

For Immediate Release

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Fire Safety Expert Reassures Municipal Water Authorities on Home Fire Sprinkler Liability Issue

YORK, PENNSYLVANIA — Municipal water authorities can easily resolve liability concerns regarding the suspension of water service to state-mandated residential fire sprinklers, according to Paul McCulloch, NICET III, lead fire protection designer for Fire Safety at Uponor Inc.

“Potential liability issues have been successfully resolved by more than 400 jurisdictions across the country that already require sprinklers in new-home construction,” said McCulloch, speaking on Nov. 5 at a joint meeting in York of the Central Section Water Works Operators’ Association of Pennsylvania (WWOAP) and the North and South Central Districts of the American Water Works Association (AWWA) of Pennsylvania.

McCulloch, who was recently appointed to the Residential Fire Sprinkler Design and Installation Exam Development Committee by the International Code Council® Board for International Professional Standards (BIPS), cited a number of examples of how jurisdictions have effectively indemnified water authorities that terminate water service to homes with fire sprinkler systems.

“When water service is suspended, code officials typically deem the dwelling uninhabitable, so there is no need for an operating fire sprinkler system,” said McCulloch, adding that sprinklers are designed to give homeowners precious minutes to escape a burning home. “Some jurisdictions limit potential liability by requiring homeowners to sign a water-termination document, acknowledging that a home’s fire sprinkler system has also been disabled.”

The continuing-education seminar reviewed the role that local water authorities play in implementing the 2009 International Residential Code (IRC), which among other new-building standards includes a requirement for fire sprinklers to be installed in all homes built after Jan. 1, 2011. The Commonwealth is one of two states that have adopted the new residential life-safety standard, commonly referred to as the National Fire Protection Association Standard (NFPA) 13D.

In his remarks, McCulloch also referenced a 2008 study by the Washington Water Utilities Council that found that multipurpose (“flow-through”) fire sprinkler designs offer the lowest cost of installation and the lowest amount of ongoing maintenance by a homeowner.

More than 75 water professionals took part in the daylong seminar and continuing-education program that featured multiple topics and presenters.

Uponor, Inc. is a leading supplier of plumbing, fire safety and radiant heating and cooling systems for the residential and commercial building markets in the United States. Uponor, Inc. employs 380 people at its North American headquarters in Apple Valley, Minn. For more information, visit www.uponor-usa.com or call (800) 321-4739.

For more information about Uponor, visit the Uponor media room at <http://uponor.oreilly-depalma.com/>

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Hi-res versions of a photograph to accompany this release are available for immediate download in .tif format by using this link:

http://uponor.oreilly-depalma.com/2010/solving_home_sprinkler_liability.shtml

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