

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Smoking Materials Cause Fire at University of Kansas Fraternity House

Newburyport, Massachusetts - August 27, 2014

Just before noon on August 26, 2014, a fire broke out at the Sigma Chi fraternity house, located in the 1400 block of Tennessee Street, Lawrence, KS, near the University of Kansas. The fire was located in a third floor living area, including bedrooms and bathrooms. No students were injured, despite there being over seventy students present in the house at the time of the fire. Two of the students occupying the space in which the fire occurred were in class at the time the fire broke out.

Over thirty firefighters responded to the blaze, and controlled the fire within sixty minutes. Fire crews continued to work the scene for over three hours, performing overhaul and eliminating hot spots.

Lawrence Fire Department Division Chief Shaun Coffey stated that the fire did not appear to be suspicious, but that an investigation as to the cause of the fire was underway. Fire Officials later report that the cause of this fire was the improper disposal of smoking materials. This is the second fire in this house in two years, although the first occurred on August 22, 2012, it was related to ongoing construction to the building's exterior. There were no injuries reported with the initial fire, in 2012.



Media credit: [Mike Yoder](#)

Other Greek organizations have offered assistance with housing the students who live in the affected area, as they are likely to be displaced as a result of this fire. Luckily, no one was injured in this fire, however.



CCFS reflects on this incident and wants to remind everyone of the importance of properly installing and maintaining smoke detectors and other fire prevention equipment, in accordance with prescribed codes and standards. But let's look beyond requirements and ask ourselves what else we can do to avoid potential loss of life from fire.

- If you need to smoke, **smoke outside**; be sure to **fully extinguish all smoking materials**. Leave the smoking materials outside; **never bring smoking materials indoors**.
- Keep a **portable fire extinguisher** on every floor - and be sure it is fully charged. A fire extinguisher is useful for fires smaller than a wastebasket. **Before using a fire extinguisher call 9-1-1 and sound the fire alarm**. If a small incipient fire cannot be controlled, or if it becomes larger than a wastebasket, exit the building immediately.
- Plan your **escape routes** - Identify windows, and doors, know two ways out and determine an escape route **before the fire**.
- Keep an **emergency escape ladder** on upper floors - plan a safe escape route for windows.
- Keep **escape routes clear** - do not allow objects to be stored in halls or stairwells.
- **Inspect the exterior door** at bottom of stairwell. It must be able to be opened without a key from the inside. **Door cannot be blocked** by snow, cars or other objects.
- **Choose a meeting place in advance** - Pick a highly visible area, a safe distance away from the flames, to meet in case of fire related emergency.
- **Be prepared** - Practice your emergency exit routes with each occupant. Practice crawling low to avoid toxic smoke from a fire. Practice feeling doors for heat before opening doors. Practice opening windows and using an emergency escape ladder.

“The Center for Campus Fire Safety also wants to point out the necessity of fire sprinkler systems”, said Paul D. Martin, President of The Center for Campus Fire Safety. “To have residence halls without fire sprinklers today should be unacceptable to parents” said Martin. Fire Sprinklers protect people and structures. Most people don't realize that 8 out of 10 fire deaths occur at night when everyone is asleep. Fires are also fast; they can go from a tiny flame to total destruction in as little as three minutes. Fire sprinklers can suppress and often extinguish a fire before the fire department arrives, providing additional time to escape.



86 fatal fires have been documented that occurred on a college campus, in Greek housing or in off-campus housing within 3-miles of the campus - claiming a total of 123 victims.

- » 73 fires have occurred in off-campus housing claiming 104 victims
- » 7 fires have occurred in on-campus building or residence halls claiming 9 victims
- » 6 fires have occurred in Greek housing claiming 10 victims

CCFS has been documenting specific campus related fires deaths since Year 2000. Current and more detailed statistics, along with the definition of how we define “campus related fires” are always posted on the website, along with a host of fire safety resources and tips for fire safety professionals as well as students in both universities and off-campus housing. One of the resources includes a daily and ongoing listing of other fire incidents in the higher education arena.

To learn more about CCFS and its programs, visit [www.campusfiresafety.org](http://www.campusfiresafety.org).

**For additional information:**

Fire Fatality Statistics and Definition:

<http://www.campusfiresafety.org/firefatalitystatistics>

Continual e-news -campus fire & safety:

<http://www.campusfiresafety.org/News>

Campus Fire Safety Resources: <http://www.campusfiresafety.org/resources>



### **About The Center for Campus Fire Safety (CCFS)**

The Center for Campus Fire Safety (CCFS) is a non-profit, member focused organization devoted to reducing the loss of life from fire at our nation's campuses. The mission of The Center for Campus Fire Safety is to serve as an advocate for the promotion of campus fire safety. CCFS serves as the focal point for the efforts of a number of organizations and also as a clearinghouse for information relating to campus fire safety. Visit us at [www.campusfiresafety.org](http://www.campusfiresafety.org) for more information.

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