



NFSA e-Bulletin

NFSA WELCOMES NEW NIST COST-EFFECTIVENESS REPORT

A new study released by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) concludes that the benefits outweigh the costs associated with the installation and use of a fire sprinkler system in new single family homes. The study, which considered different styles of single-family homes (colonial, ranch and townhouse), states that benefits include not only reductions in civilian fatalities and injuries, but in homeowner insurance premiums, uninsured direct property losses, and uninsured indirect costs. According to John Viniello, President of the National Fire Sprinkler Association (NFSA), "This report comes at a critical time when the nation's code-writers are considering whether to require the installation of sprinklers in all new dwellings. The report shows that costs are lower with sprinkler protection than without, and should provide the necessary impetus to finally address the residential fire problem."

Russell P. Fleming, P.E. Executive Vice President for the National Fire Sprinkler Association, applauded the new study on the basis that it recognizes the cost effectiveness of dwelling sprinklers, but expressed caution about wording within the study that suggests multi-purpose systems (combined sprinkler and plumbing systems) are more cost-effective than standalone sprinkler systems. He noted that the cost side of this new report is based on a separate 2005 NIST study that compared standalone vs. multi-purpose piping systems, but failed to use a level playing field. "We cooperated with NIST in the 2005 cost study by obtaining real cost estimates for the standalone systems from member contractors based in California, Illinois, and Florida. These contractors bid the systems as they do regularly in their own marketplaces. We later found that the information for the multi-purpose system was not submitted based on actual contractor pricing, but was simply provided by the manufacturer of piping and fittings for the multi-purpose system."

Viniello agreed with this point, stating "In the real world, the marketplace will decide which type of system is most cost-effective for a given market area. To date, most communities that have adopted ordinances requiring sprinkler systems in all new dwellings are finding that dedicated fire sprinkler contractors using standalone systems are providing the sprinkler protection."

The September 2007 report is available at the www.nist.gov website.

About the National Fire Sprinkler Association

Established in 1905, the National Fire Sprinkler Association (NFSA) is the voice of the fire sprinkler industry. NFSA leads the drive to get life-saving and property protecting fire sprinklers into all buildings; provides support and resources for its members – fire sprinkler contractors, manufacturers and suppliers; and educates authorities having jurisdiction on fire protection issues. Headquartered in Patterson, N.Y., NFSA has regional operations offices throughout the country. www.nfsa.org.