

UNITED STATES
CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20207

The Chairman

July 2001

Dear Insurance Carriers and Risk Management Professionals:

As Chairman of the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission ("CPSC"), I am writing to ask for your cooperation with an important voluntary recall program jointly announced recently by the CPSC and Central Sprinkler Company ("Central"). In conjunction with the CPSC, Central is undertaking to replace over 35 million fire sprinkler heads with O-ring seals. Central will provide free replacement sprinklers and arrange for the free labor to install them. Although you have undoubtedly been made aware of the program, you are an important link in the chain of fire protection, and I would, therefore, like to take a moment to explain some of the background to the program before asking for your help in some very specific ways to make it succeed.

Why Central and the CPSC Have Developed the Voluntary Replacement Program

Growing knowledge about the many conditions that affect sprinkler performance, as well as laboratory testing, have led Central to determine that over time the O-ring sprinkler heads in question can corrode or minerals, salts and other contaminants in water can affect the rubber O-ring seals. These factors could cause these sprinkler heads not to activate in a fire. Laboratory testing has indicated that most sprinklers would operate in a fire situation, but certain tested heads required higher water pressure to activate than may be available in particular buildings.

Central's discovery highlights the need for regular inspection, maintenance, care and testing of *all* fire sprinkler systems. CPSC is currently working with the sprinkler industry to study sprinkler system conditions and upgrade existing standards and codes. In the meantime, Central is providing newer fire sprinklers that do not use O-ring seals, and is voluntarily launching this program to provide enhanced protection to its sprinkler customers.

Important Background to the Voluntary Replacement Program

- The program provides building owners with newer sprinkler technology at no cost to them.
- Due to the number of sprinklers involved, the program will be phased in over a number of years. CPSC believes this phased in approach is appropriate and serves the public interest.

- We believe that fire safety is best served by replacing these O-ring seal sprinklers with Belleville seal sprinklers in the orderly, planned and organized program that Central and CPSC have developed.

How You Can Help

We urge you to do the following to assist in this important program:

- Recognize that the orderly and efficient replacement of sprinklers will be advanced if building owners are allowed to replace their sprinklers over time according to the CPSC-approved program.
- It is critical to the success of this program that we are able to implement it without any serious disruption. Your cooperation and support can greatly help us to achieve this goal.
- Familiarize your insureds with the models and types of sprinkler heads involved in the program, and encourage their participation in the program.
- Encourage your insureds who have these sprinklers to participate by calling the toll-free Notice Packet Request Line at **1-800-871-3492** or visiting Central's website at www.SprinklerReplacement.com.
- Remind building owners of the need to perform routine inspection, testing, and maintenance of sprinklers and sprinkler systems to ensure the proper function of the fire protection system. The most recent industry standards state that all dry sprinkler heads should be inspected and tested for proper activation at least every ten years.

If you have any questions about the voluntary replacement program, please feel free to call Central's **Contractor and Industry Professional Hotline** at **1-866-836-3928** (9 A.M. (EST) to 7 P.M. (EST)), or visit Central's special website at www.SprinklerReplacement.com.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and your continued contribution to fire safety.

Sincerely,



Ann Brown

Chairman, United States Consumer Product Safety Commission