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Sprinklers save lives

In the early morning hours of Nov. 26, a fire broke out in a single-family home at Essex and Bridge streets in Rahway ("Woman killed, man in critical condition after Thanksgiving morning blaze"). By the time firefighters arrived on the scene, the rear of the house was fully engulfed in flames and a resident was trapped inside.

A woman was rescued from the fire, but she perished at the scene and another resident sustained burns over 30 percent of his body and was listed in critical condition at Saint Barnabas Medical Center.

If fire sprinklers were present in this single-family home, the tragic loss of life and injury may have been prevented and property damage may have been drastically reduced. Properly installed and maintained fire sprinklers help control fires from spreading.

In many cases, automatic fire sprinklers extinguish a fire before the fire department even arrives on the scene.

More important, the presence of fire sprinklers could have mitigated the risk to individuals affected by the blaze, including firefighters who could have been injured fighting the fire.

Currently, there is a pending regulation in New Jersey that would make it mandatory for all newly constructed one- and two-family homes as well as condominiums and townhomes to be equipped with fire sprinklers, starting in 2012. If passed, this regulation would help to reduce the devastating effects of fires and help protect New Jersey residents in the places where they feel safest — their homes.

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