

New Trend: Residential Fire Sprinklers

Homeowners install smoke alarms to be alerted that a fire is present in the home. Few, however, actively install a system that can extinguish a fire promptly, saving family members and belongings from injury or damage.

For centuries, commercial businesses have relied on emergency sprinkler systems to put out flames. The same technology can be installed at home to act fast should a fire start in the home.

According to the report, "National Fire Protection Association Fire Loss in the U.S. 2007," 414,000 fires occurred in 2007 resulting in 2,895 civilian deaths from the fires. Residential sprinkler systems may have been able to prevent many of the casualties in these events.

Residential sprinkler systems use specialized piping and specialized sprinklers attached to the home's water supply. Improved sensitivity in many home sprinkler systems enable the emergency system to react quickly should a fire occur. What's more, sprinklers are activated individually. That means if a fire is present in the kitchen, only the kitchen sprinkler head will deploy based on the presence of heat. Sprinklers in other rooms in the house will not go off.

Many newer homes are being built with residential sprinkler systems in place. The sprinkler heads are designed to be unobtrusive so they blend in with a home's interior design. Plus, plastic plumbing enables the systems to be less expensive than in the past. Homeowners can also retrofit existing homes with a sprinkler system for about \$1.50 per square foot.

Some homeowners argue that a sprinkler system will cause more damage to the home than a fire, but research has indicated that smoke and fire damage are greater than interior damage from a sprinkler.

These sprinkler systems may help homeowners save money in the long run. Not only will it save on potential damage to human life and belongings, but also insurance rates may drop if the home is equipped with a residential sprinkler system.

Leading Cause of Home Fires

- Cooking fires are a major cause of home fires. Ignition of food and cooking utensils tops the list.
- Smoking and leaving the cigarette unattended or falling asleep while smoking attributes to many fires each year.
- Heating equipment can cause fires. Heating equipment fires are most prevalent during the winter months when auxiliary heating methods, such as space heaters, are used to keep warm.

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Three Steps to Conserve Energy and Save Money

(Family Features) If you want to save money this fall by being more energy efficient, you can also reduce your carbon footprint by making changes right at home. A variety of home improvement projects can have a positive impact on your wallet while conserving energy. However, knowing what's right for you and your home can sometimes be a challenge. Here are some tips on how to get started.

Find the Culprits

Conducting a quick home energy assessment will help you discover problem areas throughout your home. Be sure to check for air leaks which are a main source of energy loss. Sealing air leaks and insulating your home in cost effective locations can save up to 20 percent a year in heating and cooling costs. Gaps that leave an incomplete building envelope can be found in every room in the home, so be sure to look around window and door frames, electrical and gas service entrances, outdoor water faucets, where dryer vents or cable lines pass through foundation walls, and where basement walls meet the ceiling or floor. You should also check insulation levels in the attic and basement



and cooling equipment and replace old lighting with energy efficient bulbs.

Go Online

Once you know what needs to be done, research the projects you plan to tackle. Learn the difference between specific products, understand the steps involved in making the improvement and plan for expenses. The website www.sealyourhome.info offers a "seal it" house tour that shows sources of common air leaks in the home and gives step by step instructions on how to seal them along with suggested products to use. The site also offers an Energy Star calculator that compares your home's energy consumption to national averages and based on the results, homeowners receive

a list of ways to improve their home's energy efficiency. By knowing where and how to properly seal your home, homeowners can make an informed decision on which simple do-it-yourself projects to tackle and thereby decrease their heating bills. Helpful information is also available from Energy Star (www.energystar.gov) and your local utility company.

Make the Repairs

When the time comes to fix problem areas, it's important to choose the right tools for the job. For example, if you decide to seal air leaks, you need the proper sealant to effectively complete the building envelope. Premium sealants, such as DAP Energy Saver High Performance Air Leak & Gap Sealant, DAP

Dynaflex 230 and DAPalex Ultra 230 Sealant, work well for sealing gaps up to 1/2 inch, both indoors and out. These sealants offer maximum flexibility and adhesion making them ideal for handling joint movement caused by temperature fluctuations without cracking or losing adhesion. They provide an airtight and watertight seal to prevent the infiltration of air, water, moisture and even insects. These sealants are easy to apply, paintable, low in odor and VOC content, and clean up easily with water.

For larger holes and gaps, an expanding foam sealant can be used. DAPtex Plus latex foam sealant is user-friendly and features the same sealing and insulating properties as polyurethane foam without the problems of overexpansion, solvent cleanup and getting it stuck to your fingers. DAPtex Plus is designed to not over expand, so windows or sockets won't pop out. Plus, it's toolable and cleans up easily with water.

For more information on products and on general information on how to properly seal your home in preparation for cooler temperatures, visit www.dap.com.

Why Do Windows Sweat?

When cooler weather arrives, homeowners often face a troublesome condition. Condensation forms on windows and can be a nuisance or even cause damage to the surrounding trim. There are reasons why sweating windows occur. Knowing the causes is the key to fixing the situation.

When air gets warm it expands and is able to absorb water. When the air cools, eventually it gets to the point where the water is

released in the form of condensation. As a result, when warm, moist air from inside the home comes in contact with cold windows, it releases the condensation on the windows. The opposite can occur in the warmer months, when outdoor air condenses on windows because of an air-conditioned interior.

There are many activities that put moisture in the air, including breathing, showering and cooking. Removing excess moisture from the home can help reduce condensation and window sweating.

- Be sure that windowless bathrooms have an exhaust vent that will vent air outdoors. Bathroom doors also should have enough of a gap on the bottom of the door to let air



PHOTOS COURTESY OF METROCREATIVE SERVICES
Warm, moist interior air meeting up with cold air from outside can cause window sweating.

- inside the bathroom.
- Gas appliances, such as fireplaces, should be properly vented.
- Opt for cooking methods that do not produce steam.
- Lower the thermostat

so that the home is cooler, ideally between 62 to 68 degrees F.

- Check if the clothes dryer is properly vented outdoors.
- Consider running a dehumidifier if moisture is a problem not easily remedied.

• Think about replacement windows. Insulated windows that feature double or triple panes will be more insulated, preventing the warm air in the home from meeting the cold air of outdoors. Also avoid metal window frames, as such frames tend to conduct the cold and can further exacerbate sweating issues.

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