

Ken Freiburger is a man who likes to practice what he preaches.

As Walkerton's fire chief, Freiburger spends a lot of time educating others on how to prevent fires in their homes. He's now taking his own message to heart, and installing a residential sprinkler system in his new home.

"I've done a lot of research over the last couple of years, and of all the municipalities that have implemented home sprinkler systems, statistics show there has not been a (fire-related) fatality as of yet," said Freiburger.

"Buildings can be replaced, lives cannot be."

Freiburger's new home is going up on Sideroad 15, just east of Walkerton. Before his family moves in sometime this fall, the house will be fully equipped with an automatic sprinkler system, the type previously used only in places such as schools and warehouses.

"My background as a municipal fire chief gives me the extra incentive to do this," he said, noting that the system is affordable, and will make him eligible for an insurance reduction. "This is something new to this area, and relatively new to the province of Ontario, and it's especially significant to be doing it in a rural setting."

Freiburger's sprinkler system, which is sold under the name AquaSafe and made by Wirsbo, is being installed by Uponor Canada, Inc., a company based in Regina, Saskatchewan with a sales office in Brampton. Employee Kevin Price said the cost to install a sprinkler system in a residence depends on a number of factors, but ultimately gives its occupants peace of mind.

"The cost is dependent on the structure, the contractors, and the area we're in," said Price, noting that Uponor installs its systems from coast to coast.

"They're becoming more and more popular, as people are more interested now in well-built homes and interested in life safety measures."

According to Price, it's taken time for homeowners in Ontario to adjust their way of thinking when it comes to home safety. The trend of "safety first" is picking up momentum, he said.

"People are saying I'd rather spend

\$4,000 on a sprinkler system than a hot tub. That shift in mentality has been slow in coming (but it's getting there)," he said.

Freiburger's sprinkler system is a multi-purpose system, said Price. It not only fulfills the fire prevention requirements of a sprinkler system, but also provides potable water to the home's sinks, showers and bathtubs.

"We feed each sprinkler head from four pieces of half-inch tubing, which is very flexible and easy to install," said Price.

"Every time you turn your tap on, water is running through the tubing, so you don't require back-flow protection because you'll

never have stagnant water."

Employees of Reed and Schaab were at the building site last week to install the sprinkler heads and hundreds of feet of plastic tubing. Price said if a fire were to break out in the house, sprinkler heads would be activated only in the rooms where the fire was

burning, saving the rest of the house from potential water damage.

"(The heads) are activated by heat; they will discharge at 155 degrees Fahrenheit, which means from the time the fire starts, they'll discharge in about a minute," said

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According to provincial statistics, the water damage that results when a residential sprinkler system douses a fire is about \$2,200. When a fire department turns its hoses on a house fire, the water damage averages about \$45,000.

Because Freiburger's house is in a rural area, his sprinkler system will draw its water from a holding tank, that is in turn connected to a cistern. In urban areas, the system could be connected to a home's municipal water line.

Anyone looking for more information on the sprinkler systems can log on to www.uponor.com