



The Tennessee State Fire Marshal's Office

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State Fire Marshal: Select fire-safe housing for your college student this fall

NASHVILLE, TN – As the fall semester approaches, colleges and universities are busy preparing for the arrival of students from across the state. Some will be first-time students moving into the residence halls, others may be moving off-campus and living on their own, many for the first time.

“The State Fire Marshal’s Office encourages parents and students to stay informed of campus fire safety steps to ensure a great school year ahead,” says Tennessee State Fire Marshal Julie Mix McPeak.

According to the Center for Campus Safety’s statistics from January 2000 to June 2013, 83 fatal fires were documented that occurred on a college campus, in Greek housing, or in off-campus housing within 3 miles of the campus. Those fires claimed a total of 120 lives.

It is imperative that both off-campus and on-campus students understand fire risks and the importance of fire safety measures.

Consider the following before moving in or signing a lease:

- Are working smoke alarms installed? In Tennessee, landlords are required by state law to install working smoke alarms in their rental property. It then becomes the responsibility of the tenant to maintain the alarms. Test smoke alarms before moving in. Talk to the property owner about the maintenance needed for that particular model of alarm (some smoke alarms have batteries that need replacing annually, others are designed to last for 10 years). Stress to your college student the importance of having working smoke alarms and the dangers posed by disabling or removing batteries from smoke alarms.
- Are there at least two ways to exit the bedroom and the building?
- Do the upper floors of the building have at least two interior stairs, or a fire escape?
- Is a sprinkler system installed and maintained? Fire sprinkler systems respond quickly and effectively to a fire, often extinguishing it before the fire department arrives.
- Does the building have a fire alarm system installed and maintained?
- Does the sprinkler system or fire alarm system send a signal to the local fire department or campus security?
- Are the existing electrical outlets adequate for all of the appliances and equipment the student has – without the need for extension cords?

- Are there EXIT signs in the building hallways to indicate accessible escape routes?
- Has the building's heating system been inspected recently (in the last year)?
- Is the building/home address clearly posted to allow emergency services to find it quickly in the event of an emergency?

There are certain factors that are commonly present in fires involving college students. A lack of automatic fire sprinklers, missing or disabled smoke alarms, and careless disposal of smoking materials are all major factors in fires on and off-campus. Students and parents should be aware of these factors and discuss how to reduce the risk they pose. The State Fire Marshal's Office encourages parents to remind their students to take fire drills and evacuations seriously and to be aware that fire safety is important at home and on and off-campus.

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