Residential Fire Sprinkler Systems

Tips for Taking Care of Your Investment

A residential sprinkler system is an investment in your family's safety. Whether your fire sprinkler system is brand new or over 20 years old, these valuable tips can help you maintain and protect the investment that protects your loved ones now and into the future.

WHO CAN YOU CALL FOR HELP?

Just like your furnace, water heater, chimney, and dryer vents, your fire sprinkler system should be maintained by having it tested and inspected on a regular basis. Contact a licensed sprinkler contractor so your system can be tested by a qualified technician.

A sprinkler company can test and inspect the system, inform you of any fire sprinkler heads that have been recalled, test systems equipped with a pump, and check the water levels of water tanks that may be attached to the system. If you have a flow switch, they can test it to make sure that when a fire sprinkler head activates the horn and strobe installed on your system works properly.

To find out who installed you sprinkler system, look for a tag or placard attached to you sprinkler system where the water supply for the system comes into your home. You can also contact the builder that built your home or the Excelsior Fire District.

Keep in mind, the sprinkler company that installed your system many have merged with another company, changed company names, or is no longer in business.

You do not have to use the same company that installed your sprinkler system to inspect and test your system. You can find a licensed fire sprinkler company, fire sprinkler contractor, or fire protection company by going the Minnesota State Fire Marshals web site at https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/sfm/programs-services/Pages/fire-Sprinkler.aspx

Keep the name, phone number, and emergency number of your sprinkler company on file, posted by the fire sprinkler system valves, and saved electronically.

Verify that your insurance company knows there is a residential fire sprinkler system installed in your home. Some insurance companies offer reduced premiums or discounts ranging from 5% to 15%.

MAINTENANCE AND TESTING

Visually inspect all the fire sprinklers heads in your home to make sure if they activate nothing will obstruct the spray pattern.

Make sure all the valves supplying water to your fire sprinkler system are open so when a sprinkler head is activated water will flow out of the head.

If water storage tanks are part of your sprinkler system, make sure the required water level is always maintained. Once a sprinkler head is activated, it needs an ample supply of water to prevent the deadly occurrence of flashover.

There may be a dry sprinkler head installed by the door going from your garage into your home. It is a special sprinkler head that must be tested and/or replaced every 10 years.

If your system is equipped with a pump, it should be tested annually. Contact a sprinkler contractor to have your pump tested.

Like the plumbing in your home, the fire sprinkler system must be insulated and protected from freezing temperatures during the winter months. Consult your fire sprinkler contractor before moving, adding, or changing insulation around your sprinkler piping.

Antifreeze systems should have annual maintenance. The antifreeze solution should be tested and/or replaced on a regular basis. Over time the solution can break down and cause the pipes to freeze.

ITEMS THAT MAY AFFECT HOW YOUR SPRINKLER SYSTEM WORKS

If you have added an irrigation system, water softener, water treatment system, or other appliance to your domestic water system since your fire sprinkler system was installed, contact your sprinkle contractor to make sure these additions will not affect capabilities of your sprinkler system.

Give sprinkler heads clearance by making an imaginary 18” globe around sprinkler heads starting with the bottom of the head (deflector plate). Keep storage, decorations, and obstructions outside of the globe.

Never paint a sprinkler head or concealer plate that hides a sprinkler head. Do not allow over spraying from a paint gun to spray on to a sprinkler head. If you have recently had your ceilings or walls painted, make sure the concealer plates on your fire sprinkler system were not painted. Many times the plate will get painted over and will get stuck to the painted surface. Any painted concealer plate needs to be replaced immediately. Painting over your fire sprinkler system may void your warranty.

Openings around fire sprinkler heads can delay activation of the sprinkler head because the heat from the fire goes around the head instead of collecting in it. Holes or openings in walls and ceilings can also spread the fire to places behind or above the fire sprinkler heads. Always

keep attics, crawl spaces, and plumbing access panels closed. If holes must be cut in walls or ceilings to make repairs, cover them up with sheet rock or plywood after working on the repair. Holes in walls and ceilings as small as a pencil are big enough for heat to spread fire.

If you are going to remodel by changing a wall or putting on a large addition to your home, include your sprinkler contractor in the process.

Never hang, attach, or tape items to the fire sprinkler heads or sprinkler piping. Using a sprinkler head as a hook can impede its effectiveness in a fire, cause damage, break the glass tube in the fire sprinkler, and cause the head to activate.

The areas sprinkler piping runs through must always be maintained at 40 degrees. If you are going on a winter vacation or closing your home up for the winter, do not turn the thermostat down so low that the temperature around sprinkler piping could dip below 40 degrees.

WHAT TYPE OF SYSTEM IS INSTALLED IN YOUR HOME

There are two basic types of sprinkler systems, stand-alone residential sprinkler systems and multipurpose residential sprinkler systems.

A stand-alone sprinkler system's water supply is separate from the domestic water system using mainly orange CPVC pipe or black steel pipe. A multi-purpose system runs with the domestic water through clear PEX or Wirsbo Aquapex pipe and in some applications orange CPVC pipe.

Antifreeze Systems are specialized systems for areas that are not heated to at least 40 degrees at all times. A placard should be on your system identify it as an Antifreeze System.

Please call the Excelsior Fire District if you need help determining the type of system you have.

To learn more about residential fire sprinkler systems check out the YouTube videos below.

HSFC Built for Life Part 1
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kA18ya-Gx50

HSFC Living With Fire Sprinkler Systems
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pejpm2Vt-y4

The Uponor Aquasafe Fire Safety System
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XeM9y8tIaVI

For more information on residential sprinkler refer to NFPA 13D or NFPA 13R.

If you have any questions call EFD Fire Inspector, Kellie Murphy-Ringate at 952-9602-1692 or e-mail at kmurphyringate@excelsiorfire.org

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