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Campus and dormitory fires

The following information and resources are being provided as part of NFPA's commitment to increasing awareness and enhancing public safety.



Facts & figures

- In 2002-2005, U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated average of 3,300 structure fires in dormitories, fraternities, sororities, and barracks. These fires caused an annual average of 7 civilian deaths, 46 civilian fire injuries, and \$25 million in direct property damage. Note: Dormitories include school, college and university dormitories; fraternity and sorority houses; monasteries; bunk houses; barracks; and nurses' quarters.
- The number of reported fires in the dormitory occupancy group increased 3% from 3,200 in 1980 to 3,300 in 2005. In comparison, structure fires of all types declined 52% from 1980 to 2005.
- Between 2002-2005, cooking equipment was involved in 72% of the reported dormitory fires; this includes confined or contained fires. Heating equipment was listed as the equipment involved in 2% of these fires; an additional 2% were confined heating equipment fires.
- Structure fires in dormitories, fraternities, sororities, and barracks are more common during the



NFPA Safety Tips

Be prepared for a fire

- ▶ Your building should have an evacuation plan. Learn it and participate in all fire drills.
- ▶ If you hear an alarm, leave immediately. Close doors behind you as you go. Take room keys; if you can't escape you may have to return to your room.
- ▶ If you have a disability, make sure you are included in the escape planning for your classroom area and housing.
- ▶ Learn the location of all building exits. You may have to find your way out in the dark.
- ▶ Make sure your building has smoke alarms. Do not disable them or remove batteries.
- ▶ The best protection is a building with a fire sprinkler system.
- ▶ Don't hang anything from fire sprinkler pipes or nozzles.
- ▶ Keep a flashlight handy.

FEATURED PRODUCT



Fire Safety 101: College Fire Safety Brochure (College-Adult)

College fire safety lessons start with NFPA!

Item #: BR43B
List: **\$23.00**
Member: **\$20.70**

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Fire Protection Handbook, 2003 Edition

Stay competitive and well-informed with the industry's #1 reference - NFPA's *Fire Protection Handbook!*

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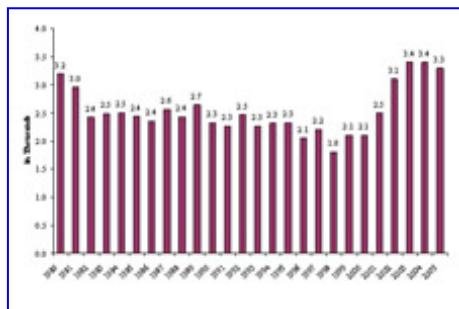
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evening hours between 5 p.m. and 11 p.m., as well as on weekends.

Source: NFPA's "U.S. Structure Fires in Dormitories, Fraternities, Sororities and Barracks," August 2007

- All visitors: [Download this report for free.](#) (PDF, 361 KB)
- All visitors: [Download a free printable fact sheet on dormitories, fraternities, sororities and barracks.](#) (PDF, 39 KB)
- Related report: NFPA's "[Structure Fires in Educational Properties](#) " report, September 2006.

Structure Fires in Dormitories, Fraternities, Sororities and Barracks, by Year: 1980-2005
[See larger image.](#)



More information on this topic

Fire investigation reports

Chapel Hill firefighters work on May 12, 1996, at the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity house on the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill campus. A fire claimed the lives of five people.

- NFPA members: [Download this report for free.](#) (PDF, 3.7 MB)
- All visitors: [Download a free report summary.](#) (PDF, 22 KB)
- See more [NFPA fire investigation reports on dormitory fires.](#)

Related articles from NFPA Journal®

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Escape tips

- ▶ 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, but close 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.

Smoking

Gimme an F! Gimme a P! What's That Stand For? Fire Protection! [The University of Utah, like many other campuses, has a fire prevention program that consists of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.](#) By Mike Halligan. Jan/ Feb 2005

•

Auditing Classes: [Pennsylvania's first fire safety audits of universities and other state facilities look to NFPA codes and standards.](#) By Stephen Barlas. Nov/Dec 2004

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Inside the Beltway: [Strong prospects for Campus Fire Safety Right to Know Act.](#) By Stephen Barlas. Nov/Dec 2003

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21st Century Dormitory: [Recent tragic fires at colleges and universities have led to a small rise in fire sprinkler systems for dormitories.](#) By Shelly Reese. Nov/ Dec 2003

•

In Compliance: [The fire problem in educational occupancies.](#) By Chip Carson, P.E. Sep/Oct 2003

•

Schooled in fire: [A new program helps drive campus fire-safety growth at our nation's colleges and universities](#) (PDF, 792 KB). By Ed Comeau. Nov/Dec 2002.

•

Introduction to Freshman Fire Safety: [Dormitory fire safety is a priority for parents, and NFPA is there to help.](#) By Meri-K Appy. Jan/ Feb 2002.

Download the chapter on "Campus Fire Safety" from NFPA's Fire Protection Handbook
The [12-page chapter on Campus Fire](#)

[Safety](#) (PDF, 110 KB), authored by Ed Comeau, addresses the risk of fire associated with on-campus and off-campus residential occupancies and some strategies for minimizing that risk. The chapter includes case studies and an overview of the PODS (Prevention, Occupant awareness, Detection, and



- ▶ If you must smoke, only smoke outside of the building and only where it's permitted.
- ▶ Use deep, wide, sturdy ashtrays. Ashtrays should be set on something that is sturdy and hard to ignite.
- ▶ It's risky to smoke when you've been drinking or when you're drowsy.
- ▶ Don't smoke in bed. Soak cigarettes before you empty ashtrays.
- ▶ After a party, check furniture and cushions for smoldering butts.

Cooking

- ▶ Cook only where it's permitted.
- ▶ If you use a kitchen, keep it clean and uncluttered.
- ▶ If you use electric appliances, don't overload circuits.
- ▶ Never leave cooking unattended.
- ▶ If a fire starts in a microwave oven, keep the door closed and unplug the unit.
- ▶ Check with your school and local fire department for off-campus housing before using a grill.
- ▶ Gas and charcoal BBQ grills must only be used outdoors.
- ▶ Position the grill well away from siding, deck railings and out from under eaves and overhanging branches.
- ▶ Place the grill a safe distance from lawn games, play areas and foot traffic.
- ▶ Keep children and pets away from the grill area: declare a three-foot "kid-free zone" around the grill.

Suppression) Strategy. [Order the complete two-volume Fire Protection Handbook.](#)

Other resources

- [Campus Firewatch](#) is an electronic newsletter focusing exclusively on campus fire safety.
- The [Center for Campus Fire Safety](#) provides a place for those interested in campus fire safety to share ideas and learn from their peers.
- When selecting a school, [ask these questions when you are visiting campuses](#) (courtesy of The Center for Campus Fire Safety).
- [U.S. Fire Administration campus and student fire safety information](#)

Updated: 8/07

- ▶ Put out several long-handled grilling tools to give the chef plenty of clearance from heat and flames when flipping burgers.
- ▶ Periodically remove grease or fat buildup in trays below grill so it cannot be ignited by a hot grill.

Candles

- ▶ Don't burn candles.

Electrical

- ▶ Check your school's rules before using electrical appliances in your room.
- ▶ Follow the manufacturer's instructions for plugging an appliance into a receptacle outlet.
- ▶ Don't pinch cords against walls or furniture or run them under carpets. Never tack or nail cords.
- ▶ Don't overload your wiring.
- ▶ Buy only appliances that have the label of an independent testing lab.

▶ Use light bulbs that match the recommended wattage on the lamp or fixture. Place lamps on level surfaces, away from things that can burn.

[Download a printable sheet of these safety tips.](#) (PDF, 24 KB)

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NFPA Mission: Reduce the worldwide burden of fire and other hazards on the quality of life by providing and advocating consensus codes and standards, research, training, and education. [More about NFPA.](#)

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