



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dorm Fire at Howard University Sends 2 Students, 1 Security Guard to the Hospital

Newburyport, Massachusetts - March 21, 2014.

On March 19, 2014, shortly after midnight, fire broke out in Meridian Hill Hall, on the campus of Howard University. The fire was contained to a single room, on the fourth floor of the building, according to a press release issued by the university. Students living on impacted floors, from smoke and water damage, have subsequently been relocated to other dormitories on the campus. Howard University President Wayne Fredrick attributes the quick actions of students and staff in recognizing that a dangerous situation exists and quickly evacuating.

Luckily, no lives were lost in this fire; however, two students and one security guard were transported to the hospital with undisclosed, but minor, injuries. Meridian Hill Hall, as well as all other dorms on campus, has fully integrated fire suppression and detection equipment, according to the University's Annual Security Report. Finally, the report states that there were no fires in Meridian Hill Hall during the 2010-2012 academic years. When choosing colleges, the Center for Campus Fire Safety recommends that potential students and parents review these reports to ensure that the buildings, in which you or your child may be living, are as safe as possible. Ensure that campus buildings have sprinklers and fire alarms; they could save your or your child's life.

CCFS reflects on this tragedy and also 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.

- Plan your **escape routes** - Identify windows and doors, know two ways out and determine an escape route **before the fire**. Always choose the safest escape route - the one with the least amount smoke and heat. Be prepared to get low under smoke if necessary.



- Keep **escape routes clear** - do not allow objects to be stored in halls or stairwells. Make sure windows can be **easily opened**.
- **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.
- Keep an **emergency escape ladder** on upper floors. Follow manufacturer's instructions for the safe use of emergency escape ladders. Only purchase emergency escape ladders evaluated by a recognized testing laboratory. Only use the ladder from upper floors in a real emergency.
- **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. Practice opening windows. Practice using an emergency escape ladder from the first floor.
- Use a portable fire extinguisher **only** if you know how and can do so safely. **Before using a fire extinguisher call 9-1-1 and sound the fire alarm.** Fire extinguishers are useful only for very small fires, like those contained in a small waste basket. If the fire is larger than that, exit the building immediately.

“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.

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 for more information.

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