



## Automatic Sprinklers: Homeowner/Occupant Sprinkler Inspections

No. FP-2009-44 November 3, 2009

**Learning Objective:** The student shall be able to identify the owner's inspection and maintenance requirements for sprinklers in one- and two-family dwellings and manufactured homes.

A close look at the pressure gauge on this residential sprinkler system riser reveals there is no water pressure and the system may be out of service, or the gauge valve is simply closed. In either case, this system needs attention.

Residential sprinkler systems are intended to be easy to install and simple to maintain, yet one of the arguments by those who oppose residential sprinkler mandates is "who will force maintenance the system" since fire inspectors generally do not inspect occupied one- and two-family dwellings and manufactured homes.

According to NFPA 13D, *Standard for the Installation of Sprinkler Systems in One- and Two-Family Dwellings and Manufactured Homes*, the sprinkler system installer must provide the owner/occupant instructions on inspecting, testing, and maintaining the system.

Then, the responsibility for properly maintaining a sprinkler system is that of the owner or manager, who should understand the sprinkler system operation. A minimum monthly maintenance program should include the following:

- Visual inspection of all sprinklers to ensure against obstruction of spray.
- Inspection of all valves to ensure that they are open. While the main control valves on the pictured backflow prevention device are open, it appears there is a problem in the water line to the building.
- Testing of all waterflow devices. A water flow test would reveal this system's impairment.
- Testing of the alarm system, where installed. Where it appears likely that the test will result in a fire department response, notification to the fire department should be made prior to the test.
- Operation of pumps, where employed.
- Checking of the pressure of air used with dry systems.
- Checking of water level in tanks.
- Special attention to ensure that sprinklers are not painted either at the time of installation or during subsequent redecoration.



Photo courtesy Freedom Fire Protection, LLC, Longmont, Colorado. This residential sprinkler system has no water pressure, or the gauge valve is closed.

For additional information, refer to NFPA 13D, *Standard for the Installation of Sprinkler Systems in One- and Two-Family Dwellings and Manufactured Homes*.

