

20 Questions and Answers on Misconceptions, Myths, and the Requirements for Residential Sprinkler Systems



On April 4, 2019, the Douglas County Commission adopted the 2018 International Fire Code which included provisions requiring residential sprinkler systems under certain conditions. The East Fork Fire Protection District is attempting to address 20 of the most common questions that have been raised since the adoption.

Question 1: When does the new requirement go into effect?

Answer: July 1, 2019

Question 2: If a building permit is issued before July 1, 2019, will a sprinkler system be required?

Answer: No

Question 3: Do other fire service agencies/jurisdictions in the region have this requirement?

Answer: With the exception of Storey County, Yes, all other fire agencies have some form of residential fire sprinkler requirement, and some have had it for some time.

Question 4: Is every new home required to have a sprinkler system?

Answer: No

Question 5: When would a new home be required to have a sprinkler system?

Answer: Any new home, which is greater than 1000 feet from a water supply that meets the fire flow requirements.

Any new home, which is greater than 5000 square feet, including the garage.

Question 6: Is every existing home required to have a sprinkler system?

Answer: No. Existing homes that undergo construction and where more than 50% of the existing square footage, including the garage is added to the existing dwelling, and where the home is located greater than 1000 feet from a water supply that meets the fire flow requirements.

All existing homes, that undergo construction/addition, and the home including the square footage of the garage, is increased to exceed 5000 square feet, with a one time increase of 360 square feet is permitted.

Question 7: Are accessory structures without a residential living unit required to have a sprinkler system?

Answer: No

Question 8: Why is the garage included in the requirement?

Answer: Many house fires start in one of two places. The kitchen or the garage.



Question 9: How much will a system actually cost?

Answer: The cost can vary greatly; however, the average costs locally are running between \$3.50 and \$4.50 per square foot for the average home system.

Question 10: How large of a water storage tank is necessary to support a residential sprinkler system?

Answer: 300 to 400 gallon tank.

Question 11: Does every system need a water supply tank?

Answer: No. The requirement for a tank is based on the water supply available to support the sprinkler system, if the water is supplied from a domestic well and the well is capable of providing the required flow for the system, then the storage tank is not required. In some cases it may be more cost effective to increase the pump size/capacity than installing a sprinkler system with a tank. If you are on an approved water system, and a sprinkler system is required, a tank is not necessary.

Question 12: Does the system need to be electronically monitored at a remote site or with an alarm monitoring company?

Answer: No

Question 13: How much space does the water storage tank, if required, and pump system require?

Answer: Actually, not that much. The self-contained package units require no more space than two large capacity water heaters (approximately 30 inches deep by 65 inches wide by 90 inches tall)



Question 14: Does the system require emergency back-up power or an emergency generator?

Answer: No. However, some systems are available with a battery back-up pump system.

Question 15: How many residential fire sprinkler installers are there within our region?

Answer: According to the Nevada State Fire Marshal, there are 19 licensed installers within northern Nevada.

Question 16: Will the sprinkler requirement delay the building permit process and start of construction?

Answer: No. The East Fork Fire Protection District, working with the Douglas County Building Department allows, “*deferred submittals*” in the permitting process.” This means that the fire sprinkler plans can be submitted at a later date, allowing construction to begin with the initial issuance of a building permit and taken all the way to the framing inspection allowing sufficient time for the sprinkler system plans to be prepared, submitted and reviewed, thus not slowing or delaying construction. After all time is money.

Question17: Should realtors and developers disclose the sprinkler requirement with the sale of residential property or the cost of construction?

Answer: It is not a requirement, that would be an individual’s decision. It would be important to disclose what current and future code versions would be in effect for the customer who wishes to build a home.

Question18: Do code updates and adoptions usually increase the cost of a home?

Answer: Yes. In past code adoptions, increases in construction costs have occurred to comply with new structural engineering, seismic, and energy efficiency requirements to name just a few.

Question 19: Why even have this requirement?

Answer: There are several reasons, the obvious one being the safety of the occupants and preservation of property. Firefighter safety is also an important reason. The geographic challenges the East Fork Fire Protection District faces and the available resources make for some extended response times to many areas, thus allowing small fires to become large fires. Fire Sprinkler systems are designed to keep a fire small and in many cases provide complete extinguishment.



Question 20: Are residential sprinkler systems already required in some areas and developments of the East Fork Fire Protection District.

Answer: Yes. Currently, the Clear Creek, Taylor Creek, Jobs Peak, and Pruett Ranch developments/subdivisions each have the requirement for residential systems and were required as part of long standing development agreements still enforced today for many of the same reasons they are now required under the adopted ordinance.

