



## **The Necessary and Positive Impact of Residential Fire Sprinklers**

### **Written Statement of**

**Chief Jack Parow, MA, EFO, CFO  
President and Chairman of the Board, International Association of Fire Chiefs**

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The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) strongly supports fire sprinkler installation in all new construction, including one and two-family dwellings, in order to protect the public, fire service personnel, structures and their contents, the economy and the environment.

Each year in the United States, an average of 3,000 residents and 100 firefighters are lost to the effects of fire; thousands more are injured. Additionally, \$18 billion in property loss is averaged each year. It is just one segment of the total \$347 billion annual price tag associated with the cost of fire in the U.S.

By upholding residential fire sprinkler codes as an integral part of a community's fire protection, we have the opportunity to reduce the number of home fire deaths and injuries, avert the loss of billions of dollars annually, and build the fire protection system we need now to address the current and emerging threats to our communities. The increased demands on today's local fire departments—usually without increased staffing or funding—and the changes in building materials and home contents, all increase the risk to the public and its public safety personnel. It's time to add active fire protection as a baseline in all new construction.

Fire prevention and response methodology must adapt to the changes we are seeing in the built environment. As new technologies and construction techniques (light-weight construction being one example) become the building industry's norm, and building contents become more flammable and more toxic as they burn, we in the public safety arena must change the way we protect our communities. We must meet these new challenges with a proactive approach, rather than the reactive approach of the past. The construction techniques allowed in the building code and new types of furnishings necessitate the additional protection of built-in fire protection in homes as well as in commercial settings. Fire sprinklers will provide the active protection needed to reduce the fire risk of these new building components to residents and firefighters.

The changing threat is the end result of creating efficiencies in the building, manufacturing and home furnishing industry. The consequences of these actions require the unprecedented response efficiencies that automatic fire sprinklers provide in emergency response time, economic investments, and environmental impact (such as reducing water usage and fire-based emissions by early and targeted suppression.)

The IAFC firmly opposes code changes and regulations that prevent or discourage the installation of fire sprinklers and/or ties the hands of fire service leaders by restricting them from implementing the best protection for their community's needs. We also stand against fees and charges that create economic barriers to the installation of fire sprinklers. We support incentives for business owners and citizens to protect their buildings, thus protecting those who live in our communities, their property and fire service personnel.

The International Association of Fire Chiefs strongly believes that all citizens should be protected against death, injury, and property loss resulting from fire in their residence. Furthermore, that all homes should be equipped with both smoke alarms and automatic fire sprinklers. The IAFC fully supports all efforts to reduce the tragic toll of fire losses in this nation, including the adoption of the International Residential Code that requires automatic sprinklers in all new residential construction.

I support these principles wholeheartedly, not only as the president and chairman of the board of the IAFC, but as a fire service professional who has dedicated my career to the safety of the residents and responders of the state of Massachusetts. As I travel the country representing fire service leaders from around the world, I am proud to be able to speak of and draw upon the historical leadership Massachusetts has shown and results our courage has produced in reducing fire-related fatalities. Now is not the time to rest on our laurels. Now is the time to meet new challenges with new solutions. Now is the time for Massachusetts to demonstrate its leadership and embrace IRC codes requiring residential fire sprinklers.