

## A New Idea Catches On

*Knock, knock.* I got up from the couch and went to answer the door. When I opened it I saw a man holding a stack of brochures and a clipboard, dressed in khaki pants and a navy polo.

“Have you heard about the benefits of a residential fire sprinkler system?” he asked enthusiastically. I silently wished that I hadn’t opened the door, thinking of all the other door-to-door salesmen who wouldn’t take “no” for an answer. As I listened to his speech about the reasons that I should purchase a sprinkler system I found myself intrigued by the idea. To my surprise, I purchased one of the systems and had it installed in my home the next week.

2:17 A.M. I will never forget the time my clock read as I awoke to the high-pitched beeping of a smoke alarm. Feeling panicked, yet still somewhat groggy, I stumbled as I got out of bed. Smoke clouded the air in the hallway and I realized that the fire must have started in the living room. Suddenly I remembered Onyx, my black lab, was locked in his crate in that room. Before I could begin thinking of a way to get him out, I realized that the beeping had stopped. The smoke was beginning to clear and I heard the sound of rain. After a moment, it occurred to me that the sound was not rain- it was the residential fire sprinkler I had purchased a few months before.

The relief I felt at the sound of the sprinkler was immense. However, I knew that I still needed to call the fire department so that I could be sure that the fire had been contained and would not start again. I waited outside with Onyx until the fire engine came racing down my street eight minutes later. The fire fighters inspected the living

room and concluded that the fire had started from the ashes in the fireplace. I was horrified to realize that I had forgotten to close the screen after putting out the fire I had kindled the previous evening. One of the ashes had jumped out onto the carpet and started the flames.

The next morning, crews from the local news stations came to my house asking to cover the story. Although I was embarrassed, I granted their interviews in the hopes that other people would learn from my experience and be more careful with fires in their homes as well as think about investing in a home fire sprinkler system. Once the news broadcasts aired that night, my story continued to gain attention. Reporters began calling my house from places all across the country, but none was more surprising than the phone call from one of the producers of *Larry King Live*. I was asked to appear on the show as a part of their new “Increasing Awareness” week, which was created to make viewers more aware of how to avoid everyday dangers that are often forgotten.

The next week, I was in Los Angeles waiting to appear on the show. Butterflies filled my stomach as I waited backstage for my cue. “Our next guest is Jenna Snow, who narrowly avoided the loss of her home in a fire. She’s here tonight to tell us how!” I tried to smile as I walked on set, going over what I was going to say in my head for what seemed like the millionth time. After answering a few questions that had become standard after giving so many interviews at home, I knew it was time to give the speech that I prepared especially for this show.

“My experience with a home fire taught me something that I think the rest of the country is largely unaware of- the value of residential fire sprinklers,” I began. “So, to

illustrate their importance, I have come up with the Top 5 reasons to buy your own sprinkler system!

The number five reason to buy a home fire sprinkler system is the insurance discount you will receive. If your home has sprinklers installed, you will benefit from a 5-15% discount on your homeowners insurance and even more discounts are expected to become available soon!

But if that's not enough to convince you, here's reason number four- home fire sprinklers have a very low water requirement. The average amount of water used to put out a home fire with sprinklers is 341 gallons. When a fire department responds, they usually need about 2,935 gallons of water. So if you're trying to 'go green' and help the environment, buying a sprinkler system is a great step!

Reason number three for buying a home sprinkler system is their small size. Most people think that fire sprinklers will look tacky or be enormous, but they are actually very discreet. There are different models to choose from, so you can pick the one that best fits in with your home décor.

The amount of money saved in fire repair is the number two reason to buy. If a fire is contained by a residential fire sprinkler, the cost of repairs is usually around \$2,166. The cost skyrockets to \$45,019 if the fire is able to spread until the fire department is able to respond. So even though it may cost a little extra money now, the amount you save if you ever experience a home fire makes the purchase worthwhile.

Now for the number one reason to have a home fire sprinkler system installed- the quick response can save your life. Residential sprinklers have increased sensitivity so that they respond to fires before they can cause significant damage or injury. Even if a

fire happens in the middle of the night, like it did to me, they are not at all likely to be fatal if you have a sprinkler system installed.”

“Well we’re almost out of time, but we’ll take one viewer question,” Larry said after giving his own response to my list. “Philadelphia, Pennsylvania- you’re on!”

“Hi, Jenna! I’ve never really thought about getting a residential fire sprinkler system, but your story made me realize how important they can be. I do have one question though- if the system was activated to contain a small fire wouldn’t there be severe water damage to the rest of the house?”

“Not at all! Only the sprinkler closest to the fire will activate so there’s no waste of water or risk of water damage. That’s a good question though- a lot of people have the misconception that sprinklers throughout the house would be set off for just a small fire.”

Larry responded to wrap up the show, “That’s good to know, Jenna. Thanks for making us all more aware of the benefits of residential fire sprinkler systems, and be sure to close the screen next time you use your fireplace!”

## Bibliography

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