



? ON-CAMPUS

Take the Time to Ask Questions

Talking about campus fire safety with school officials

Beginning a new school year is a time of anticipation. Students are excited about the academic atmosphere of their home-away-from-home and they are looking forward to being on their own.

As they ask questions about campus activities, programs, and academic life, parents should continue asking questions about the school and just how prepared they are for an emergency. Don't leave it to your son or daughter. Face it; they are more interested in the first big party on campus or making plans with their new friends and roommates.

For many parents, the questions they need to ask will be follow-up questions they asked when their child first visited the campus.

The Center for Campus Fire Safety (CCFS) reminds parents that During Campus Fire Safety Month, students will learn that fires do happen in campus-related settings and students need to protect themselves no matter where they live. CCFS has a list of questions parents can ask to discern the level of safety and preparedness. A safe school will share these answers with pride.

- How are the fire incidents on your campus? Are the incidents usually accidental or intentional? Do you follow up with public education and informing students of how to prevent these events in the future? How do you handle fire investigation and an identified fire-setter in the school community?

- Which buildings are protected with an automatic fire sprinkler system? Are sprinklers included in every new-construction project and renovation? Are all residential buildings equipped with sprinklers? Are labs and other

high-risk areas protected (such as art rooms, kitchens, mechanical areas or shops with heavy equipment)?

- Does your college or university have a system for the security and accountability and safe storage of chemical, biological or radioactive materials (as applicable) with the information available 24/7?

- Does every student's room have a smoke alarm? Does it send a signal to campus security or the fire department? What is the power supply to the detector? (hardwired/ battery/ both) Are batteries changed when clocks are changed? Who provides the battery replacements?

- Are false alarms a problem in the residence halls? If not, what practices have given you this success? If they are, what steps are being taken to correct the situation?

- What is the school's disciplinary policy towards students that cause false alarms or fail to evacuate during an alarm?

- Is your alarm system tied into local first responders so the fire department IMMEDIATELY notified of ALL incidents on campus?

- Is smoking allowed anywhere on campus? What are the penalties for violation?

- What items such as candles and Halogen lamps are prohibited in the residence halls?

- What are the acceptable small appliances to bring to school? Do the dorm rooms have enough outlets with enough power to feed energy need? Are there recommended limits or specific certified products that are safer to use?

- What is the training on fire prevention and comprehensive life safety does the residence hall staff receive and how often are they refreshed?
- How often do students get exposure to fire and life safety training such as fire extinguisher training?
- How often are evacuation drills conducted? What other types of exercises does the school conduct regarding emergency planning and preparedness?

These questions and their answers will make a world of difference because September is one of the worst

months for fatal campus-related housing fires. Unfortunately, many college students do not realize how quickly a fire can occur.

One more question. Do you remember the advice you gave your child on their first day of school? It was probably something like "Don't be afraid to ask questions."

As colleges and universities open their doors and prepare for a new school year, take the advice you gave your child those many years ago. **Ask questions about fire safety.**



Students living off-campus should also practice **fire** safety.

Electricity Safety

If an appliance starts smoking, has an unusual smell, or causes a fuse to blow, unplug it immediately. It may be malfunctioning and should be repaired. Call your landlord if you have questions or need assistance with malfunctioning items in your rental unit.

Cooking Safety

Never leave cooking unattended. Many fires have started from overheated grease, because heat can cause the grease to burst into flame. If this happens, carefully slide a lid over the fire and turn off the burner. Do not use water on grease or electrical fires. Never put foils or other metals in microwave ovens.

Take Care When Smoking

Carelessly discarded cigarettes are the leading cause of fire deaths in the United States. Never smoke in bed or while you are drowsy, because dropped embers may start fires.

Candles

Place candles on sturdy holders that will not tip or burn and position them far away from curtains and other flammable items. Never leave burning candles unattended.



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