

# Fire and EMS on Campus: So Many Choices

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**W**hen parents send their children off to college to further their education there is a considerable amount of time invested into planning, selecting, and applying to colleges based on what the college will offer the student. Some of those things might be the cost of the education, living conditions, student to teacher ratios, and extracurricular activities that are offered as part of the whole package. I know that these are all things that I looked into when I first went off to college, but one thing I didn't look at was what level of fire and EMS was available to the students and the community. I also now wonder how many other people look at that as well when they are planning for their children's higher education.

This is an interesting subject to look at as it could be an influential factor when it comes to picking what colleges to attend. Some might argue that it would be just as important as to the level of academia that is being paid for and provided. The college campus can sometimes be viewed as a separate community within a community. The larger community is provided a level of fire and EMS based on the population as allocation of resources, in the form of tax dollars for funding. The demand on resources that are available to the public can greatly change when a college campus is within a community. For example, if a community has a permanent population of 20,000 residents from which a portion of their property taxes are being used to pay for the level of service it might only allow for a minimal

level of protection from the fire and EMS providers. If that community has a college campus that has a student and faculty population of 10,000 that fluctuates in size during the academic year, one must take into account that number when developing a master plan on how to provide a level of service to all of those within the overall community, that includes permanent and temporary residents.

If a particular college was being looked at by a family for attendance, and based on the population of the student body and faculty and to then also include the permanent population of the overall community one would want to make sure the level of protection and services provided by fire and EMS would be sufficient to meet the needs and demands of those requiring service. This would also include the inspection services of the fire department as well as the code enforcement capabilities of that department. The department should have the resources and capabilities to ensure that all dormitories and housing facilities all have the most up to date and compliant early notification and fire suppression devices throughout the buildings. The occurrence of dorm and off campus housing fires and injuries can be pointed out to prove this point. These dorms should have the same early warning systems and/or fire suppression systems that one might find in their own homes, if not better. Another important factor that should come into mind is the means of egress that these dorms or housing facilities have. The potential to have to evacuate a large number of people in a short period of time certainly exists in these types of occupancies. It would seem reasonable that any college would have these things taken care of, as well as many other's but these are just a few items.

Along with fire protection and services there is also the EMS component and the question should be asked to what level is EMS provided to the students and by whom? In many communities that have a college within them exists a separate EMS service that just provides EMS and no fire suppression services. There are also communities where the fire department provides all services, both fire and EMS, and this is the case in Bridgewater, Ma. where we find the full time career fire department provides fire and EMS care to the paramedic level to both the town as well as the college

population. In Durham, New Hampshire, McGregor Memorial EMS is a regional non-profit organization that provides EMS services to the towns of Durham, Lee, Madbury, as well as the student population of the University of New Hampshire. While they provide EMS to those communities, each town has their own fire services that are provided by a separate fire department. With regards to EMS on a college campus it would also be important to know whether or not they have any plans in place to address the potential medical needs at a mass gathering, such as a football game or even if a single dorm had multiple residents that were all ill or injured at the same time. It would also be good to know how many ambulances or resources that were available to the population, or if there are any community-wide EMS activities, such as CPR classes or if the community is an AED community. That would be the strategic placement of AED's throughout the community or within college campus buildings.

While we want the best for our children in all aspects of life, which includes their higher education, we should be as informed and educated as we possibly can when it comes to their education. We spend a lot of time making sure they are going to the right college based on any number of factors, attributes, and outcomes that each college will provide. While academics, prestige, and extracurricular activities might be very important to those who are making these decisions on where to go, it should also be just as important to ensure that the college is providing an adequate level of fire and EMS services to both the resident as well as the student population. In fact I would suggest that it also be a significant contributing factor when it comes to deciding on a higher learning institution for our children.



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