



CHIEF'S FILE CABINET

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Ready or Not, Here I Come

Once upon a time (no, this is not a fairytale!) children used to play a game called hide-n-seek. One person was designated as being “it” and everyone else was given the task of hiding. It would cover its eyes and count backward from some number such as 100 and when the game was started everyone ran to hide themselves away. When it reached zero, they openly announced “ready or – not, here I come!” The search was on. If you were discovered, you and “it” both raced back to the same spot where you tried to beat “it” – or you were out. I am not sure if kids nowadays play such a game, but I do know that the warning declaration of ready-or-not here it comes is still a relevant admonition. What I am referring to however is not hide-n-seek but rather the ramping up of our delivery system to deal with the passage of the requirements in the IRC that mandate residential sprinklers in future homes in certain states around the United States.

Are you ready? This is not a rhetorical question. It is a serious consideration in those states that are moving ahead with the adoption process. As a fire professional I am sure that you have already recognized that the next ten years are going to be very different than the previous decade when it comes to building America’s fire problem. For the first time in history there is a real potential for resolving the fire problem in single and multiple family occupancies. In my opinion the new way will not be business as usual. Granted, most all fire prevention bureaus are familiar with sprinkler systems. Sprinklers have been in the codes for decades. What is going to be new is that these new requirements are going to create a much higher level of cooperation and coordination with the building department. These new requirements will also require a different interaction with the community. I know that because here in California those departments that have been involved in this concept have shared this experience for decades. It is not a hypothetical consideration. It is a real scenario. Again, I repeat earlier question, are you ready?

At an absolute minimum, your department will need to evaluate and assess how you are willing to do business in the area of plan checking and field inspection. Both of these areas of implementation may require a new set of competencies for the entity charged with the task of enforcement.

It is also true that new relationships may be required with your water supplier. In fact, this one area will likely be a field of endeavor or collaboration in cooperation will be extremely important for future success.

If you want to be ready you need to develop a plan. The following are a few suggestions on what some of the components of what the plans might look like:

1. Developing a library of documents relative to residential sprinkler methodology. At a minimum you should have the following: NFPA 13D, and the IRC Section P2904



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2. You should be periodically reviewing the following websites that date your knowledge of what information is currently available
 3. You should begin to identify roles and relationships that will be part of your organizations internal processes including developing strong relationships with the building and water departments.
 4. Seek out training opportunities as early as possible for your fire inspection staff. If possible have a joint building and fire participation in these training experiences
 5. Upgrade and improve relationships with the sprinkler system professionals in your operational area
 6. Network with other departments to give insight on how they are planning to respond when the time comes from them also
 7. Subscribe to both Sprinkler Quarterly and Sprinkler Age Magazines to be in the loop on the latest information that is available
 8. Review your plan checking processes and identify your strengths and weaknesses. Develop a plan to eliminate them
 9. Carry out community outreach to all properties to educate and inform the general public on the process

Well, that is about it for this month's column.

I remember when we played ready or not as a kid the person who had won the game was usually the one with the strategy that allowed them to hide well until they were exposed and then beat the other person back to the point where the winner was declared. Now is no time to go into hiding, but you better have a strategy to be prepared when someone asks are you ready?