



# IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

**Central Sprinkler Company Announces Voluntary Program to Replace 35 Million O-Ring Sprinklers  
July 2001**

Dear Building Owner/Homeowner:

I am writing to share some important safety information about fire sprinklers that may be installed in your home or building. Please read the following information carefully.

Central Sprinkler Company, an affiliate of Tyco Fire Products LP, of Lansdale, PA (Central), and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) are announcing a voluntary replacement program. The company will provide parts and labor to replace 35 million fire sprinklers with O-ring seals.

The program involves approximately 33 million “wet” sprinklers with O-ring seals manufactured by Central and approximately 2 million “dry” sprinkler heads with O-rings manufactured by Central. Also included are about 101,000 “On-Off” sprinklers used in “wet” systems and sold by Gem Sprinkler Co. and another 66,000 “dry” sprinklers manufactured by Star Sprinkler Inc. Enclosed please find a notice packet, which provides more detail about this program, instructions for participating, and the forms you must complete to submit a replacement claim.

### Why are the sprinklers being replaced?

Central initiated this action because it discovered that these O-ring sprinklers can degrade over time. These sprinkler heads can corrode, or minerals, salts and other contaminants in water can affect the rubber O-ring seals. These factors could cause the sprinkler heads to not activate in a fire. Laboratory testing has indicated that the majority of the sprinklers would operate in a fire situation, however, some required higher water pressure to activate than may be available in particular buildings.

Central has received four reports of “wet” O-ring sprinkler heads failing to activate during a fire situation and nine similar reports of “dry” O-ring sprinkler heads. These incidents resulted in property damage claims ranging from \$1,000 to more than \$100,000.

### What fire sprinkler models are involved in this program?

As mentioned above, this replacement program includes two kinds of sprinklers, “wet” and “dry.” “Wet” sprinklers are installed in piping that is filled with water. “Dry” sprinklers are used in areas that may be exposed to very cold temperatures and the exposed piping does not contain water. These sprinklers were installed nationwide in a wide variety of buildings, including houses, apartments, hospitals, day care facilities, schools, dormitories, nursing homes, hotels, parking garages, supermarkets, warehouses, and office buildings.

The “wet” sprinkler models with O-rings manufactured by Central that are covered by this program include the following:

CENTRAL “WET” SPRINKLERS (MANUFACTURED FROM 1989-2000)					
GB	GB4-FR	GB-R1	BB2	ELOC	ELO-GB QR
GB-J	GB4-EC	GB-RS	BB3	ESLO	LD
GB-1	GB4-QREC	GB-R	SD1	ELO SW-20	K17-231
GB-ALPHA	GB-20	ROC	SD2	ELO SW-24	Ultra K17
GB4	GB-20 QR	BB1 17/32	SD3	ESLO-20 GB	ELO-16 GB
GB-QR	GB-LO	BB2 17/32	HIP	ELO-231 GB	GB MULTI-LEVEL
GBR-2	LF	BB3 17/23	WS	ELO-GB	GB-QR MULTI-LEVEL
GB-EC	GBR	BB1	ELO-LH	ELO-231 GBQR	ELO-16 GB FR

The “dry” sprinklers with O-rings manufactured by Central involved in this program include the following models:

CENTRAL “DRY” SPRINKLERS (MANUFACTURED FROM MID-1970’s - 2001)			
A-1	GB	GB4-EC	ELO-16 GB
H-1	GB-QR	GB4-QREC	ELO-16 GB FR
J	GB4	ELO-231 GB	
K	GB4-FR	ELO-GB QR	

The program also covers approximately 167,000 Gem and Star brand sprinklers with O-rings, including the following models:

GEM “WET” SPRINKLERS (SOLD UNDER GEM NAME FROM 1995-2001)	
F927	

NOTE: Replacement sprinklers for Gem “Wet” sprinklers will not have “On-Off” functionality.

STAR “DRY” SPRINKLERS (MANUFACTURED FROM MID-1996 - 1998)	
ME-1	SG
SG-QR	Q
Q-QR	

### What do I need to know about the replacement program?

We will replace each of these O-ring sprinkler heads with a free replacement Belleville seal sprinkler head. Belleville seals use a metallic “spring seal” – rather than a rubber O-ring- to maintain a watertight seal. In order to cover your costs for replacement

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labor and minimize disruption to you, we will either perform the replacement work ourselves or contract with an authorized sprinkler installer to perform the replacement work.

Due to the number of sprinklers involved, sprinklers will be replaced over time, with priority based on the age of the sprinklers, the population affected (e.g. hospitals and nursing homes submitting claims will be addressed first), and whether the sprinklers show signs of corrosion or leakage. Central and the CPSC staff agree that this phased-in program puts in place an orderly process that serves the public interest. In addition, you should know that Central is aggressively communicating with other interested parties. To that end, Central has contacted local fire marshals and other authorities to ask them to cooperate with Central to make this program work. Central is also asking sprinkler installation contractors to work with customers to assist in identification of sprinklers and encourage participation in this program.

### **Can I tell if I have these O-ring sprinklers in my home or building just by looking?**

You may be able to. *Please refer to the Identification Brochure that is included with the enclosed notice packet. Please review these materials carefully. It is very important for you to determine if O-ring sprinkler heads covered by this program are installed in your home or building.* Because sprinkler heads can be difficult to identify, we urge you to check any sprinkler system installation or maintenance records, your spare sprinkler cabinet or check with your architect, builder, sprinkler contractor, homeowners' association or property manager. You can also get assistance by reviewing the materials on this website or by contacting **1-866-505-8553** between 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. EST to speak with customer service representatives who can assist you with head identification. **Be sure that you do not attempt to remove or disturb the sprinkler heads in order to identify them.**

### **What do I have to do to maintain my sprinklers?**

Central and the Commission staff emphasize that for sprinkler systems to be effective, they must be regularly inspected, and maintained like a building's heating, cooling, electrical and elevator systems. You should ensure that your sprinklers and sprinkler system are regularly inspected, tested, and replaced if necessary by a professional sprinkler contractor. In addition, the most recent industry standards state that dry sprinkler heads should be tested, and replaced, if necessary, at least every 10 years. Central believes all fire sprinkler heads should be tested no later than 10 years after installation, and depending on water quality and other factors, more frequent testing may be appropriate.

### **How do I submit a claim to have my sprinklers replaced?**

A detailed explanation of this voluntary replacement program can be found in Book 1, pages 1-4 of the claim packet. To make a replacement claim, you will need to review and complete all documents included in this packet.

### **What if I have questions?**

You should read all of the information in the packet, because it answers many questions you may have and explains your legal rights and obligations. If you have any questions about how to complete the forms or how to identify the O-ring seal sprinkler heads involved in this program, please call the **Customer Service Hotline** at **1-866-505-8553** 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. EST. Additional information may also be obtained by reviewing the materials on this website. On behalf of all of us at Central Sprinkler, we thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,  
Robert J. Brinkman, Jr.  
President  
Central Sprinkler Company