



OFF-CAMPUS

By Tim Knisely

December 2014

Preparing for a New Year:

In November I had the opportunity to attend The Center's annual Campus Fire Forum, held this year in Orlando, FL. This conference is always a great time to network with my peers and colleagues from across the country, see old friends and meet new ones. Personally, this conference gives me a chance to refocus my efforts of the task at hand that I've spent all year working on. Each year I head home rejuvenated with new ideas and encouraged that all of our efforts really do make a difference.

This past year, as in many years all of the campus related fire deaths are occurring in the off-campus housing market. This does not mean that we can relax our efforts in the on-campus setting. Instead, we may need to find more reasons to provide safety outreach to these students living on-campus because once they leave the chances of

having a pre-incident contact is minimal.

The off-campus environment is very and eerily similar from town to town and city to city. This environment or culture we are now seeing was brought to the forefront most recently in Boston following two significant fires. One of these fires in 2012 significantly injured a sophomore student, while a second fire in 2013 occurred across the street and claimed the life of a 22-year old senior. The Boston Globe recognized this as an emerging issue and conducted a 9-month investigation into the off-campus problem, where thousands of students from Boston's many campuses are living.

Jenn Abelson, an Investigative Reporter for the Boston Globe's Spotlight Team opened this year's Forum as our Keynote Speaker sharing her first-hand account of the housing issues that face the students, their families and the

community in Boston.

The [video](#) produced in this investigation brings the story to life with real-life conditions that the reporters observed as they met with students and accompanied the city's inspection staff. Many in attendance at The Fire Forum already knew, while others quickly realized that the story is quite similar to theirs - just the name of the city changes.

Following the Keynote Presentation, many of the attendees participated in the Off-Campus Panel Discussion where the audience had a chance to ask questions of the panel and participate in the answer sessions. The panel consisted of educators, inspectors, representatives from both the alarm and sprinkler industry and the keynote speaker. Very quickly, another hour had gone by and after much discussion it was clear that the issues in the Off-Campus neighborhoods are not going to be easily solved. It will take much more



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discussion, grass roots efforts and a lot of luck to improve the safety in this type of housing.

Throughout the rest of the week in Orlando, I had a chance to speak to many of The Center's new members that were in attendance as well as spend some time with the many industry members and vendors that were participating in the educational sessions or the vendor exhibit. Two of particular interest to the Off-Campus readers are JUSTICE and Every Bear Goes Home, both non-profit organizations dedicated to saving students. [JUSTICE](#) was formed in memory of four students that were killed in a fire in Paris in 2011, while studying abroad and provides educational information and safety resources to students in these programs. [Every Bear Goes Home](#) is an educational program at UC Berkeley in California and provides all-hazards educational programs to students. The Center's webpage also highlights a

number of non-profit partners that participate with CCFS throughout the year, please click [HERE](#) for more information.

To keep the Off-Campus issues fresh in our minds as well as keeping the discussions going, I encourage each of you to join The Center's Off-Campus Fire and Life Safety Alliance. The Alliance was started last year following a suggestion from one of our valued members. In the past year, The Alliance has been a member's only site and featured discussion from breaking news and inspection discoveries or trends. Now, the site is public and open to anyone with an interest in campus fire safety, especially interests in the Off-Campus arena.

To join, click [HERE](#) to send a request.

Have a Great and Safe Holiday Season and I'll see you all next year!

Tim

Tim Knisely

Tim Knisely is on the Board of Directors for The Center and the Senior Fire Inspector for the Centre Region Code Administration in State College, PA.

In this position he manages the Existing Structures Division that administers the fire and property maintenance code in all existing commercial and residential rental properties, and coordinates the life safety education for the community including off-campus and Greek housing.

Tim has been active with The Center for Campus Fire Safety since its inception and served as treasurer from 2007 to 2010.

He is a frequent presenter at Campus Fire Forum, an instructor for the Fire-Wise Campus program and served as project manager for Campus Fire Data.



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