



## CAMPUS FIRE SAFETY CODE TALK

Campus Fire Safety e-NewZone

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### Campus Fire Safety by the Numbers

*By: Allan B. Fraser, CBI, CPCA, Senior Building Code Specialist, NFPA*

According to NFPA's webpages:

- Structure fires in dormitories, fraternities, sororities, and barracks are more common during the evening hours between 5 p.m. and 11 p.m., and on weekends.\*
- In 2009-2013, U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated annual average of 3,870 structure fires in dormitories, fraternities, sororities, and barracks\*
- In 2009 - 2013 86% of the reported structure fires involved cooking equipment. 83% of fires were specifically reported as contained or confined to cooking equipment\*
- From 2000 - 2015, 89 fires that killed 126 people have occurred on a college campus, in Greek housing or in off-campus housing within three miles of the campus. Of these:
  - 76 off-campus fires caused 107 deaths
  - 7 on-campus building or residence hall fires claimed 9 victims
  - 6 fires in Greek housing took the lives of 10 people
- Of these 89 fires, 38 of them resulted from unattended cooking, unsupervised or improper candle use or from an electrical problem.\*\*
- From 2000 - 2015, more than nine out of 10 (94 percent) fatal campus fires took place in off-campus housing\*\*\*. Three factors contributing to the majority of off-campus fires are:
  - Missing or disabled smoke alarms
  - Improper disposal of cigarettes (on couches and other flammable furniture)
  - A student's impaired judgment due to alcohol

\*Source: NFPA's Fire Analysis & Research Division

\*\*Source: The Center for Campus Fire Safety

\*\*\*Source: U.S. Fire Administration



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These numbers are sobering to say the least, but there are some even more sobering numbers that parents and students need to be aware of and to constantly keep in mind when thinking about their own safety at school, at work, at home, and everywhere they go.

How often do you think about your safety and what you would do in the case of tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, earthquakes and other natural disasters? While fires take more lives in this country than natural disasters, natural disasters can cause a huge amount of damage and overwhelm first responders very, very quickly. Therefore everyone needs to be prepared and know what to do to help themselves where ever they are.

Bill Scott, a long time wheel chair user and deceased former chair of NFPA's *Disability Access Review and Advisory Committee*, used this mantra everywhere he went. "All people, regardless of their circumstances, have some responsibility for their own safety" and here's why.

The fact is that there is 1 first responder for every 113 people in this country. How many people live in your dorm? How many dorms are on your campus? Let's say that there are 5,000 students on your campus. That would mean that there would need to be about 44 first responders on duty at the national average of 1 to 113 just to evacuate your campus. Are there 44 police, fire and EMT's are on any given shift in your community? What happens when the event encompasses ten buildings? Twenty buildings? Half of the community? You can see that a community runs out of first responders very quickly as the magnitude of the event grows.

Now consider that approximately 22 of those 113 people have a disability. Another 12% are children under the age of 14 and another 15% are people over 65. Those numbers don't include people who are institutionalized in hospitals and other healthcare facilities, or those who are homeless. Do you see how huge the problems can become very quickly?

Take some responsibility for your own safety no matter what your circumstances are! Make a plan and practice it. Change the parts that don't work and practice it again. Practice it once a month so it becomes as automatic as tying your



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shoes or driving your car. NFPA has a free, *Emergency Planning Guide for People with Disabilities* that will walk you through making your own plan regardless of your circumstances at: [www.nfpa.org/disabilities](http://www.nfpa.org/disabilities). It's not just for people with disabilities. Remember, if it works for people with disabilities, it works for everyone! Don't wait! Take charge of your own safety!

### **Allan B. Fraser, CBI, CPCA NFPA**

Allan is NFPA's Senior Building Code Specialist. His projects include staffing seven technical committees, NFPA's *"Disability Access Review and Advisory Committee"*.

He authored NFPA's *"Emergency Evacuation Planning Guide for People with Disabilities"* and created "**e-ACCESS**", NFPA's quarterly newsletter on fire and life safety information for people with disabilities.

He represents NFPA on ANSI/ICC A117.1, *Standard for Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities*, ASHRAE's SSPC 90.1, SSPC 90.2, and Code Interaction Subcommittee and RESNA's Standards Committee on Stair Descent Devices.

An expert in Code Administration he was the Building Commissioner in five (5) different municipalities over a 27 year career and rebuilt those departments incorporating "state-of-the-art" software, communications and imaging systems. He created computer programs to issue permits & track all department functions. He's been on State and Regional Technical Committees, taught Building Code at professional seminars and continuing education programs and holds both State and National Certification



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