



# Fire Safety 101

A Factsheet for Colleges & Universities

**E**very year college and university students experience a growing number of fire-related emergencies. There are several causes for these fires, however most are due to a general lack of knowledge about fire safety and prevention.

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) offers these tips to help reduce and prevent the loss of life and property in dormitory and university housing fires.

## THE FACTS

In cases where fire fatalities occurred on college campuses, alcohol was a factor. There is a strong link between alcohol and fire deaths. In many adult fire fatalities, victims were under the influence at the time of the fire. Alcohol abuse often impairs judgment and hampers evacuation efforts. Cooking is the leading cause of fire injuries on college campuses, closely followed by careless smoking and arson.

## THE CAUSE

Many factors contribute to the problem of dormitory housing fires.

- Improper use of 911 notification systems delays emergency response.
- Student apathy is prevalent. Many are unaware that fire is a risk or threat in the environment.
- Evacuation efforts are hindered since fire alarms are often ignored.
- Building evacuations are delayed due to lack of preparation and pre-planning.
- Vandalized and improperly maintained smoke alarms and fire alarm systems inhibit early detection of fires.
- Misuse of cooking appliances, overloaded electrical circuits and extension cords increase the risk of fires.

## SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

- Provide students with a program for fire safety and prevention.
- Teach students how to properly notify the fire department using the 911 system.
- Install smoke alarms in every dormitory room and every level of housing facilities.
- Maintain and regularly test smoke alarms and fire alarm systems. Replace smoke alarm batteries every semester.
- Regularly inspect rooms and buildings for fire hazards. Ask your local fire department for assistance.
- Inspect exit doors and windows and make sure they are working properly.
- Create and update detailed floor plans of buildings, and make them available to emergency personnel, resident advisors and students.
- Conduct fire drills and practice escape routes and evacuation plans. Urge students to take each alarm seriously.
- Do not overload electrical outlets and make sure extension cords are used properly.
- Learn to properly use and maintain heating and cooking appliances.

**For More Information Contact:**  
**The United States Fire Administration**  
Office of Fire Management Programs  
16825 South Seton Avenue  
Emmitsburg, MD 21727

**Or visit the USFA website:**  
[www.usfa.fema.gov](http://www.usfa.fema.gov)

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