



OFF-CAMPUS

By Tim Knisely

February 2019

After Hours Emergencies:

Many of you that work in the housing and fire arena frequently need to deal with events that occur beyond the normal office hours. If you don't - consider yourself lucky!

Those of you that are on-call may go days or even weeks without any calls. Or, you may end up with four or five in one weekend. During the semester, the chances are higher that something will happen.

These call-outs are generally initiated by the police or fire departments, or facility managers within the buildings. Something went wrong causing someone to call 9-1-1. Or, it could be an alarm activation initiated the response. The first responders need a resource to turn the incident over to once the emergency is controlled. This is where the on-call staff is needed.

The calls can be for just about anything that the tenants can dream up. As we have said before - students are living on their own for the first time. Mistakes will and do happen.

First, and perhaps most common is the typical fire incident or dealing with those displaced or impacted by the fire. Some displaced tenants may find friends to stay with, others are accommodated by the housing division of the university or the Red Cross. The primary concern is to make sure that everyone has a safe place to stay temporarily. If the entire structure is uninhabitable or dangerous, more actions may be necessary, and you may need to call more staff to assist. Beyond the fires, the list of potential incidents can be endless - here are just a handful:

- *Freeze ups, in the cold climates
 - *Sprinkler and domestic water lines that are subject to freezing, will freeze if the insulation is not properly installed and the heat is not maintained. Failure of these systems will be identified when the frozen portion will expand and break or thaw out.*
 - *Depending on the weather system or this year's Polar Vortex, extreme low temperatures beyond the design temperature) are experienced. Freeze and breaks are inevitable.**
- *Sprinkler activation for incidents other than fires*



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- *Intentional or accidental damage - typically a golf club or some type of heat source*
 - *The tenants will report that 'it just went off for no reason'. This is an indicator that they were likely intimately involved in the activation. They may also be wet!*
 - *Water emergencies from tubs, sinks or other domestic lines*
 - *Yes, water lines beyond sprinkler lines do freeze and break*
 - *When there is water damage, it almost always occurs on the upper floors it seems. And, almost always at 1:30 AM, or later.*
 - *Alarm activations, or multiple activations that cannot be restored*
 - *Could be related to water from above*
 - *Could be the building rep that does not know how to properly reset the system*
 - *Or, an immediate service call may be needed to troubleshoot the system.*
 - *Out of control parties / Overcrowding*
 - *The structural damage from the overcrowded party, inside or on the deck. This may be reported by tenants that live on the floor below that can see cracks in the drywall. Or, the deck or floor may partially or completely collapse with people injured/trapped.*
 - *And last, but not least - vehicles hitting structures, or driving through the structure*
 - *This can happen anywhere and at any time. And seems to occur more often than one would think.*

The fire and police departments need to be familiar with the on-call services that are offered by your agency and must know how and when to make notification. Facility managers need to be prepared and have a plan. Most do. But some will need guidance from time to time. If you have the opportunity, plan some meetings with the managers to share ideas and resources for when these events happen. And, review these plans periodically to make sure that the phone numbers, emails or contact person is accurate.



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Having a plan will pay dividends at 1:30, 2:30 or 3:30 AM.

So, if you are on-call get some sleep. You'll need it.

Tim

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Tim Knisely is 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 served on The Center's Board of Directors since its inception and served as treasurer from 2007 to 2010.

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