



CONNECTICUT FIRE MARSHALS ASSOCIATION

March 3, 2011

House Bill 6378 An Act Requiring An Automatic Fire Extinguishing System In All One And Two Family Homes

The Connecticut Fire Marshals Association **SUPPORTS** this bill

Members of the Connecticut Public Safety and Security Committee

My name is Patrick Tourville and I'm the President of the Connecticut Fire Marshals Association which represents 400 fire service professionals including Fire Marshals, Deputy Fire Marshals, Fire Inspectors, Public Fire Educators and Fire Investigators in the state of Connecticut. Thank you for allowing me to speak in support of House Bill 6378.

I sit before you today pleased to say that residential fire sprinklers have been adopted in all the national model codes across the country. The need has been recognized and the professionals have decided to use this affordable, simple and effective technology to save lives and property where the need lies most – one and two family homes. To date the most fire fatalities still occur in one and two family homes both in Connecticut and nationally.

There is no dispute that residential fire sprinklers have and continue to;

- Save lives of building occupants.
- Save lives of firefighters called to respond to a home fire.
- Offset the risk of premature building collapse posed to firefighters and occupants by lightweight construction components when they are involved in fire.
- Reduce property loss caused by fire.
- Reduce the carbon footprint a house fire leaves on the environment.
- Conserves water during fire suppression efforts.

Fire Sprinklers have been in use for more than a century protecting public occupancies, industrial and commercial properties. Technology has advanced allowing for the same protection in residential homes. Although similar in many ways the residential fire sprinkler is designed with one objective, life safety.

These systems are designed to provide for 10 minutes of water to be delivered to the system to allow the occupants of the home to evacuate safely. We know;

- Home fire sprinkler systems respond quickly to reduce the heat, flames, and smoke from a fire, giving families valuable time to get to safety.
- Roughly 90 percent of the time, just one sprinkler operates.
- Each individual sprinkler is designed and calibrated to go off when it senses a significant heat change.
- Only the sprinkler closest to the fire will activate, spraying water directly on the fire.
- In home fires deemed large enough to activate an operational sprinkler, sprinklers operated and were effective in 92 percent of reported fires.

This nationally recognized technology is the next step in reducing the fire fatalities in one and two family homes that had been addressed back in 1973 from the America Burning Report. Although smoke detectors have been required in residences since 1985 this technology was quite controversial in its day, but is credited for saving many lives. These life-saving systems respond quickly and effectively to the presence of a nearby fire. Sprinkler systems provide additional benefits, on top of the benefits already provided by smoke alarms.

- Working smoke alarms cut the risk of dying in a reported home fire by about 50 percent.
- If you have a reported fire in your home, the risk of dying decreases by about 80 percent when sprinklers are present.

I ask each of you that have a family to think for a moment. The smoke detector sounds in your home. The children or a loved one are asleep in their bedrooms upstairs. Your spouse is in the other room. Suddenly you see smoke so thick to go through. You exit the home only to find your spouse. What will you do next? Will you try to go back into the building for a loved one or your children?

Chances are you answered I'm going to find my children or loved one, a possible fatal mistake for all involved.

If residential fire sprinklers are present within your home everyone's chances of survival increased significantly for about \$1.61 a square foot during new construction.

This technology has already been installed in homes throughout Connecticut. It is the future for reducing fire fatalities across the state. The implementation date of 2013 is an achievable time frame for the trades, officials and all involved to plan for the transition of this requirement in new home construction across the state.