

Fire Safety for College Students

The United States Fire Administration works to educate citizens about fire safety issues toward prevention of fires and subsequently saving lives. Each year nationwide, college and university students on- and off-campus, experience hundreds of fire-related emergencies. There are several specific causes for fires involving college students, both on and off campus, including cooking, intentionally set fires, and open flame. Overall, most college-related fires are due to a general lack of knowledge about fire safety and prevention.

For most students, the last fire safety training they received was in grade school, but with new independence comes new responsibilities. It is important that both off-campus and on-campus students understand fire risks and know the preventative measures that could save their lives. The United States Fire Administration (a division of FEMA) offers the following safety tips for students

Candles

- Avoid using lighted candles!
- Do not leave candles unattended.
- Keep candles away from draperies and linens.
- [Learn About Candle Safety »](#)

Cooking

- Cook only where it is permitted.
- Keep your cooking area clean and uncluttered.
- If you use electric appliances, don't overload circuits.
- Never leave cooking unattended.
- If a fire starts in a microwave, keep the door closed and unplug the unit.
- [Learn About Cooking Fire Safety »](#)

Smoking

- If you smoke, smoke outside.
- Make sure cigarettes and ashes are out. Never toss hot cigarette butts or ashes in the trashcan.
- After a party, check for cigarette butts, especially under cushions. Chairs and sofas catch on fire fast and burn fast.
- Be alert - don't smoke in bed! If you are sleepy or have been drinking, put your cigarette out first.
- [Learn About Smoking Safety »](#)

Escape Planning

- If you have to escape through smoke, get low and go under the smoke to your exit.
- Before opening a door, feel the door. If it's hot, use your second way out.
- Use the stairs; never use an elevator during a fire.
- If you're trapped, call the fire department and tell them where you are. Seal your door with rags and signal from your window. Open windows slightly at the top and bottom; shut them if smoke rushes in from any direction.
- If you have a disability, alert others of the type of assistance you need to leave the building.
- [Learn About Escape Planning »](#)

Particularly for students living off campus, fire safety is an important concern, as the university does not monitor conditions of facilities and responsibility for fire safety. According to the U.S. Department of Education, approximately two-thirds of all students live in off-campus housing. There are five common factors in a number of off-campus fires involving college students (Source: Campus-Firewatch)

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- Lack of automatic fire sprinklers
- Missing or disabled smoke alarms
- Careless disposal of smoking materials
- Impaired judgment from alcohol consumption
- Upholstered furniture fires on decks and porches

Good Questions to Ask Before Moving in or Signing a Lease

1. Are working smoke alarms installed? (Preferably in each bedroom, interconnected to sound all if any one detects smoke)
2. Are there at least two ways to exit your bedroom and your building?
3. Do the upper floors of the building have at least two interior stairs, or a fire escape?
4. Is a sprinkler system installed and maintained?
5. Are the existing electrical outlets adequate for all of the appliances and equipment that you are bringing – without the need for extension cords?
6. Are there EXIT signs in the building hallways to indicate accessible escape routes?
7. Does the building have a fire alarm system installed and maintained?
8. Has the buildings heating system been inspected recently (in the last year)?
9. Is the building address clearly posted to allow emergency services to find you quickly in the event of an emergency?
10. Does the sprinkler system or fire alarm system send a signal to the local fire department or campus security?