

Cape Coral pushes fire sprinklers

By Denes Husty III • dhusty@news-press.com •
 October 29, 2010

1:10 A.M. — Flames burst from the pan of oil Quinetta Johnson left on the stove in her Cape Coral apartment.

She left, just for an instant, to use her computer.

"I smelled smoke. I went into the kitchen and turned off the stove," recalled Johnson, 52, of the Oct. 18 fire.

And then "the flames just shot up all of a sudden," Johnson said.

Before the fire got a good start, the ceiling sprinkler installed in Johnson's unit in the Crossings at Cape Coral was activated, quickly extinguishing the flames, she said.

Now, the Cape Coral Fire Department wants to encourage people building new single-family homes to install sprinkler systems. They want to reduce the \$575 fire service impact fee charged by the city for each new home. Total impact fees can run as much as \$16,629.

The reason is simple: "The single most effective way to prevent fire-related deaths is with sprinklers," said fire Chief Bill Van Helden.

In Cape Coral, 19 residents died in fires in houses without sprinklers from 1993 through 2008, according to Fire Department records. There were no fire-related deaths last year and have been none this year.

The department is paying \$1,200 for a study to determine how much to reduce the city's fire service impact fee on new homes if the owner voluntarily installs a sprinkler system.

The study, which should take several months to complete, is being done by James C. Nicholas, the consultant who developed Cape Coral's fire service impact fee.

Owners of houses with fire sprinkler systems also can get reductions on homeowners' insurance premiums, Van Helden said.

Dee Parlin, owner of Parlin Insurance Agency in Lee and Collier counties, said fire sprinklers can reduce annual insurance costs by about 5 percent. Policies through her agency range from \$1,200 to \$1,300 a year, resulting in a savings of \$60 to \$65 if sprinklers are installed.

The most persuasive argument for installing fire sprinklers in homes is the prevention of injuries and death, said Alan Carter, fire marshal for the Fire Department.

The risk of dying in house fires drops 80 percent and damage is reduced by 71 percent if there are sprinkler systems inside, according to the National Fire Protection Association's Web site.

In Johnson's case "that fire was extinguished within the first minute," preventing the fire from destroying her apartment and adjacent units, Carter said.

The only problem she had, Johnson said, is the sprinkler couldn't be shut off for two hours because of a stuck valve, ruining the carpet, which had to be replaced.

Carter said such problems are rare and can be reduced with annual inspections in homes.

Advertisement



We focus on automating Marriott® Hotels' global invoice process. So they don't have to.

Learn more at RealBusiness.com

xerox 
 Ready For Real Business

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™