



CAMPUS FIRE SAFETY CODE TALK

Campus Fire Safety e-NewZone

Have a Plan for your Safety

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Okay, so it's the middle of summer and the last thing that's on your mind are college dorm rooms or off-campus housing. But you will soon be there. Whether it's your first year in college or your final year, you should have a plan for your safety. According to the Center for Campus Fire Safety, there were 7 fire deaths in on-campus facilities in the time period from 2000-2014. In a report by Richard Campbell of the National Fire Protection Association, over the period of 2007-2011, there were an estimated 3,810 structural fires reported in dormitories, fraternities, sororities, and barracks each year. These fires caused an average of \$9 million in property damage. Cooking was the cause of 84% of the fires and 29% of the injuries. Heating equipment was the cause of 23% of the injuries and smoking materials, 11%. Abandoned or discarded materials were a factor in 14% of fires, and misuse of materials was a factor in 13% of fires. Heat source too close to combustibles was a factor in 10% of these incidents, but these fires were responsible for one-quarter (25%) of injuries. These statistics do not address other off campus residences.

The majority of these fires could have easily been prevented by better awareness and education. It is part of your responsibility for practicing fire and life safety in your housing areas, that's given. But having a plan to act diligently for your own awareness and safety is being personally proactive and ultimately will help to make everyone's living area safer. It is important to make yourself aware of how these fires begin in order to understand how to prevent them and how to keep yourself alive when one occurs. This information helps to provide the motivation for your plan. The institutions of your choice will most likely have programs and information on their safety regulations regarding living spaces, it is important to research these and



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remember them. Visit your schools safety department and find out what information is available and learn how to prevent these fires and the resulting injuries.

Most institutions will have a list of what, if any, heating or cooking equipment is allowable in the dorms. Some dorms have small community kitchens. Don't use cooking equipment while impaired and stay in the kitchen when using cooking appliances. Keep any combustibles away from heat sources. Refrain from using candles, smoking materials, incense, auxiliary heaters or other like devices inside. Do not overload extension cords. In some cases extension cords are not allowed in the dorm rooms. Planning with these simple rules in mind will help to reduce one of the highest causes of fires and injuries in college residences.

You should also look for living spaces that include sprinklers. All living facilities should have smoke alarms with battery back-up and that are wired so that, when one is activated, they all provide an audible alarm. For residents with certain impairments, visual or other specific warning methods are available. When these devices sound or otherwise activate, **Get Out!** It may be easy to disregard the alarm especially if no one else is leaving but do not get complacent. Plan to get out every time! Develop the mindset of evacuation every time. Smoke alarms should be installed in every sleeping room, outside every sleeping area, and on each level of the residence. Never remove batteries or disable an alarm for any reason. It is also advisable to have Carbon Monoxide detectors on each level of the residence.

Remember (EDITH) exit drills in the home? Make sure you know your two closest exits and practice those routes. Make sure that these exit pathways remain clear at all times. By using different door and stair access ways you develop familiarization, in an emergency this can be lifesaving. Your plan should be to make yourself intimately aware of how to get out of the residence in an emergency and practice it routinely.



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Begin now to develop your personal plan by understanding the statistics relating to fire causes and how to prevent them and how to get out. That plan should include understanding the rules regarding campus housing, how to stay safe, and to practice these rules. By beginning now to develop an attitude of responsibility and safety around your new college living space, when you get there, it will be easier to follow your plan for staying safe. A good plan developed early will also help you develop behaviors that will keep you safe and create a safe living environment. When it comes to your safety, as Ben Franklin once said, "if you fail to plan, you are planning to fail."



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