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Donald Wescott Fire Protection District, March 21

Benefits of sprinkler systems detailed

By Jim Kendrick

During the March 21 board meeting, Fire Marshal Margo Humes and Chief Vinny Burns explained the Donald Wescott Fire Protection District staff's views on how fire safety is enhanced by automatic sprinkler systems.

Burns also discussed the final preparations for the dedication of the district's new Station 2 in honor of the late Chief Jeff Edwards, who was so instrumental in getting this station built. The new station is located at 15505 Highway 83, which is on the northeast corner of the Stagecoach Road intersection. (See the photos for this event on pages 1 and 14.)

Chief's report

Humes reported that about one-fourth of the businesses in the district have been inspected. She has been appointed by the International Association of Arson Investigators as the district leader for nine counties in this region.

Humes showed a video of the infamous Warrick, R.I., Station night club fire that killed over 100 people in 2003. She also showed a comparison test video of an identical space being ignited by the same pyrotechnics on stage being knocked down in less than a minute by an automatic sprinkler system. Temperatures never exceeded 120 degrees and oxygen levels and heat flux remained survivable.

She said sprinkler systems provide life safety, particularly for houses with an eight-minute response time. Sprinkler systems do not necessarily put out all of a fire. About 95 percent of the fatalities in a home fire are children, and automatic sprinkler systems have prevented deaths when they have functioned properly.

Note: Some of the basic facts that have been discussed about automatic sprinkler system operation during this countywide debate are:

- Sprinklers provide life safety.
- There has never been a recorded loss of life in a structure protected by a properly maintained automatic sprinkler system.



- No one has ever drowned from an activated sprin-
- Water damage caused by sprinklers is less than the fire damage.
- Sometimes sprinklers put out a fire while no one is
- Sprinklers do not stop structure fires started by wildland fires.
- Nothing else works as well as sprinklers for containing or putting out a house fire.
- Every sprinkler head does not spray at once in modern sprinkler systems, although they are shown doing that on some TV shows and in movies.
- Only the sprinkler heads affected by heat operate.
- Most fires extinguished by sprinklers have been put out by five or fewer heads.
- The relative affordability of a sprinkler system in a new 6,000-square-foot or larger home in a wooded area is far less of an issue than the cost of it for a 2,000-square-foot home.
- There can be problems with leaks and anti-freeze in sprinkler systems in homes that lose heat or other
- The initial cost and ensuring competent installation of a well-designed system in what are typically custom houses can be a problem.

Burns then discussed a Board of County Commissioners hearing to be held on March 27 regarding the county's endorsement of the 2003 International Fire Code provisions requiring automatic sprinkler systems. The Housing and Building Association (HBA) and the Pikes Peak Regional Building Department are opposing any code requirement for residential sprinkler systems.

A compromise position on requiring sprinkler systems for new homes larger than 6,000 square feet was proposed and adopted by the Wescott board. Burns noted that for a house that size in an area with no hydrants, it is impossible to establish and maintain a water flow of at least 250 gallons per minute long enough to control a fire. The main issue now for the Wescott board is whether to allow a certificate of occupancy for a new district home that passes the weaker county fire code but not the Wescott

Board President Scott Campbell endorsed the Wescott firefighters' position that the 6,000-square-foot minimum is necessary for resident and firefighter safety. New lightweight construction materials, such as I-beam floor trusses, collapse more quickly and burn hotter due to the chemicals used in manufacturing than solid wood joists that used to be standard construction materials. Other lightweight and synthetic building materials and newer foam mattresses also burn hotter and more quickly. Other



and out, newer Trex porch, large 2-story. 3 bd. 3 ba. Basement. Large kitchen, walk out to back yard. rooms. Great room with gas log Beautiful mountain setting and large fireplace. Eat-in kitchen. Basement lot. Walk to lake, trails, restaurants, bedroom suite perfect for roommate park, and elem. school. \$189,000. teen, or guests. \$139,900.



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