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### **“No Lead” Regulations and Residential Fire Sprinklers - NSF 61 Committee Clarifies Requirements -**

There are two regulations that restrict the use of materials containing lead in drinking water systems, one established by federal law, and the other by NSF 61, which is the U.S. model regulation governing plumbing systems that deliver drinking water. Plumbing system components that are not intended to serve water for drinking, cooking or oral hygiene, such as shower valves and toilet flush valves, are exempt from the federal “no lead” law and health effects requirements in NSF 61 because any lead that might leach into water from these components will not be consumed.

Residential fire sprinklers are likewise exempted from the federal no-lead law, but they are not exempted from the health effects requirements in NSF 61. Occasionally, this inconsistency between the federal law and NSF 61 has led to questions regarding the possible need for backflow protection to isolate residential fire sprinklers made with leaded brass from potable water, particularly when they are installed on multipurpose systems that integrate fire sprinklers with the cold water supply to plumbing fixtures. If backflow protection were actually required for leaded brass sprinklers (it actually isn't), it certainly wouldn't be feasible to isolate individual sprinklers on multipurpose systems.

Fortunately, the NSF Joint Committee on Drinking Water Additives recently clarified the materials requirements in NSF 61 that govern residential fire sprinklers. The change acknowledges that residential fire sprinklers are not required to be made with “lead free” brass provided that the sprinklers are able to pass the lead contamination tests specified by NSF 61, which all currently listed residential sprinklers are believed to do.

In summary, the change to NSF 61 makes it clear that listed residential sprinklers manufactured using traditional brass are allowed to be used in stand-alone and multipurpose fire sprinkler systems with no special backflow prevention requirements.