpose fire sprinkler system supplies domestic water to both the fire sprinklers and the plumbing fixtures.

Q: What type of piping can be used?

A: Piping allowed for fire sprinkler systems can be metallic (typically copper), or non-metallic (CPVC or PEX).

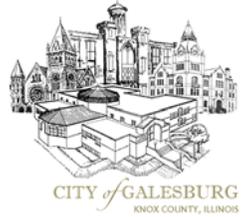
Q: What is the cost of the fire sprinkler system?

A: Cost is affected by several components of the fire sprinkler system. Most significantly by the type of water source (municipal water system or private well), the type of piping (metallic or non-metallic), and pipe design (stand-alone or multipurpose).

A recent study by the National Fire Protection Research Foundation found prices ranging from \$0.38 to \$3.66 per square foot of sprinklered space. The bottom of the range consisted of dwellings/townhouses with a multipurpose fire sprinkler system of non-metallic piping and in an area served by a municipal water system. The top of the range consists of dwellings/townhouses with a fire sprinkler system of metallic piping and in an area where a private well and pump were required for water service. The installation of a multipurpose fire sprinkler system resulted in a cost reduction of about 33%.

Q: Are smoke alarms still installed when a fire sprinkler system is installed?

A: Yes. Smoke alarms are still required to be installed. Smoke alarms react to smoke, and fire sprinklers react to heat. The smoke alarms are designed to waken and warn the occupants that a fire has occurred. The fire sprinkler system is designed to allow time for the occupants to escape by slowing the spread of fire.



Additional Resources

Planning and Public Works Department
309-345-3617

Galesburg Fire Marshall
309-345-3757

The City of Galesburg Fire Department:
www.ci.galesburg.il.us/city_initiatives/fire_department/

View a comparison video of a residential fire with and without sprinklers:
www.ci.galesburg.il.us/city_initiatives/about_fire/

Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition:
www.homefiresprinkler.org/

National Fire Protection Association:
www.nfpa.org

U.S. Fire Administration:
www.usfa.fema.gov/citizens/home_fire_prev/sprinklers/

Other items to consider

The addition of a fire sprinkler system in a residential home does not eliminate the need for smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors or having an evacuation plan.

The best thing that a family can have in case of a fire is an escape plan in place. Once a plan is in place be sure to practice that plan, especially if there are children in the house.

It is also best to consider the option of fire sprinklers before starting construction. It is possible that the water line coming into the house will need to be increased in size to accommodate the sprinkler system.

If you decide on installing a sprinkler system in your home learn how to maintain the system. Some systems do not require any maintenance, while others may require a sprinkler technician to service the system.