



NAHB Fire Sprinkler Survey Executive Summary August, 2006

The National Association of Home Builders opposes mandatory fire sprinkler systems in single-family homes because they do not significantly enhance occupant safety and are not cost-effective, bringing no demonstrable infrastructure cost savings to communities in which such mandates are enacted.

In August 2006, NAHB commissioned a survey of 800 likely voters by Public Opinion Strategies of Washington, D.C., to determine some of their opinions regarding residential fire sprinklers.

While NAHB has accumulated anecdotal information from news stories and from its builder members to conclude that consumers do not want to pay for sprinklers when they are offered as an option and that they overwhelmingly oppose mandates requiring them, this survey offers hard data to back up what members have heard.

When presented with a theoretical list of free options that a builder might offer to a potential home buyer as an incentive to sign a contract, two-thirds of survey respondents chose options other than fire sprinklers. Thirty-seven percent said they'd choose a finished basement if offered; 34 percent chose a fire sprinkler system, and granite kitchen countertops and upgraded carpet and flooring ran third and fourth at 14 percent and 11 percent, respectively.

When asked how much they would be willing to pay to install fire sprinklers in their new homes, 28 percent of respondents said they would not choose them at all. Sprinkler costs vary depending on the climate, whether the house is on a public water line, and of course by the size and layout of the house. A conservative cost of \$2 per square foot for the average 2,400-square-foot house means that a residential fire sprinkler system would cost \$4,800. Survey results show that only 15 percent of consumers in the sample are willing to pay that much.

The reason: Survey respondents said they believe that they are already safe. To the question, "Do you believe that smoke detectors do an adequate job of protecting your family in a house fire?" an overwhelming 89 percent of respondents said they do. That is likely why 65 percent of consumers surveyed said fire sprinkler systems should remain an option for new homes, not a mandate.

Survey data includes age range, sex, work status, marital status, age, ethnicity, region (though not state or metro area) and political affiliation. Additional analysis of the data based on these factors is available to home building associations. Contact Calli Barker Schmidt at cschmidt@nahb.com or 800-368-5242, ext. 8132.

Public Opinion Strategies Survey Questions
August 2006
800 Likely Voters Responding

1. Imagine you are buying a new home and the builder is offering you one of the following options as a free incentive to buy a home... Which one of the following would you choose?

- 37% A finished basement
- 14% Granite kitchen countertops
- 34% A fire sprinkler system
- 11% Upgraded carpet and flooring
- 5% Other

2. Do you believe that smoke detectors do an adequate job of protecting your family in a house fire?

- 54% definitely yes
- 35% probably yes
- 6% probably no
- 3% definitely no
- 2% don't know

3. Do you believe that fire sprinkler systems should be required in all newly constructed homes or should they be optional for home buyers who want them?

- 29% definitely required
- 6% probably required
- 23% probably optional
- 42% definitely optional

4. If fire sprinkler systems WERE offered as an option for your new home, what is the most you would be willing to pay for them?

- 25% \$1,200 for a typical three bedroom home
- 23% \$2,400
- 12% \$4,800
- 3% \$9,600 or more
- 28% I would choose not to have fire sprinklers regardless of the cost