Facts & Myths

Automatic sprinkler systems have enjoyed an enviable record of protecting life and property for over 100 years. Yet, there are still common misunderstandings about the operation and effectiveness of automatic fire sprinkler systems:

✗ MYTH:
"Water damage from a sprinkler system will be more extensive than fire damage."

✔ FACT:
Water damage from a home sprinkler system will be much less severe than the damage caused by water from fire-fighting hose lines or smoke and fire damage if the fire goes unabated.

Property losses are 85% less in residences with fire sprinklers compared to those without sprinklers.

Quick response sprinklers release 13-24 gallons of water per minute compared to 250 gallons per minute released by a fire hose.

✗ MYTH:
"A smoke detector is enough protection."

✔ FACT:
Smoke detectors can save lives by providing a warning system but can do nothing to extinguish a fire or protect those physically unable to escape on their own, such as the elderly or small children.

Though nearly 90% of U.S. homes have at least one smoke detector, only 60% have working detectors, often because of dead or missing batteries.

As the percentage of homes in America that were "protected" with smoke detectors increased from zero to more than 70%, the number of fire deaths in homes did not significantly decrease.

✗ MYTH:
"When a fire occurs, every sprinkler head goes off."

✔ FACT:
Sprinkler heads are individually activated by heat.

Residential fires are usually controlled with one operating sprinkler head.

90% of all commercial fires are controlled with six or fewer heads.

Experience over an 82-year period in Australia and New Zealand with sprinklers documents an astonishing 99.8 percent effective rate.

✗ MYTH:
"Sprinklers are designed to protect property, but are not effective for life safety."

✔ FACT:
Residential sprinklers provide a high level of life safety.

Statistics demonstrate that there has never been any multiple loss of life in a completely sprinklered public assembly, educational, institutional, or residential building where the system was properly operating.

The combination of automatic sprinklers and early warning systems in all buildings and residences could reduce overall injuries, loss of life and property damage by at least 50%.