

FIRE SPRINKLERS – A HUGE SUCCESS STORY

Released by Sgt. Kenny Hayes, Public Information Officer

Should anyone doubt the effectiveness of fire sprinklers in the wake of the tragic fire in Charleston, South Carolina, that killed nine firefighters on June 19, the following from the Ormond Beach (Florida) Fire Department should settle the debate. It describes the town's success with a similar fire the day after the Charleston fire.

A comparable fire, coincidentally at a furniture store, occurred at Ormond Beach the evening after the Charleston fire. These two recent fires – within a day of each other and with several similarities – provide a timely comparison that shows the tremendous effectiveness of fire sprinklers in preventing tragedies.

ACTUAL FIRE COMPARISON

WITHOUT Fire Sprinklers		WITH Fire Sprinklers
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Furniture Store	Property	Furniture Store
June 19, 2007	Date	June 20, 2007
Charleston, S.C.	City	Ormond Beach, Fla.
Entire 31,300 Square Feet	Size of Fire	100 Square Feet
Nine Firefighters	Deaths	None
Total Loss, Including Inventory	Monetary Loss	\$8,000

(The above details come from the Ormond Beach Fire Department and media reports.)

As the longest-tenured fire sprinkler advocacy association in the U.S., the NFSA is the voice of the fire sprinkler industry. Our work:

1. Adds value to homes and apartments
2. Reduces insurance premiums
3. Protects residents' property
4. Saves their lives

As the nation recovers from the disaster that recently occurred in Charleston, South Carolina where nine firefighters lost their lives in a furniture store fire, it is interesting to note that at a similar fire occurred in Ormond Beach yesterday with a dramatically different outcome.

The Wednesday night fire at Modernage Furniture demonstrates the effectiveness of automatic fire sprinklers in providing life safety and property protection. According to Ormond Beach Fire Chief Barry Baker "not to discount the need for proper firefighter training and staffing, fire sprinklers are your best friend in controlling fires. They are efficient, effective and essential to protecting lives and property."

Firefighters were dispatched to the Moderage Furniture store at 445 South Yonge Street in Ormond Beach at approximately 7:30 p.m. Wednesday night: Upon arrival firefighters found a small fire within the showroom being held in check with the buildings automatic fire sprinkler system. The fire was caused by discarded smoking material according to the state fire marshal investigator. The damage was limited to a small area of approximately 10 X 10 resulting in approximately \$8,000 dollars in damage. Three sprinkler heads activated.

This is a great sprinkler success story states Mike Garrett Building Official/ Fire Marshal for Ormond Beach. "The Page 44

buildings sprinkler system did its job. There were no fatalities, no injuries, and a very small amount of property damage. With some minor clean up the business will be back up and running in a day or so. This is a great example of how sprinklers help with business continuity."

According to the National Fire Protection Association:

Properly installed and maintained automatic fire sprinkler systems help save lives. Because fire sprinkler systems react so quickly, they can dramatically reduce the heat, flames and smoke produced in a fire. Fire sprinklers have been around for more than a century, protecting commercial and industrial properties and public buildings, such as hotels and hospitals and high-rises.

When sprinklers are present, the chances of dying in a fire are reduced by 50-75% and the average property loss per fire is cut by 50-66%, compared to fires where sprinklers are not present NFPA has no record of a fire killing more than two people in a completely sprinklered public assembly, educational, institutional or residential building where the system was working properly.

Sprinklers are highly reliable. When present in the fire area, they operate in all but 7% of fires large enough to activate the system. Human error was a factor in almost all of the failures. The system was shut-off in almost two-thirds of the failures.

This fire incident clearly demonstrates the effectiveness and value of built-in fire protection. Quite often building and fire officials are asked; Why does my building need sprinklers? Or told; our building budget does not include funding for fire sprinklers. While most building and fire codes require sprinkling of larger commercial buildings, fire and building officials still get resistance from builders and developers who only view the short term and tend to ignore fire safety. In reality most fire sprinkler systems cost about as much as carpeting and with proper insurance credits can pay for itself in 7 to 10 years.

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