



## OFF-CAMPUS

By Tim Knisely

August 2016

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### If it's Predictable - It's

#### Preventable:

This past week my community had a reminder that our fire prevention efforts can never stop, especially with student housing. Well before the arrival of the students for the fall semester we are seeing more and more students present during the summer months. Some may be taking class, while others are here to work or hang out with friends. So, this means that we no longer have an off season from our housing issues.

This fire was very typical in off-campus housing; a grease fire from unattended cooking and when the fire was detected the tenant applied water in the attempt to extinguish the

flames. Most of us know what happened next - the flash fire and rapid development of flames and heat boiling out of the pan. Fortunately, a few good things occurred:

1. The fire was quickly controlled due to two sprinklers activating.
2. The alarm system activated and notified the fire department. (No one called 9-1-1)
3. No one was displaced beyond the apartment where the fire occurred, and this is only temporarily to dry out the carpeting.

My agency and staff work year round to develop and present educational programs based on our fire trends. A fire like this justifies why we do. Following past fires staff has set up some

impromptu fire safety programs in the neighborhood where the fire occurred. We are always looking for new ideas and programs to try. Currently, we are preparing to unveil a new interactive fire safety trailer, dubbed the Fire Safety Lab that is designed as a dorm room, apartment and home office. The Fire Safety Lab is for teaching the basic about home fire hazards, along with the primary and sometimes simple and actions an occupant may take. The lab includes a home full of hazards ready to challenge the visitor. Our goal is to reduce the general fire risk associated with cooking, as well as the dangerous trend of applying water on grease fires.



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Soon, 9,000 freshmen will move on-campus here; meaning about 9,000 sophomores will be moving off-campus. As we know, these new residents will be living on their own for the first time. It's time to get ready! How does your community prepare for the next generation of off-campus residents?

A primer for this article was shared on the Off-Campus Fire & Life Safety Alliance group page asking the members to share some of the fall fire safety preparation. After all, September is Campus Fire Safety Month! And, I got some good feedback.

The first was from the University of Vermont, courtesy of University Fire Marshal John Marcus. There the Office of Student and Community Relation's (OCSR) mission

statement is to *“provide resources and education to our students so they have successful experiences transitioning to and living off campus. We also work with students, neighbors and the city partners on initiatives to improve the quality-of-life in our shared community.”*

The Office of Student and Community Relations offers a series of sessions to assist students with housing, leases, roommate issues, security and tips for being a good neighbor. Attendees receive a Preferred Renter's Card that shows prospective landlords that the students have taken the initiative to educate themselves about housing options and how to be model tenants. Next month I'll provide more

about John's program at UVM, including why he makes the presentation in his pajamas!

Keep your programs and events coming! In September we'll showcase more of the creative and unique ideas that are developed to keep our students - our residents safe.

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### 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.



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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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