



? OFF-CAMPUS

Take the Time to Ask Questions

Talking about campus fire safety with landlords

Like students on campus, many students living off-campus have forgotten the basic messages of fire safety. "For most of these students, the last fire safety training they received was in grade school; but with new independence comes new responsibilities," notes the United States Fire Administration (USFA).

It is important that both off-campus and on-campus students understand fire risks and know the preventative measures that could save their lives. Parents play a role in this and their understanding of fire safety issues is vital when their children are moving into off-campus housing.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, there are approximately 18,000,000 students enrolled in 4,100 colleges and universities across the country. Approximately two-thirds of the students live in off-campus housing.

Unfortunately, off-campus housing fires are common and fatal. According to CCFS fire fatality data from January 2000 to present:

69 fatal fires have been documented that occurred on a college campus, in Greek housing or in off-campus housing within 3-miles of the campus - claiming a total of 99 victims

56 fires have occurred in off-campus housing claiming 80 victims

7 fires have occurred in on-campus building or residence halls claiming 9 victims

6 fires have occurred in Greek housing claiming 10 victims

Of the 69 fires documented:

14 were intentionally set claiming 22 victims

31 were accidental - includes cooking, candles, smoking or electrical claiming 40 victims

24 of the fires the cause was never determined - or the cause was not available at press time. These fires claimed 37 victims.

According to the USFA, four common factors in off-campus fires are:

- Lack of automatic fire sprinklers
- Missing or disabled smoke alarms
- Careless disposal of smoking materials
- Impaired judgment from alcohol consumption

The Center for Campus Fire Safety (CCFS) reminds parents that during Campus Fire Safety Month, students will learn that fires happen on and off campus and students need to protect themselves no matter where they live. CCFS has a list of questions parents can ask to discern the level of safety at off-campus housing.

- Does every room have a smoke alarm? Does it send a signal to campus security of the fire department? What is the power supply to the detector? (hardwired/ battery/ both) Are batteries changed when clocks are changed? Who provides the battery replacements?
- Does the building have sprinklers and fire extinguishers?
- Are false alarms a problem in the building? If not,

what practices have given you this success? If they are, what steps are being taken to correct the situation?

- What is your disciplinary policy toward tenants who cause false alarms or fail to evacuate during an alarm?

- Do the rooms have enough outlets with enough power to feed energy need? Are there recommended limits or specific certified products that are safer to use?

- What is the training on fire prevention and comprehensive life safety does the building staff receive and how often are they refreshed?

- How often are evacuation drills conducted?



Students living off-campus should also practice **fire** safety.

Electricity Safety

If an appliance starts smoking, has an unusual smell, or causes a fuse to blow, unplug it immediately. It may be malfunctioning and should be repaired. Call your landlord if you have questions or need assistance with malfunctioning items in your rental unit.

Cooking Safety

Never leave cooking unattended. Many fires have started from overheated grease, because heat can cause the grease to burst into flame. If this happens, carefully slide a lid over the fire and turn off the burner. Do not use water on grease or electrical fires. Never put foils or other metals in microwave ovens.

Take Care When Smoking

Carelessly discarded cigarettes are the leading cause of fire deaths in the United States. Never smoke in bed or while you are drowsy, because dropped embers may start fires.

Candles

Place candles on sturdy holders that will not tip or burn and position them far away from curtains and other flammable items. Never leave burning candles unattended.



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