

Good afternoon, visitors! As curator of the Flaming Fresco Museum of Art, I strive for maximum protection and preservation of our priceless pieces of art. These compositions are representations of entire time periods, personalities, ideals, and states of mind. Many are hundreds of years old, the only clues we have to uncovering the essence of long-ago societies and peoples. Accordingly, I employ only the finest mechanisms and strategies for their protection.

This brings me to a mention of my mortal enemy, fire! This nefarious thief will plunder my museum like no other. He cares nothing for the value or beauty of the work, but rages and destroys everything in his path. Entire pieces, entire collections, entire galleries, and even entire museums can be wiped out! As said by expert Nick Artim, "Fire destroyed objects are gone forever. An uncontrolled fire can obliterate an entire room's contents within a few minutes and completely burn out a building in a couple of hours." My museum, wooden and erected in the 1800s, is especially prone to fire because of its design and structure. All it takes is the discarded cigarette of a disobedient guard or an errant candle on our "Rembrandt by Candlelight" tour.

Thankfully, I have hope. I have automatic fire sprinklers. These life-savers are central to my fire-combating strategy. They heroically extinguish fires at any time of day or night without human help. While my workers may fail and ~~alarms~~ alarms may wail without remedy, my fire sprinklers fearlessly step in to save the day. They release their potent water and subsequently quell heat and smoke damage and squelch the evil fire, saving some of humanity's greatest mementos. I am so indebted to my sprinkler system that I have established an exhibit detailing their history and impact. This is but a small

tribute to these safeguards of fine art, but it is one well worth viewing. You will find the exhibit on the second floor between the Picasso gallery and the restrooms.

The first display case showcases some of the first crude attempts at a fire sprinkler system. Automatic fire sprinkler systems were being designed as early as the 1800s by great thinkers concerned with protecting businesses and factories. Of course, these sprinklers were not nearly as advanced as the ones in operation today. The one to the left was used by a New England mill owner, and not only was it unable to release water specifically on the fire, it had to be manually operated. Inventors on both sides of the Atlantic investigated more workable designs. Englishman John Carey made significant strides in 1806 with a heat-sensitive system, and American Philip W. Pratt patented a system in 1872. Henry Parmalee, shown in the photograph above the display cases, built upon Pratt's design to create a more feasible system, which he installed successfully into his piano factory in 1874. Parmalee's sprinklers were manufactured and installed in various buildings at the hand of Frederick Grinnell, who patented both a sprinkler tube and a more advanced system. Sir William Mather spread Grinnell's sprinkler throughout Europe, Australia, and India. You can see models of both Parmalee's and Grinnell's systems in the display case below.

The establishment of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) in 1895 created regulations for fire sprinklers and their installation. The NFPA was instrumental in popularizing the sprinkler systems and ensuring that they were properly installed and utilized. Pictures of NFPA projects and copies of significant NFPA documents are arranged on the display board in the center of the room.

The second portion of the fire sprinkler exhibit is dedicated to the positive impact generated by fire sprinklers. You notice the smiling children, stockpiles of merchandise, and rare museum specimens pictured in the collage that occupies the third wall. These have all been saved by automatic fire sprinkler systems.

Now examine the mounted newspaper article detailing an American tragedy in 1980. Eighty-five people died in a fire in this Las Vegas hotel. While devastating in itself, even more disturbing is the lack of fire protection incorporated into the building's design. The building was only partially covered by a fire sprinkler system in the high-rise hotel portion. In the casino and restaurant area, where the fire started, no fire sprinklers had been installed. The existing sprinkler structure was able to contain the fire to a certain extent, suggesting that a fully operative system could have drastically changed the outcome of this tragedy.

Thankfully, this outrage set America on a path of stricter ordinances and heavier enforcement. Today, fire sprinklers are required in public buildings, including hotels, hospitals, and schools. Commercial buildings also enjoy the security of sprinkler systems, and an increasing number of homeowners are installing systems. Progression is still needed in several areas, such as college dormitories and off-campus housing. Please take some of the pamphlets, such as the "*Living With Fire: Information Bulletin on Fire Sprinklers*", provided at the end of the exhibit. I hope you have enjoyed my tribute to the sprinkler system and have realized their enormous benefit. Take time to notice the presence or absence of systems in areas you frequent and ensure that you and your loved ones are properly protected.

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As I confident now that you are a staunch defendant of the fire sprinkler, I would like to address a select few of my colleagues who scoff at sprinkler systems, whining about water damage and aesthetic detraction. Water damage is minimal compared to the devastating damage wrought by heat and fire. Furthermore, as my visitors can attest, no one notices fire sprinklers unless they are specifically looking for them. Not one visitor has ever complained to me that my fire sprinklers detracted from the beautiful artwork in my museum. Thus, I leave my colleagues with this final warning- I will be rejoicing over my intact Van Gogh splattered with water droplets as you wail over the charred remains of your museum!

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