

Fire sprinkler systems soon to be required in your new home

(ARA) — If you're planning on building a new home after this year, you should also be planning on installing a fire sprinkler system. That's because recent national code changes require that new single-family homes built after Jan. 1, 2011, have sprinklers, although every state has the option to adopt the code on its own timeline, so it's important to check your local code for the effective date in your area.

The reason for the code change is obvious. Fire sprinkler systems have been proven to save lives. Thousands of people — many of whom are children or seniors — die each year in fires that quickly spread in homes without fire sprinklers. Smoke detectors alone, while certainly an important first step, do not provide added time for you and your family to escape.

Fire sprinklers can extend your window of opportunity for escaping a fire, and you should evacuate quickly to make the most of that extra time. National statistics show that having a fire sprinkler system in your home can actually double your chances of escaping a fire and minimizing property damage. And by installing a sprinkler system, you might also realize a savings on your homeowners' insurance.

Understanding the value of fire sprinkler systems and why the new code requires them is only part of protecting your family and home. "The reality is that there are more options for homeowners than ever before," says Matthew Kuwath of BlazeMaster Fire Sprinkler Systems. "Your builder can certainly help you evaluate your alternatives. But the more you know, the better prepared you are to make an educated decision."

Here are a few questions you should ask regarding the installation of a life safety system in your new home:

How much should you expect to spend on the installation of a fire sprinkler system?

When installed during the construction process, the average system runs about 1.5 percent of the total cost of the home. Actual costs vary depending on the type of piping material used. When amortized over a typical 30-year mortgage, this cost equates to about one cup of gourmet coffee per month. Some piping materials, such as chlorinated polyvinyl chloride (CPVC), a high-performance plastic specially listed for fire sprinkler systems, offer additional savings over other piping systems due to superior hydraulics and a fast and easy installation method. This translates into an overall cost savings for the homeowner.

Should you be concerned about potential water damage from the sprinkler system?

The reality is that a residential fire sprinkler system discharges considerably less water than a fireman's hose. According to the Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition, a fire hose, on average, uses more than 8 1/2 times more water than a standard sprinkler system. In addition, modern systems are designed to only activate those heads in the immediate area of

the fire and not all the heads in the system. And, a sprinkler head will only be activated when it senses intense heat.

Do all residential fire sprinkler systems work the same?

At a very basic level, all fire sprinkler systems are designed to do one thing — discharge water in the area of the fire to allow occupants sufficient time to escape unharmed. However, that's not to say that all fire sprinkler systems are the same. Piping materials and overall design of the system can be very different with some offering significant cost and performance advantages.

From a material standpoint, the piping can be metallic or plastic. Metallic systems are not installed as frequently today due to problems with corrosion and escalating material costs. BlazeMaster pipe and fittings have become the most specified non-metallic fire sprinkler system in the world for several reasons. The material is corrosion resistant and provides a superior safety performance over other plastics because it does not support combustion and will not continue to burn after the ignition source has been extinguished. In addition, it is lightweight, fast and easy to install, which minimizes labor costs.

From a design standpoint, a fire sprinkler system can operate independently or in combination with the plumbing system. These combination systems are most commonly referred to as multi-purpose systems. Due to reliability concerns, however, they are not approved for use in all regions of the country.

What should you know about the specific system being installed in your home?

Both the pipe manufacturer and installer need to have a solid track record. BlazeMaster fire sprinkler systems, for example, have been successfully installed for more than 25 years both in the U.S. and abroad and are supported by a comprehensive training and technical support program. In addition, homeowners receive easy-to-understand materials relative to general operation and maintenance of the system.

It's your home and your family. So make sure you have the facts to make the best decision. To learn more about home fire sprinkler options, visit www.blazemaster.com or www.homefiresprinkler.org.

Wood Staining 101:

Easy Refinishing Projects For The DIYer

(MS) — Few things add style and elegance to a room like the rich look of wood furniture. But, has the wood furniture in your home lost its luster? What about the flea market find that doesn't quite match the other wood pieces in your home? It's easy to give wood surfaces a new, long-lasting finish with stain and a protective finish. Just follow these simple steps from the wood finishing experts at Rust-Oleum:

Tip # 1: Preparation is the key to a beautiful staining project. Start your project by sanding. Sanding allows stain to adhere and penetrate the wood, providing a better looking, more even appearance. Then clean the wood surface thoroughly and wipe away any sanding residue with a damp sponge. Before applying stain to the entire project, test it out on an inconspicuous area of the project. For example, if you are staining a chair, turn it over and stain the bottom of the seat to test the color.

Tip #2: Bring out wood's natural beauty with a colored stain. Stains add a luxurious, warm finish that'll enhance its appearance and add classic style to any room. Try deeper stains like Cabernet and Dark Walnut for a rich, traditional feel. Or, use lighter colors like Golden Pecan or Golden Oak for a more natural look.

Think stains are messy and hard to apply? Not anymore! Varathane Foam Stain — Rust-Oleum's latest Varathane brand innovation — eliminates the drips and dribbles of traditional stain. Unlike liquid stains, this foaming stain formula takes the mess out



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of stain application, and gives you ultimate control. Just foam on the stain, and rub it in with a lint-free rag — it's that easy!

Tip #3: The best way to make your stain look better and last longer is by protecting your project from spills, stains, scratches, and normal wear-and-tear with a clear finish. Try using

a polyurethane like Varathane Diamond Polyurethane. The water-based polyurethane goes on clear and stays crystal clear — unlike most oil-based finishes, it won't change the appearance of the stain. Plus, it's low odor and great for interior use! The durable topcoat is a great way to enhance the beauty of your wood

staining project, and keep it looking great for years to come.

For more information on Varathane products visit www.rustoleum.com. Need ideas and tips for your wood finishing projects? Visit www.woodanswers.com.

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