

To: Kansas Fire Chiefs, Building Owners, School Administrators, and Fire Safety Stakeholders

From: Mark Engholm, State Fire Marshal

Date: October 20, 2025

Subject: Issues with Recalled Fire Sprinkler Heads

As many of you are aware, on the night of July 13, 2025, a devastating fire occurred at the Gabriel House Assisted and Independent Living Facility in Fall River, Massachusetts, resulting in 10 fatalities and more than 30 injuries, including six firefighters who were injured while rescuing invalid residents from the building.

Although the final investigative report from the Massachusetts State Fire Marshal has not yet been released, preliminary findings indicate that several sprinkler heads found in the facility had been subject to a nationwide recall issued in 2001 and were never replaced. The recall, which affected approximately 35 million sprinkler heads, was issued due to a defective gasket that could prevent activation during a fire.

Investigators have confirmed that the recalled sprinkler heads were present throughout the facility. Notably, the sprinkler head located in the room where the fire originated failed to discharge water, contributing to the fire's rapid spread. Additional recalled sprinklers have since been discovered in other facilities in Massachusetts, raising concerns that similar defective devices may still be installed in buildings elsewhere in the country.

These recalled sprinkler heads were distributed nationwide and installed in a wide variety of occupancies, including:

- Residential buildings
- Hospitals and nursing homes
- Day care centers and schools
- Dormitories
- Supermarkets, warehouses, and parking garages
- Office and commercial buildings

Although a free replacement program was implemented at the time of the recall, those programs have expired. Further information about the specific sprinkler head recalls can be found at the following links:
<https://www.cpsc.gov/Recalls/2001/cpsc-central-sprinkler-company-announce-voluntary-recall-to-replace-o-ring-fire>

<https://www.cpsc.gov/Recalls/1999/cpsc-mealane-corp-announce-recall-of-star-fire-sprinklers>

The Kansas State Fire Marshal's Office (KSFM) urges fire department personnel, inspectors, fire protection contractors, and building owners to inspect all sprinkler systems within their jurisdictions to verify that recalled models are not present.

The affected sprinkler heads can typically be identified by markings such as:

- The words "CENTRAL" or "STAR"
- The letters "CSC"
- The letter "G" inside a triangle
- A star-shaped symbol stamped on the metal frame or deflector

Model designations and manufacture dates may also be stamped on the frame or deflector.

While the original replacement program has ended, it remains imperative that any recalled sprinkler heads still in service be replaced immediately to ensure proper system performance during a fire emergency.

In addition, NFPA 25: Standard for the Inspection, Testing, and Maintenance of Water-Based Fire Protection Systems requires that any sprinkler exhibiting the following conditions be replaced without delay:

- Leakage
- Corrosion detrimental to performance
- Physical damage
- Loss of fluid in the frangible bulb
- Accumulation of material ("loading") that impairs operation
- Non-factory-applied paint or coatings (including spray foam or paint on the bulb/fusible link)
- Recalled sprinklers

I am optimistic that any recalled sprinkler heads that were installed in Kansas facilities have already been identified and replaced. However, through continued vigilance and collaboration among local authorities, inspectors, and facility operators, we can help ensure the ongoing safety of Kansas residents, especially those who are most vulnerable to injury or death during fires.

If you have questions regarding this or other fire safety issues, please contact our office at (785) 296-3401 or by email to prevention@ks.gov.

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