Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority (HFRA)
Position Statement for Sprinklers – September 2012

Sprinklers

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority play a key leadership role in promoting a better understanding of the benefits of sprinkler systems. Accordingly, the Authority works to encourage building owners and developers to install these systems where there is a case for doing so, for example, where there are risks to people, or where there is a clear business case in terms of cost and benefit.

Sprinklers can add clear value and are proven to save lives and property. They improve firefighter safety, minimise environmental damage and reduce the economic cost of fire. Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority proactively endorses the installation of sprinkler systems.

Refurbished buildings (retro fit)

Where significant refurbishment or upgrade is being planned in buildings which are occupied by vulnerable people, we advocate the installation or retro fitting of sprinklers. In older buildings, built to earlier standards, the level of risk may no longer be acceptable and the retro fitting of sprinklers may be appropriate to overcome the risks.

HFRA will promote and campaign for the use of fire sprinklers in high risk premises to enhance and improve public and firefighter safety.

Sprinklers in schools

The prevention of fires in educational establishments remains a priority for us because of their standing as a public and community asset and their importance for the educational wellbeing of children. Moreover the loss of coursework, the implications in terms of wider economic and social costs, property protection and environmental damage means fires in schools have far reaching consequences. Schools also tend to be a target for arsonists.

HFRA recommends that new schools should have sprinklers fitted. In exceptional circumstances, where the risk is determined to be low, alternative fire precautions may be considered.

Sprinklers in residential care premises

Fire deaths and injury data indicates that those most at risk are children, older people, people with mental health problems, and particularly those with mobility problems who are unable to leave buildings easily. These buildings are an asset to the community due to their importance in looking after those most vulnerable and remain a priority for us to protect.

HFRA strongly recommends that all new residential care homes should be fully fitted with sprinklers for the protection of residents from fire.

Sprinklers in high rise buildings

Fires in this type of building can present additional risks and considerations for the occupants and firefighters. The design and construction of these buildings delay intervention by the fire service meaning fires can escalate.

HFRA will campaign for sprinklers to be a mandatory requirement in all buildings above 30 metres in height.

Sprinklers in commercial buildings

The risks to firefighters in large commercial buildings are substantial due to the size and the potential for rapid collapse of the building. This is particularly relevant when considering modern methods of construction. Sprinklers would assist to reduce risks associated with fire fighting operations. The presence of more large commercial buildings with sprinklers will aid growth in the economy as it will reduce business losses from fire as fewer businesses will financially fail or be forced to relocate. It has been recorded that the carbon footprint of a building increases by a factor of three when destroyed by fire. The environmental impact of fires in commercial premises is great. Using sprinklers to control fires will reduce this impact on the environment.

HFRA will promote the installation of sprinklers in all large commercial buildings on the basis of improved firefighter safety.

Sprinklers in timber framed constructed buildings

Unlike a traditionally built property, a timber framed building is at the greatest risk of fire during the construction phase due to the amount of exposed and unprotected combustible elements. Fires in timber framed buildings have resulted in very rapid fire development leading to early structural collapse, and the severity of radiant heat generated has caused fire spread to neighbouring buildings up to 30 metres away.

HFRA recommend that substantial timber framed buildings are installed with sprinklers and installation should be completed early to protect the building during the highest risk construction phase.

Sprinklers in domestic premises

Fire safety measures such as smoke detectors may sometimes not be sufficient to protect the most vulnerable when there is a fire within their home, due to their inability to evacuate themselves. This vulnerability can be due to a number of factors including lifestyle characteristics and physical mobility. The ageing population and changes in social care policy mean that more vulnerable people are remaining in their own homes.

HFRA recommends that sprinklers should be installed in people's homes, such as social housing, where those people are more likely to be vulnerable from fire.