

College Campus and Students



Did you know that cooking fires is the leading cause of injuries on college campuses, followed by careless smoking and arson?

According to statistics compiled by the Center for Campus Fire Safety, close to 90 college students have died in on and off-campus fires in the United States since January of 2000. Sadly, most of these fires may have been prevented if both the students and schools had observed fire safety practices.

The National Center for Education Statistics cited Virginia as having 99 postsecondary schools during the 2003-2004 school years. With this many colleges and universities, one can only imagine the number of students attending learning institutions that will either be staying on campus dormitories or off-campus apartment housing. The fact is no matter where students are staying during the school year, they need to put fire safety first. One college/university student fire-related death or injury is one to many – especially when there are time proven steps that can be taken to prevent the fires in the first place.

The Virginia Department of Fire Programs recommends the following life-saving tips to help reduce and prevent the loss of life and property in dormitories and college apartment housing fires.

Parents and Students: Before Selecting a School

When visiting or selecting a school, make an informed decision and ask these questions when you are visiting campuses...

- How many fires have occurred on campus in the past 2-5 years? How many students were injured or killed?
- Does every student room have a smoke alarm? How often are evacuation drills held?
- How many false alarms have occurred in the residence halls?
- Is the fire department immediately notified whenever any fire alarm system is activated?
- Are smoking, candles, and halogen lamps prohibited in the residence halls?

Dormitory Housing Fires: What You Should Know

- Many factors contribute to the problem of dormitory housing fires.
- Improper use of 911 notification systems delay emergency response.
- Student apathy is very prevalent. The attitude, “it won’t happen to me” all too often keeps students from taking fire safety seriously.
- Vandalized and improperly maintained smoke alarms and fire alarm systems inhibit early detection of fires, and limit critical moments to escape!
- Misuse of cooking appliances, overloaded electrical circuits and extension cords increase the risk of fires.

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Take responsibility for Prevention

- If you are partying, assign a non-impaired event monitor.
- Do not overload electrical outlets.
- Keep space heaters and halogen lamps away from combustibles.
- Never leave candles unattended.
- Extinguish all smoking materials thoroughly.
- If you must smoke, smoke outside.
- Use ashtrays with a wide, stable base that are hard to trip over - if it wobbles, it will not work!
- Put it out. All the way. Every time.
- Douse the ashtrays with water before you toss the butts into the trash.
- Do not smoke if you are drowsy. Do not smoke in bed.
- If people smoke while at your home, be sure to check for cigarettes butts near the furniture and under sofa cushions before you call it a night.

Smoke Alarms Save Lives!

- Working smoke alarms can double your chances of surviving a fire.
- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home.
- Test your smoke alarm monthly.
- Clean your smoke alarm often. Keep it free of dust and replace the battery at least twice a year. Remember, improperly working smoke, especially alarms with missing batteries, can not warn you of danger!

Cooking Safety

- Never leave cooking unattended. A serious fire can start in just seconds.
- Always wear short or tight-fitting sleeves when you cook.
- Keep towels, pot holders and curtains away from flames.
- Never use the range or oven to heat your home. Double-check the kitchen before you go to bed or leave the house.

Plan Your Escape

- Smoke alarms can only warn of danger. After the alarm you must then take action to escape.
- The best thing to ensure you and your family will do the correct thing in an emergency is to have an escape plan and practice it.
- Escape plans should be practiced from every room in the house.
- Know two ways out of each room.
- Caution everyone to stay low to the floor and never open doors that are hot.
- Select a location where everyone can meet after escaping the house.
- Remember, once out, stay out!

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