

**NIFSAB'S USE OF HOME FIRE SPRINKLER COALITION RESOURCES
TO SUPPORT LOCAL RESIDENTIAL FIRE SPRINKLER ORDINANCE EFFORTS**

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Program/Project Overview

NIFSAB has worked to assist fire officials in northern Illinois in their efforts to add stand-alone residential fire sprinkler ordinances, and to adopt the national model codes containing residential fire sprinkler provisions for new single-family homes. NIFSAB undertook this project in an effort to reduce residential fire deaths and injuries among civilians and first responders. Our objective was to be the education, information and resource center locally for any fire or building official who contacted us for assistance. To ensure that we provided high quality, accurate and effective sprinkler information that addressed the questions and concerns of key stakeholders, NIFSAB focused on NFPA 13D installation requirements and used materials from the nonprofit Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition (HFSC).

Formative Evaluation-Planning

NIFSAB began the effort in 1999 and due to its steady progress it has become an ongoing program. Our effort is informed by data from the Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal (OSFM) and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). We selected HFSC materials for these main reasons: 1) exclusive focus on non-commercial education; 2) materials are created with input of fire service and other safety experts; 3) materials are tested among end users and revised as needed before distribution; and 4) HFSC has demonstrated widespread effectiveness in overcoming myths, misinformation and lacking interest.

Process Evaluation--Implementation

The program was initiated in the 10-county area (7.8 million population) in northeastern Illinois surrounding Chicago. When we began only two of over the more than 300 municipalities and fire districts had 13D ordinances. We invited fire officials to attend group Residential Fire Sprinkler Summits where we educated about NFPA 13D systems and provided data and other information to dispel myths and misinformation. We shared a range of HFSC's printed educational tools. Summits began modestly with seven towns in attendance (2003), but grew year to year to 250 in attendance representing over 140 towns and fire districts. The initial documents used were the HFSC Protect What you value most Controlling the home fire Threat brochure, and the Residential Fire Sprinkler Public Education Guide a five step planning process". Nothing else was available at that time, and those documents and reports are still very competent today!

It was at these meetings that we developed the need to collect data on successful activations. Demonstration houses were utilized for a variety of events and localities (over 45 homes completed), using donated labor, materials, or Grants. The concept was to install the fire sprinkler system at the appropriate stage of construction and then host an "open house" for all area fire and building officials to walk through before the walls went up, and while the work was still being done. This gave officials the opportunity to ask technical and code questions of technicians, contractors, and laborers. The builders were provided with HFSC's Builder Kit and brochure. Insurance and real estate agents were each provided with HFSC's targeted brochures for their professions. Those in Public Works received HFSC's Water Purveyors brochure. All elected officials, trustees and aldermen received the DVD HFSC created specifically for them. When the homeowner took possession, they received HFSC the Living With Sprinklers kit. We completed 45 homes in this time frame using the donation/grant process.

We first started using live side-by-side demonstrations in 2000 to show the speed of fire, flashover, the use of smoke detectors, and the speed of a home fire sprinkler. We improved on our initial design to get mobility. HFSC based it's side-by-side kit on our model. Since the first demo, we've conducted 363 side-by-side demos with more than 200 fire departments. The program has shifted from a "full service" type program to a "self service" program, with the fire department utilizing the HFSC side-by-side kit for complete self-sufficiency.

Impact Evaluation--Short Term Results

There were 2 municipalities with NFPA 13D ordinances when we started in 1999, and now there are 75.

Outcome Evaluation--Long Term Result

With the number of communities passing ordinances at the level it is now, it is no longer considered an anomaly or lone wolf syndrome to pass a residential fire sprinkler ordinance. In the early years, there was little documentation and support data; now there is a great quantity of professional documents and reports from HFSC and NFPA for the fire chief to utilize. HFSC has added new educational tools every year that we have utilized as they came on line. Also, in the early years, there was little practical experience in type of installation, plan review, testing, maintenance, fire insurance and cost data; now there are thousands of protected homes to draw data from. So falsehoods and inaccurate information can be countered quickly, leaving the antagonist with loss credibility.

Recommendations for Others

Do not take anything for granted and educate and solidify your base of fire officials. Basic fire sprinkler education is needed throughout your area.

Encourage all departments to sign up for the HFSC Built For Life Fire Department Program so they will all begin to receive the grant material to begin to educate themselves and their department officials and firefighters. Use every opportunity throughout the year (not just Fire Prevention Week) to educate the general public, your firefighters and elected officials. At this time, 163 Illinois departments are signed on.

Pitfalls: Emails, electronic media is recommended wherever possible, but do not totally rely on it; handing the mayor, aldermen or trustees the Elected Officials DVD is much more effective face to face than other methods. Make it personal. But follow up with Social Media Facebook, Twitter, venues, and a Business oriented venue like LinkedIn.

Conclusion

A successful effort can be made in any area over a short term time period for individual communities and a relative long-term period by using all of the available resources from HFSC in your program. The key is to be creative in managing all of your resources to bring out the residential fire sprinkler message that is contained in the HFSC document chosen.

Embracing the Built For Life Fire Department concept and utilizing the guidance, samples, materials and information will help you reach your fire safe community much earlier. Sign up now as a Built for Life Fire Department! HFSC: www.HomeFireSprinkler.org

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NFPA: FireSprinklerInitiative. www.firesprinklerinitiative.com