



U.S. Fire Administration

# Campus Fire Safety

FA-334/October 2012



FEMA



## Campus Fire Safety

For most students, the last fire safety training they received was in grade school. It is important that both off-campus and on-campus students understand fire risks and know the preventative measures that could save their lives including safety tips along with smoke alarms and sprinklers.

According to the Center for Campus Fire Safety, on average 10 students die annually as a result of campus-related fires.

**Campus Firewatch states that four out of five campus-related fire deaths occur in off-campus housing, where approximately two-thirds of our students live.**

## Causes of Campus Fires

According to the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), an estimated 3,800 university housing fires occur each year in the United States with 88 percent being cooking fires. The leading causes of campus related fires include: 1) cooking (hot plates, microwaves, portable grills, etc.); 2) arson; 3) careless smoking; 4) unattended candles; and 5) overloaded extension cords, power strips, and outlets.

## Alcohol, Drugs & Fire Don't Mix

Alcohol or drugs increase your chance of falling asleep while smoking and reduces your ability to respond to a fire alarm and escape from a fire.

## Preventing Campus Fires & Fire Fatalities

**Cooking** is the cause of 83 percent of university housing fires.

- Never leave cooking unattended.
- Cook only where it is permitted.
- If a fire starts in a microwave, keep the door closed and unplug the unit.

### Smoking

- Smoke outside of the building and always put it all the way out before you discard it.
- Use deep, wide, and sturdy ashtrays. Sit ashtrays on something sturdy and hard to ignite.
- It is risky to smoke when you have been drinking or are drowsy.

**Escape Plans** should be known and practiced. Always know two ways out, no matter where you are.

- Get low and go under the smoke to escape to your safe exit.
- Feel the door before opening it. If it is hot, use your second way out.
- Use the stairs; never use an elevator during a fire.

## Fire Sprinklers and Smoke Alarms

- Don't disable or remove batteries from smoke alarms.
- Don't hang things on or cover fire sprinklers, which could affect their ability to work properly.
- When the smoke alarm sounds, immediately evacuate the building; don't assume it's a false alarm.

**Candles** are one of the leading causes of fires in both on- and off-campus dwellings despite the fact that most colleges and universities forbid candles in residence halls. Twenty percent of fires in dorm rooms are started by candles.

- Make sure candles are in sturdy holders and put out after each use.
- Never leave a burning candle unattended.
- Use flameless candles, which are both safe and attractive.

## Fire Sprinklers & Smoke Alarms

**The combination of working smoke alarms and fire sprinklers reduces the likelihood of dying in a fire by more than 82 percent.**

The most effective fire loss prevention and reduction measure for both life and property is the installation and maintenance of fire sprinklers.

Fire sprinkler systems offer the greatest level of fire safety because they control the fire immediately

in the room of origin, help limit the spread of fire, and often extinguish the fire before the fire department arrives.

## Sprinklers vs. No Sprinklers in Dorm Rooms



These post-fire photographs of dorm rooms show the difference a sprinkler makes. There is little visible damage in the top photo that had a sprinkler in the room; there was no sprinkler in the dorm room in the bottom picture. The dormitory burn experiment was conducted by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and the USFA.



### For further information

Visit the U.S. Fire Administration website:  
[www.usfa.fema.gov/citizens/college](http://www.usfa.fema.gov/citizens/college)

Fire is **Everyone's Fight**™



**FEMA**



**U.S. Fire Administration**

16825 South Seton Avenue

Emmitsburg, MD 21727

800-561-3356

[www.usfa.fema.gov](http://www.usfa.fema.gov)

FA-334/October 2012