

HB6777

Residential Sprinklers

2/19/2015

My name is Albert Bassett, currently a Fire Captain and a 21 year member in the Norwalk CT Fire Department. I have lived in the city of Norwalk my entire life. I have and always will pride myself on the professionalism and aggressiveness of the members of our fire department. Our fire department meets or exceeds most national response standards. I think the property we save far out-weighs the property lost.

However, I also believe the only guaranteed way to save lives is either to prevent a fire from starting or rapid application of water on an early stage fire. I knew I cannot prevent every fire from starting, technology fails, nature has its way, or an accident can happen. I decided to protect my family with the rapid application of water by installing residential sprinklers.

My decision and "oh yea moment" started on a summer night hanging out with neighbors. As a firefighter I routinely answer questions about safety concerns and things that scare people. My neighbor with three children, roughly the same ages of my own, tells me of a close call they had.

Their children were in bed and for some reason she decided to poke in her oldest son's room, something she never does. Upon poking her head in she smelled smoke and noticed a haze in the room. Quickly looking around she found a T-shirt smoldering on top of a desk lamp. She quickly extinguished it without even waking her son up. The smoke detector required in the hallway did not even activate, the sleeping 10 year-old probably would not have heard it anyway.

Today bedrooms are furnished with and clothes are made from synthetic materials that both give off toxic gases and burn fast enough to completely engulf the room in three minutes. That engulfment is above 1200 degrees, a temperature that is in no way survivable. It reaches those dangerous levels much sooner than the best fire departments can receive and respond to a call for help.

I know my residential sprinkler will rapidly apply water to the fire when the temperature at the ceiling reaches 135 degrees. At 135 degrees at the ceiling the conditions in the room are survivable. To you the sleeping occupant, it is like sleeping next to the fireplace on a winter night.

When I was building my home in 2007/08 the first priority for my potential contractor was the ability and the willingness to provide my residential sprinkler system. All design and construction changes worked around the installation of the sprinkler system.

I know I can go to the firehouse for my 24 hour shift away from home with piece of mind that my family is protected from fire the best they can be. My kids may not enjoy waking up to the ice bucket challenge or upset the Xbox has short circuited because the application of rapid water to put out the fire ruined the circuit board but they will be able to say my dad's a firefighter, he saved my life, and he's hero.