

Macomb Township Fire Department

Fire Safety Tips

January 2009

“Myth Buster” Edition (part 2)



This month's edition of Fire Safety Tips is the second installment that will address commonly held myths pertaining to fire safety. Last month we talked about how Hollywood movie makers do a really poor job with its portrayal of a house fire. They would have us believe that a fire in a home gives you plenty of time to escape, isn't very dangerous, and caused mostly by accidents that we have no control over.

According to information compiled by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), 8 out of 10 fatal fires happen at home. Most of these occur at night when we are sleeping. In the simplest terms, there are two basic ways that citizens can protect themselves from fire: Remove yourselves from a hazardous area *or* remove the hazards associated with a fire. The first way includes such things as early detection and escape planning. The second includes things like preventing a fire from occurring with fire-safe practices, sleeping with your door closed, fire extinguishers and residential sprinkler systems, etc.

This past September, the International Code Council (ICC) overwhelmingly voted to support a code proposal that requires all newly built one- and two-family homes to be equipped with residential fire sprinkler systems. This code proposal, named RB64, will take effect on January 1, 2011. This huge step in the direction of home fire safety in the United States will add only about one percent to the cost of a new home.

So first, let's dispel a few rumors about residential sprinkler systems. Secondly, let's take a look at how the United States measures up in the world when it comes to keeping our citizens safe from fire.

Residential Sprinkler Systems

MYTH

If one goes off, they all go off.

REALITY

Sprinkler heads react to temperatures in each room independently. Only the sprinklers over the fire will activate. Ninety percent of fires are controlled by the opening of only one sprinkler head.

MYTH

If I burn the toast or if someone smokes it will cause the sprinkler to discharge.

REALITY

Completely false! Sprinklers cannot and will not respond to smoke. They are heat responsive and only respond to the high temperature associated with a fire – about 135 to 165 degrees.

MYTH

Water damage from a sprinkler will be more extensive than fire damage.

REALITY

In a study done by the Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition, the average fire loss per single family sprinklered fire incident was \$2,166 (as compared to the average fire loss per unsprinklered residential incident: \$45,019).

MYTH

Sprinklers could easily accidentally go off, leak or freeze causing severe water damage to a home.

REALITY

Sprinklers and their piping are pressure-tested at two to three times higher than your plumbing system. This makes the chance of a leaking sprinkler practically nil. Like your plumbing pipes, properly installed sprinkler pipes are protected from freezing. They do not normally leak because, unlike faucets and other fixtures that are operated throughout their lives, fire sprinklers remain closed until needed. So they do not receive the wear and tear of daily use.

Our Place in the World

MYTH

The United States leads the way with fire safety when compared to other industrialized nations.

REALITY

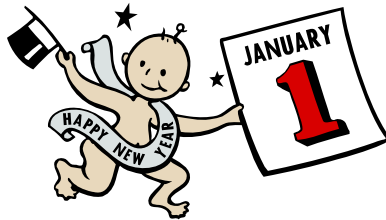
The United States and Canada have the worst fire death rate of all industrialized countries for which we have comparable data, according to a United States Fire Administration (USFA) study. According to the USFA report *America Burning, Recommissioned: Principal Findings and Recommendations*, the fire problem in America remains as severe as it was 30 years ago. Although there have been improvements over the past 30 years—fires are down by 21 percent per capita, deaths and injuries by 27 percent, and adjusted dollar loss by 28 percent—we still exceed many European nations by about two to three

times in fire deaths and the European average by about 20 percent. It seems we have a lot to learn and a lot to improve on!

If this information we have provided for you prevents one injury or saves even one life, it has been worth it. Let us know how you feel and if this has helped in any way.

If you have questions or need help with implementing any of these fire safety tips please call **Macomb Township Fire Department at (586) 286-0027.**

HAPPY NEW YEAR!



From your Friends at Macomb Township Fire Department

REFERENCES



National Fire Protection Association



United States Fire Administration



Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition



Fire Engineering Magazine

Licht, Richard

Clarifying the Issue of Fire Protection Balance



Macomb Township Fire Department
Safe from Fire Initiative