



CAMPUS FIRE FACTS

Electrical Safety for Dorms & Off-Campus

Choosing listed products for students living away at college demonstrates a proactive approach to fire and life safety, whether you are purchasing mattresses by the 100s for a dorm or several smoke and CO alarms for your student's first apartment. UL (Underwriters Laboratories, Inc) is probably the most well known of all the testing and listing organizations and their approval labels appear on all products that have undergone and passed their rigid testing. Teaching the importance of product testing and standards add to the list of life-long lessons of fire and life safety we strive to instill.

safe products + safe practices = safe environments.

•**Do not overload** extension cords, power strips or outlets: Extension cords, power cords and outlets can overheat. When cords overheat, they can also deteriorate quickly and cause a potential shock/fire hazard. Also, older buildings may not have modernized electrical systems, the wiring in walls may not be sufficient to handle the amount of electricity needed when multiple power strips are used.

•**Use a power strip with an over-current protector:** A power strip with an over-current protector shuts off power automatically if there is too much current being drawn.

•**Know how much is too much:** All appliances indicate how much wattage is consumed when operated; that rating can be found on the appliance itself and often within the use and care booklet that accompanies the product. Other appliances will indicate power usage in amps, rather than watts.

•**Be wary of electrical outlets that get too hot to touch:** If an electrical outlet becomes so hot you cannot leave your hand on it, you have a potential fire hazard. Unplug all appliances and notify landlord or resident assistant immediately.

•**Do not connect multiple extension cords together:** The more plugs and receptacles you have connecting an appliance to a wall outlet, the more chance you have for dangerous arcing and sparking. Make sure that any extension cord you intend to use is rated adequately for the current that will be drawn by the appliance. For instance, an iron will draw significantly more current than a table lamp.

•**Extension cords are for temporary situations:** Contrary to popular belief, **extension cords should not be used as a long-term solution** when you need another outlet. The longer an extension cord is, the more chance it can be damaged over time.

•**Do not route cords under doors or carpets:** Extension cords can short circuit, overheat and ignite if they are buried under carpet subject to foot traffic, if they have furniture resting on and pinching them, or if they become bunched up behind hot appliances or equipment.

•**Look for the UL Mark** on any electrical product you use: The UL Mark on extension cords, lamps and anything electrical you are going to plug into a wall outlet tells you that representative samples meet UL's rigorous safety requirements.

•**Never cut off grounding pin:** Never bend, file or cut a grounding pin from a three-pronged cord to plug an appliance into a wall outlet. This disarms the protection meant to keep you safe and presents the potential of a shock hazard.

•**Don't use cheater plugs:** Cheater plugs are adapters that allow a three prong plug to be plugged into a two-pronged wall outlet. As a general practice, refrain from using cheater-plugs. But cheater plugs with a special screw tab that can be attached to a wall outlet are sometimes acceptable.

•**Use light bulbs with correct wattage for lamps:** All UL-Listed lamps have wattage specifications near the bulb socket to tell you what size bulb is the maximum recommended. If no indication is on the product, do not use a bulb with more than 60 watts.

•**Halogen lamps:** If your living situation permits you to own one, make sure the halogen lamp meets updated requirements. All halogen lamps must be designed with a mesh guard that prevents contact with the bulb and must also have an automatic tip-over switch.