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NEW NATIONAL SURVEY SHOWS A MAJORITY OF HOMEOWNERS BELIEVE THAT FIRE SPRINKLERS INCREASE A HOME'S VALUE

Builders who install fire sprinklers as standard are seen as innovative and caring.

Quincy, MA – In a new national poll commissioned by the nonprofit Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition (HFSC) and conducted by Harris Interactive®, 45 percent of U.S. homeowners said a sprinklered home is more desirable than an unsprinklered home, most often because of the added safety provided by the sprinklers (51%).

The survey also found that 69 percent of homeowners believe having a fire sprinkler system increases the value of a home, and 38 percent say they would be more likely to purchase a new home with sprinklers than one without.

HFSC commissioned the December 2005 survey of 1,019 U.S. adults (620 of whom own a house) in order to measure awareness of residential fire sprinkler systems and gauge feelings toward builders who install fire sprinklers as a standard feature of a new home.

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While fire sprinkler systems have been in wide use commercially for more than a century, the technology has only been applied to homes for about 25 years. Sprinklers are common in office buildings, hotels and hospitals, yet still relatively rare in single-family homes. “It’s ironic and very unfortunate that the places where people are most likely to die in fires are the least likely to be protected by sprinklers,” says HFSC Chair Gary Keith.

Thousands of people die from home fires each year in the U.S., Keith says. Fire sprinkler systems are recognized by leading fire safety groups as representing the single most effective built-in protection from home fire deaths. Yet widespread misconceptions about sprinklers apparently undermine interest in the technology among both homeowners and home builders. For 48 percent of homeowners, a fear of water damage would prevent them from installing a home sprinkler system.

The water damage myth and other erroneous information are prevalent and often fueled by Hollywood stunts and special effects. In fact, water damage is no more likely with fire sprinklers than it is with other household plumbing, says Keith. “Fire sprinkler mishaps are rare. Sprinklers activate individually and only in response to the high temperature of a growing fire. Smoke cannot and will not cause a sprinkler to operate.”

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The HFSC survey showed that 63 percent of homeowners were aware fire sprinklers are available for home use. Builders who offer fire sprinklers as a standard feature of new homes fared well in the study. These builders are seen by homeowners as being “safety concerned” (70%), “innovative” (52%), and “caring” (51%). Thirty-nine percent of homeowners said they would be more likely to hire such a builder to build their house over a builder that does not offer fire sprinklers as a standard feature.

The increased safety provided by sprinkler systems is also well understood. When thinking about building a new home, many homeowners say they would prefer to install a fire sprinkler system over other amenities, such as cabinet upgrades (35%) and hardwood floors (36%). And if the cost of sprinklers could be included in the mortgage, 43 percent of homeowners said they would be more likely to have home fire sprinklers installed.

While most (85%) homeowners say they completely trust the fire department as a source for information about fire sprinklers, about two in five homeowners (40%) say they completely trust home builders for these details.

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Survey Methodology

Harris Interactive® conducted the telephone survey on behalf of the Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition between December 16 and 19, 2005 among a nationwide cross section of 1,019 U.S. adults ages 18 and over, 620 of whom own a house. Figures for age, sex, race, and region were weighted where necessary to align them with their actual proportions in the population. In theory, with a probability sample of this size, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the overall results have a sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points of what they would be if the entire U.S. adult population had been polled with complete accuracy. The sampling error for the sample of U.S. adults who own a house is plus or minus 4 percentage points.

The Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition has developed a comprehensive package of information solely for home builders, including print and video pieces designed with new home buyers in mind. To learn more about home fire sprinkler systems and request free materials, visit HFSC's Web site:

www.homefiresprinkler.org.

About Harris Interactive

Harris Interactive Inc. (www.harrisinteractive.com), based in Rochester, New York, is the 13th largest and the fastest-growing market research firm in the world, most widely known for *The Harris Poll*® and for its pioneering leadership in the online market research industry. Long recognized by its clients for delivering insights that enable confident business decisions, the Company blends the science of innovative research with the art of strategic consulting to deliver knowledge that leads to measurable and enduring value. Harris Interactive serves clients worldwide through its United States, Europe (www.harrisinteractive.com/europe) and Asia offices, its wholly-owned subsidiary Novatris in Paris, France (www.novatris.com), and through an independent global network of affiliate market research companies. EOE M/F/D/V

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