

FACT SHEET



Campus Residential Fire Safety: A Guide for College Students

Every year college and university students experience a growing number of fire-related emergencies. There are several causes for these fires, however most are due to a general lack of knowledge about fire safety and prevention.

In cases where fire fatalities occurred on college campuses, alcohol was a factor. There is a strong link between alcohol and fire deaths. In more than 50% of adult fire fatalities, victims were under the influence of alcohol at the time of the fire. Alcohol abuse often impairs judgment and hampers evacuation efforts. Cooking is the leading cause of fire injuries on college campuses, closely followed by careless smoking and arson, according to the US Fire Administration.

All colleges and universities must comply with local fire and life safety codes. Residential halls, Greek housing, and Off-campus housing, as well as educational facilities, are required to comply with these life and fire safety regulations.

Many factors contribute to the problem of residential or housing fires

- ✘ Improper use of 911-notification systems delay emergency response.
- ✘ Student apathy is prevalent. The 18 to 24 year old demographic is a difficult one to reach with fire and life safety information.
- ✘ Many students are unaware that fire is a risk or threat in their new environment.
- ✘ Evacuation efforts are hindered since fire alarms are often ignored.
- ✘ Building evacuations are delayed due to lack of preparation and preplanning.
- ✘ Vandalized and improperly maintained smoke alarms and fire alarm systems inhibit early detection of fires.
- ✘ Misuse of cooking appliances, overloaded electrical circuits, and extension cords increase the risk of fires.

Here are a few tips to help the student enjoy their new home and educational experience:

- ✓ Check with your resident assistant (RA) or housing office to see what type of fire and life safety measures are in place and review the escape plan provided.
- ✓ Whether on campus or off campus Make sure your room has a working UL-listed smoke alarm/detector alarm.



Campus Fire and Life Safety Tips continued...

- ✓ Keep a UL-listed multipurpose fire extinguisher within reach.
- ✓ If your residence hall has fuel-burning appliances check to ensure it also has a carbon monoxide (CO) alarm installed as well.
- ✓ Should your apartment be located on an upper story floor, make sure there are two or more ways to exit the floor and/or building. Study the emergency evacuation plan provided.

Due to the fact that seventy-nine percent of fatal fires occur in off-campus housing, it will be important to ask the landlord about fire safety protections. All residential dwellings must comply with local fire codes. Because codes vary by municipality, city officials can tell you what is required in the area in which you may be living.

Housing may be difficult to find, however, unsafe or unreliable housing is worth passing up. Something better, safer and more comfortable is around the corner.

In addition:

- ✚ Look for landlords who are listed with the college or university. And who understand their responsibility and liability to maintain safe housing.

Maintain working smoke detectors and a working fire extinguisher in close proximity to any heat source or open flame.

- ✚ Make sure that there are working UL-listed smoke detectors in every room, as well as the hallways, stairwells and other areas of the building.

Note: Tampering with, vandalizing and/or disarming a fire alarm is a criminal offense punishable by law.

- ✚ Test smoke alarms monthly, and replace batteries at least twice a year.

Note: Most tenants are responsible for maintaining smoke alarms and fire extinguishers, not the landlords.

- ✚ Keep a UL-listed multipurpose fire Extinguisher in rooms where fires are most likely to start, such as, the kitchen, bedrooms, living room, any room with a chimney, and laundry rooms.
- ✚ Know two ways out of every room. If you live on the second or third floor, keep a fire ladder close to provide an alternate exit.

Place all candles on a protected, heat-resistant, dry surface, away from combustible materials and out of the reach of children or pets.

- ✚ Keep candles or incense burners away from flammable items and never leave them unattended or burning unless someone is in the room.

When candle wax is 1/2 inch from the bottom of the jar – don't hesitate, Throw the jar away. It's time to purchase a new candle.

- ✚ Candle jar glass is fragile. The glass is thin, delicate and fractures easily when heat is applied. Handle with care.
- ✚ Avoid overloading electrical circuits. Use UL-listed surge protectors when needed.
- ✚ Install a carbon monoxide alarm on each floor and near sleeping areas.
- ✚ After parties, check under sofa and in chair cushions to insure smoldering materials are not hiding within the folds of the cushions.

