

Residential Sprinkler System Maintenance

Residential sprinkler systems are one of the most effective life safety systems available today. Once installed, the systems require very little maintenance. The systems are connected to a permanent water supply that ensures the system is ready to operate at all times.

The National Fire Protection Association recommends that the homeowner, occupant or manager of the dwelling where the system is installed perform the following monthly system maintenance:

1. Visual inspection of all sprinklers to ensure against obstruction of spray. (Residential sprinkler heads discharge water in a circular pattern that is designed to provide a specific density of water to the floor and wall area in the coverage area of the head. Any storage, light fixtures etc. that are close to the head can cause a "shadow" area where the water cannot reach. This reduces the effectiveness of the system.)
2. Inspection of all valves to ensure that they are open. (A valve that is even partially closed will reduce the water flow to the head and thereby reduce the effectiveness.)
3. Testing of all water flow devices. (The sprinkler system is equipped with a waterflow switch that activates the alarm-usually a bell on the outside of the house-when water flows through the system. The sprinkler riser (main control valves, etc.) is equipped with a drain valve. To test the water flow switch, slowly open the drain valve completely and listen for the bell. The bell should sound within 30 to 45 seconds. NOTE: Check to make sure that the drain discharges to a location where house or landscaping damage will not occur.)
4. If the system is connected to a monitored security system, contact the monitoring company prior to testing and then following the test to ensure they received the correct signal. They should receive a "waterflow" or "sprinkler discharge" signal from the system
5. Operation of all pumps, where installed. (If your system is equipped with a pump, you should contact a sprinkler contractor, at least annually, so your system can be tested by a qualified technician.)
6. Checking the pressure of air in dry systems. (Dry systems-sprinkler piping systems filled with air-are uncommon in residential applications. If your system is dry, the air gauge on the system should maintain a similar pressure reading at all times. A sprinkler contractor should inspect the system periodically to ensure the system is fully operational. Dry systems are more complex than wet systems.)
7. Checking the water level in tanks. (Water tanks for fire sprinkler systems are sized for the required flow from the system. The tank must be kept at the required level at all times.)
8. Special attention should be paid to ensure that sprinklers are not painted at the time of installation or during subsequent redecoration. When sprinkler piping or areas next to sprinklers are being painted, the sprinklers should be protected by covering them with a bag, which should be removed immediately after the painting is finished.