

## **2011 Code Committee - Luke Stemmer**

As we move from 2011 to 2012 it should be apparent from the latest attempts by the Builders Association to legislatively kill any form of residential sprinklers in single family homes that they are continuing to look for a back door approach to get what couldn't be gotten through the regular code adoption process. Thanks to lobbying efforts by the State Chiefs Association and a Governor who understands that the State has a code adoption process in place that has worked for years, the bill banning residential sprinklers that was passed by the House and Senate was vetoed.

The cost savings we realized a couple of years ago by not adopting the 2009 Codes have meant that we now have the changes in two base codes to review and compare to current State statues and amendments. As we are just receiving the new codes from the ICC and the fact that the State decided to close down for a while this summer, the Committee is going to be very busy in the coming months reviewing the new codes and preparing a recommendation of code changes and amendments to the State Chiefs Board of Directors and the State Fire Marshal. The hope is that the Department of Labor and Industry will be able to move forward with the adoption process in spring of 2012.

It is expected that the builders will again attack the installation of residential sprinklers during the adoption process. There is always has been some confusion as to what code the residential sprinkler requirement is actually in. It is not the Fire Code but the International Residential Code (IRC) that contains the language that everyone finds so offensive. For a cost of less than two dollars a square foot, \$4,000 for a new 2000 square foot, a home and the family in it can be protected for the life of the structure. I remember when the Federal government was first requiring air bags in automobiles; the auto industry was screaming that it would drive the cost of a car up to where no one could afford to purchase one. Now because of public demand they are advertising that they have more air bags then the competition.

So where is the public demand in Minnesota for residential sprinklers? We know they will save lives. We know new house today will become the old houses of tomorrow. So why isn't the fire service out pounding the streets proclaiming the greatness of this new over a hundred year old invention? We should be. Remember that just like seat belts save lives, sprinklers save lives. Please buckle up when going to fires and support the installation of sprinklers in all buildings.

The Code Committee is made up of several dedicated people from several different disciplines. We meet once a month for about a half day in Maple Grove. We are always looking for chiefs with an interest in fire prevention and the codes, in particular chiefs from the greater Minnesota area. If you are interested in joining the Code Committee, please call me. We are looking to diversify the knowledge base of the committee with representation from as many applicable organizations as possible. I would recommend this learning experience to anyone. You don't need to be a "code nerd" to get involved!

If you have any recommendations or questions, please contact Code Committee Chair Luke Stemmer at work: 952-924-2596 or through email at [lstemmer@stlouispark.org](mailto:lstemmer@stlouispark.org) The committee will help you as best as we can.

Luke Stemmer, Chair – Chief St. Louis Park Fire Dept.  
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