

# CAMPUS Firewatch

## Two students die in off-campus fire

### Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

On Sunday, April 22, a fire broke out in an off-campus house, killing two students from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, Lacy Siddall, 21, and Lauren Peterson, 19 of Bethalto, Illinois. According to Edwardsville Fire Chief Rick Welle, the two-story, wood frame building was a single-family home that had been converted into two apartments, one on each floor. There were two students living upstairs and the tenant on the ground floor was in the process of moving out at the time of the fire.

At approximately 3:42 a.m., a neighbor heard breaking glass and saw the fire coming from the second floor. When fire fighters arrived on the scene they report that there was moderate smoke coming from the second floor. They were able to make rapid entry into the building and quickly found the two victims on the second floor. It appeared that they were trying to escape from the fire when they were overcome.

Both victims were removed from the building and advanced life support was immediately started on the fire ground. They were transported to a local hospital and then flown to St. Luke's hospital in St. Louis for more advanced care. Both died from their injuries.

The cause of the fire is still under investigation but is believed to be electrical. The initial investigation was considering a laptop that was plugged in and charging as a possible ignition source, but it has subsequently been ruled out. The area of origin was one of the bedrooms on the second floor, but not the bedroom where the victims were found.

The building was not equipped with residential sprinklers. There were two single-station, battery operated smoke alarms present, one in each bedroom on the second floor. However, one smoke alarm did not have a battery in it and the other one had a battery that had expired over a year ago. Fire fighters reported that they did not hear smoke alarms sounding when they arrived on the fire scene.

PHOTOS ON PAGE 5

## 9 Fires – A documentary

By Ed Comeau, Publisher, Campus Firewatch

In January and February 2012, a series of campus-related fires occurred across the nation in a very short period of time. Individually, these fires were significant and, in some cases, tragic. Collectively, they painted an interesting picture of the type of fires that are happening at campuses from Massachusetts to Oregon. Documenting these fires could serve an important purpose in helping people realize the importance of fire safety, both on- and off-campus.

I felt the focus should be not so much on the fires themselves but on the impact that they had on the victims, the families, the schools and the communities. So often we look at an incident, it is a headline, and then it is replaced by the next piece of breaking news. Some have longer staying power, such as the tragedy at Marist College in New York. Others, to the media, are often non-events, such as fires in Arizona and Oregon, because the sprinklers controlled them quickly and are not newsworthy events.

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## TOWN GOWN RELATIONS

### THE IMPORTANCE OF GETTING ALONG

There are about 4,000 two- and four-year colleges and universities across the United States, according to the U.S. Department of Education, with many communities having multiple schools within their borders. This can be a double-edged sword in some cases. The schools provide a source of income for the businesses and, reportedly, during the recent Great Recession, helped to safeguard against as much of a downturn as other communities might have seen. At the same time, the schools and the student population can tax local resources such as police and fire. Add to the mix that schools are non-profits or state institutions and therefore are not taxable entities.

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## CAMPUS FIREWATCH

# FROM THE EDITOR



When I first started Campus Firewatch in 2000, I really wasn't sure where it all was going to go. This was about the time when I stepped down as the chief fire investigator for NFPA, where we had done a number of campus-related fires, and the first contract I had as a freelancer was running the first Campus Fire Safety Forum in 1999. From there, things grew and Campus Firewatch was definitely filling a gap in terms of information and resources. I continued to organize the Forums, turning them into an annual event and then founded the Center for Campus Fire Safety in 2003 and served as the director until stepping down at the end of 2006. Campus Firewatch has continued to grow, mainly because of the collaborations that have developed over the years with organizations such as the People's Burn Foundation, where we produced the landmark campus fire safety education program Igot2kno, and the Michael H. Minger Foundation.

Working with the Minger Foundation has been an incredibly productive collaboration. Through a series of Fire Prevention and Safety Grants awarded to the Foundation, we have produced videos focusing on fire safety for students with disabilities, guides for fire safety educators and resident assistants to use in teaching fire safety to students, posters for RAs to use on their floors and much more. However, we are now undertaking one of our biggest projects to date, the production of a video called 9 Fires, which I write about in this issue.

Campus Firewatch has developed a number of resources that are being used regularly by campus and community fire safety officials. Since I started it in 2000, I have been compiling a log of campus-related fires from media sources which has grown to be thousands of incidents over 12 years. This has served as evidence of where the problem really lies (off-campus) and helps reinforce the importance of fire safety education. Other tools have included topic-specific fire logs, such as couch and porch fires and sprinkler saves. This is the only, and most comprehensive, listing of campus-related incidents available going back to 2000 – a wealth of information for everyone to use.

Collaboration is the key to any successful project today. No one really has the resources, time or expertise to do anything on their own in today's economy. Also, with all of the incredible tools available through the Internet, we are able to work across the country, across time zones, on the road, when it comes to projects. While we definitely need the face-to-face opportunities to get work done, using virtual tools such as Google Docs, Dropbox, iCloud, Skype and Facetime definitely provide us with the ability to do more.

The Internet also provides us with the ability to get these resources out in everyone's hands. Igot2kno was an online training program that was developed through the involvement of a large number of experts in the fields of fire safety and campuses and made freely available for schools to use in teaching their students. The videos developed by the Minger Foundation are also available online as are all of the guides and posters. The resources from Campus Firewatch are available through its website (new and improved web site, I must say!).

But as much as I am a fan of the Internet, virtual collaboration and all of the high-tech tools, however, I really have come to have an appreciation for the "human touch." This was driven home to me by the interviews that we did for the 9 Fires project. Sitting there, talking with parents, students and survivors, hearing their stories really makes me realize that we miss a lot through all of the efforts to use virtual communications. Listening to them talk about their experiences was so dramatic... and my hope is that through the 9 Fires documentary we will be able to convey this same emotional response that I had while helping to make this video. Time will tell...

Ed Comeau, *Publisher*

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Campus fire safety is a complex issue. The information in this newsletter is provided to help you in your efforts to provide as fire-safe a community as possible. However, it is no replacement for professional advice. For further assistance, contact your local fire department.

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Campus Firewatch™  
a publication of writer-tech.com, llc  
P.O. Box 1046  
Belchertown, MA 01007  
PH: (413) 323-6002  
FX: (413) 460-0092  
[publisher@campus-firewatch.com](mailto:publisher@campus-firewatch.com)  
[www.campus-firewatch.com](http://www.campus-firewatch.com)

Design and Layout:  
McCusker Communications, Inc.  
103 Fensview Drive  
Westwood, MA 02090  
PH/FX: (781) 762-5030  
[cmccusker@cmccusker.com](mailto:cmccusker@cmccusker.com)  
[www.cmccusker.com](http://www.cmccusker.com)

## WANTED: AUTHORS

Do you have an article that you would like to write for Campus Firewatch?

We're always looking for articles on what is happening at campuses and in communities across the country.

Contact us at [ecomeau@campus-firewatch.com](mailto:ecomeau@campus-firewatch.com) and let's talk!

## Town Gown Relations - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1.

Strong town-gown relations are an important part of an effective partnership which, at times, can be contentious and this can come to the forefront during victory celebrations/riots, for example. Anecdotally, it seems that either a) there are more riots or disturbances happening on campuses or b) they are getting bigger and bigger. It used to be that there would be a celebration after a team's victory (whether it is a college team or a professional sports team) but now it seems as if there are riots whether a team wins or loses. Whatever the reason, it can strain the relationship between the school and the community. However, having already built up a strong relationship can help significantly in planning and preparing for these types of events and in the aftermath.

"Town-gown relations are vital to our operations, in various ways," said Bryan Makinen, director of Environmental Health and Safety for Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond, Kentucky. "We have a unique population, being a city within a city, and we rely on relations between emergency services and the university and different political bodies." This can be especially critical for EKU because of the Blue Grass Army Depot in Richmond which stores chemical weapons, including 523 tons of nerve agents GB and VX and mustard agent.

What is critical is open and regular communication. "Over time, we just stay in touch," reported Boulder Fire Chief Larry Donner. Boulder is home to the University of Colorado which has an enrollment of 30,000 students in a city of 97,000 people. "I meet regularly with university officials to make sure we are well connected, make sure they are happy with our services and if I have any issues I can bring them up. By staying in touch with each other, you can address minor issues while they are minor." It isn't always at the top levels, either, where this ongoing communication

needs to take place. Boulder Fire's fire safety educator works closely with CU housing and Greek Affairs in doing ongoing fire safety education, Greek Fire Academies and RA Fire Academies.

Most of the students across the country live in off-campus housing which is also where over four out of five campus-related fire deaths occur. For this reason, town-gown relations take on a different perspective in that it is important that everyone works to address the problems that can be found in this housing. At times it can be deficiencies in the building, other times it can be student behavior.

In Washington, DC, following a fire in 2004 that claimed the life of a Georgetown University student Daniel Rigby, the city started an effort through the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs to reach out to students living off-campus. Rigby was living in an illegal basement apartment and was unable to get out when the fire broke out. DCRA started an aggressive campaign using social media to educate students about that all rental properties were required to be registered with the city and what the code requirements were regarding a host of issues, from fire safety to health and sanitation. In addition to the social media outreach, DCRA would also do safety fairs at schools and some "guerilla marketing" using signs and chalk on sidewalks to reach the students.

"We work with the apartment owner's association as much as the university," in Boulder, said Donner, addressing issues such as grills on wooden decks and balconies. This is a relationship that takes time to build up and solidify, but it pays off for both parties. "It is in their best interest to maintain safe buildings," continued Donner, "as is ours. We are able to work together for a consistent message to their renters and we can provide a little bit of an excuse for them (the landlords) to say it is a fire

department issue." Boulder, like any community, has "problem landlords" but Donner is surprised at the number that do work with the fire department and the city and he reports that a vast majority are easy, and willing, to work with.

The importance of town-gown relations really came to the forefront recently in La Crosse, Wisconsin, at a fire in a residence hall at the University of Wisconsin broke out. The fire was in the basement, in a common area, and forced 271 students out of the building on a cold January morning. When Chancellor Joe Gow arrived on the scene, he said it was very comforting to be able to see a face that he knew, Fire Chief Gregg Cleveland, who is a strong advocate of knowing others in the community. "We have to get out of the firehouse and get engaged with other community leaders," said Cleveland. "That is what I strive for as a fire chief in the community, create foundations, so when bumps come up we are not meeting each other for the first time, getting to know each other."

While the fire was certainly a major event, the aftermath was even more so. Within days it became clear that the building could not be reoccupied for the rest of the semester and the students would have to be relocated. This was a major undertaking involving not only the university, but the community as well. The school started looking at available bed space in the university's other residence halls and then into the community at hotel space and also what other schools might have available in their residence halls. This type of activity is definitely easier to do, when you are under pressure, if you have the relationships already established with the community and with your peers at other institutions.

These relations take time to establish. "It takes a lot of lunches," observed Donner. And it takes effort. "It is not all that easy," said Cleveland.

The fire chief has to actively be out there in the community, working with the different groups, and not just the campus administration. "It is important for the fire chief to talk in multiple languages," added Cleveland. "When I am talking with a finance director I talk about a balance sheet or cost centers. When I talk with a legal person or an accountant, I might talk about how when someone is disabled how much it is going to cost. The light goes on and he or she understands my business. Being able to talk in that language has been critical in my ability to build relationships because I can talk in terms they understand. I talk their language."

When it comes to town/gown relations, the fire department is also competing with a lot of other departments that are vying for the attention of the university, and it is also important to have community outreach as well. "The police have been doing it for years and it puts us at a disadvantage," said Cleveland. "What have they been saying all along? Community policing. They integrated into the community, they have mastered this and that is why they are so successful."

The International Town & Gown Association is having its annual conference at Eastern Kentucky University from June 4 to 8, 2012. There are several presentations on the program relating to emergency response and preparedness along with a number of others about how to effectively build these relationships.

For fire chiefs, some of this is a culture change, observed Cleveland. "We need to get out of the firehouse more. That is what a fire chief is today, less and less operations and more about relationships."

To learn more about the International Town & Gown Association and its annual conference, go to [www.itgau.org/2012conference](http://www.itgau.org/2012conference).



*This off-campus apartment fire trapped a student on the top floor who was overcome and had to be rescued by fire fighters.*

I proposed the idea of producing a documentary called 9 Fires that would chronicle these fires to Gail Minger, President of the Michael H. Minger Foundation, and she immediately agreed that it could be a very powerful message. We had just completed a series of videos focusing on fire safety for students with disabilities and another series featuring resident assistants talking about fire safety in the residence halls and we had access to a videographer. This project would require us to travel to a number of locations, get videos of interviews and information on the incidents and compile them into a short documentary, all before the students leave campus. Gail immediately reached out to her network and was able to raise the funds to support this project within a very short time and now we were off and running, working to capture interviews within 30 days, before everyone left for the summer.

### **So what makes these nine fires so compelling?**

Together they provide either provide contrasts or examples of what should and should not happen in a fire or touching stories about the impact of these fires.

### **Off-campus fatal house fire**

This fire occurred in an off-campus house and killed three people. The cause of the fire was never determined, but it started in the back area of the house and spread into the building. Two students, seniors, and a previous student were killed in the fire.

### **Fraternity house fire**

A theme house, which is similar to a fraternity, was destroyed in an early-morning fire that was started by careless disposal of smoking materials on an attached porch. The students noticed the fire in a couch and thought they had extinguished it with cups of water and went to bed, but it broke out during the night and extended into the house. Everyone made it out safely, but one student did not realize that his friend had made it out and went back in on his hands and knees, looking for him. He was severely burned, but survived the fire, returned to school and graduated this May.



*A student was severely injured when he had to jump from his third-story bedroom window to escape this fire.*

### **Off-campus house fire**

A fire in an off-campus house, occupied by seven fraternity members, caught fire early one Sunday morning. The occupants were awakened by the smoke alarms, but several were trapped by the fire and had to jump. Two students jumped from a first floor window, but another couple had to leap from their second story window while one student jumped from the third story. This student was severely injured and broke his leg and facial bones and had a severe concussion and subsequent brain damage.

### **Off-campus apartment fire**

A fire in an off-campus, four story apartment building started in the basement when someone put linseed oil soaked rags back into a storage cabinet. The fire then spread up the stairway to all four floors. One occupant on the top floor heard the smoke alarms but thought her roommate was burning food. When she heard the sirens from the emergency apparatus, she got out of bed but was now trapped by the smoke. She tried to escape down the back stairwell but was overcome and had to be rescued by fire fighters.

### **Sprinklered laboratory fire**

A high-tech laboratory that had a number of highly toxic chemicals was the scene of a fire that started in the ceiling area. The fire broke out on a holiday, so there were no students in the laboratory. Fortunately, the lab

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*One of the parents sharing their story for the 9 Fires documentary.*

had an automatic fire sprinkler system which controlled the fire. While there was significant water damage, it was much less than what would have occurred if the fire had burned unimpeded and the toxic chemicals had been released, creating a major hazardous materials incident.

### **Unsprinklered laboratory fire**

In contrast to the sprinklered laboratory fire, another fire in a laboratory shut down the entire campus for a week. The fire broke out in an unsprinklered laboratory and because of the release of toxic materials, the entire campus had to be shut down for a week while air monitoring and testing was done.

### **Unsprinklered residence hall**

A fire in a common room in the basement of an unsprinklered residence hall at the University of Wisconsin La Crosse caused enough damage that the building had to be shut down for the entire semester, displacing 271

students. Fortunately, no one was injured in the fire, but the disruption that this caused to the campus and the students was significant and certainly an unplanned-for occurrence.

### **Sprinklered residence halls**

Two fires in sprinklered residence halls serve as a counterpoint to the unsprinklered residence hall fire. In one, a fire in a residence hall room was extinguished by the activation of the sprinkler system and a fire in the second residence hall in the trash chute was also controlled by a sprinkler activation. In both cases, the students were back into the residence halls within hours.

To gather the information for this documentary, we have been traveling across the country, talking with students, parents, survivors, administrators, and fire officials. Everywhere we have gone we have had people more than willing to tell their stories, opening up their homes to us, telling us stories that are dramatic and touching. The video is being edited by a recent graduate from Emerson College in Boston that we have worked with in the past that brings a story-teller's perspective to the project.

Hours of interviews have been done and now have to be edited together into a short documentary that will tell the impact of these fires and comparison between some of them. We are trying to keep it short so it can be easily watched online, but the problem we have is that we have so much great information, so many stories, that is going to be a challenge.

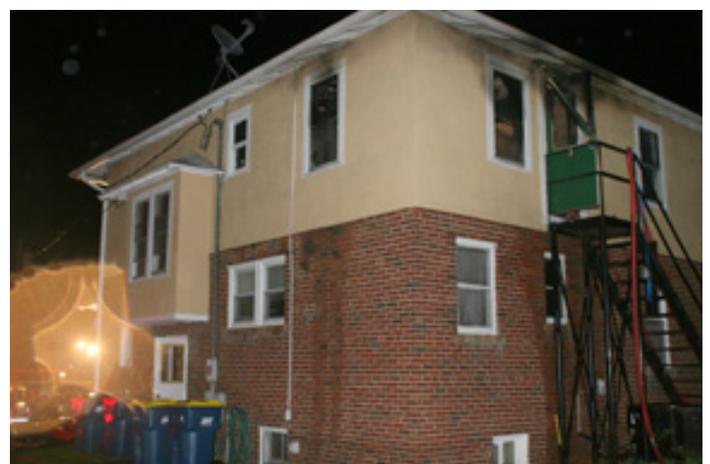
9 Fires will be made available, free of charge, on the Minger Foundation web site in August ([www.mingerfoundation.org](http://www.mingerfoundation.org)) for schools and communities to use in helping promote fire safety to students and others. Because of the diversity of people that are involved in this project, it will have something for everyone, including students, parents, university presidents and fire chiefs. We'll be building online resources to complement the movie with tools and information about what everyone can do to be a part of making sure these stories do not happen again.

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Two students die in an off-campus fire. - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1.



*Front of the house at 648 Hillsboro in Edwardsville where a fire claimed the lives of two Southern Illinois Edwardsville students. Photo provided by the Edwardsville Fire Department.*



*The southeast corner of the house where two Southern Illinois University of Edwardsville students were killed. The bedroom they were found in is in this corner of the second floor. Photo provided by the Edwardsville Fire Department.*

## CAMPUS FIREWATCH

# Campus Fire Safety Capitol Hill Day 2012

*By Ed Comeau, Publisher  
Campus Firewatch*

For the fifth year, students, parents and advocates gathered together on Capitol Hill to meet with Congress and discuss campus-related legislation. We had 33 people that made the trip and met with 80 Congressional offices – an unprecedented number of visits, all within 6 hours.

We were covering five specific bills, asking for the Members to co-sponsor them, which is what gets a bill moving out of committee and for a vote. This demonstrates that it is an important issue, one worthy of attention. It is also important to get as much bi-partisan support as possible, so we were meeting with Democrats, Independents and Republicans.

The list of bills includes:

- Campus Fire Safety Education Act of 2011, S. 620 and H.R. 1199
- Fire Sprinkler Incentive Act of 2011, S. 1035 and H.R. 1792
- Fire Grants Reauthorization Act of 2011, S. 550 and H.R. 2269
- Hon. Stephanie Tubbs Jones College Fire Prevention Act S. 1766 and H.R. 3250
- Campus Fire Safety month Resolution (to be introduced)

We had people taking part from across the country, and even out of the country with one student from Korea who was studying in the United States and wanted the opportunity to learn, firsthand, about how Congress works. This year was our most diverse (geographically) representation with people from Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, and Virginia.

### Did it work?

Yes! The biggest gain was the Fire Sprinkler Incentive Act which gained 12 more co-sponsors after our visits, five of which we met with directly.



*The team of students, parents and advocates that took part in Campus Fire Safety Capitol Hill Day 2012.*

The program started with an education session on Tuesday to bring everyone up to speed on the issues and how to advocate for your cause. We had two Congressional staffers speak about what it is like from a staffer's perspective when moving legislation through Congress. They also gave an inside look at what it is like to work on Capitol Hill, which many (all?) of the students were very interested in hearing.

We then heard from Ken LaSala (International

Association of Fire Chiefs), Sean Carroll (Congressional Fire Services Institute) and Andy Quinn (McAllister and Quinn), who are professional lobbyists that work on fire safety issues. They gave us their perspective on the legislative issues and working with Congress from their many years of experience.

The next day, we divided everyone up into teams of two or three people with a mixture of students, parents, fire officials or advocates

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on each team. We focused on specific Senators and Representatives that are on the committees where the legislation is heard (Health, Education, Labor and Pensions; Finance, Education and Workforce; and Ways and Means). In addition, team members met with staffers from their own state and Congressional district.

Scheduling these visits is a challenge, much like assembling a puzzle. We try to match constituents with their Member of Congress as much as possible because that is what the Member wants – to hear from constituents on issues. Since this time we were doing it when Congress was in session, it was busy, incredibly busy, and it is sometimes difficult to get time on a staffer's schedule. However, just about everyone we contacted was willing to meet with us and a number of them we had met with in the past and quickly said yes. This proved to me the importance of going back each year and building up the momentum on these issues.

We met with the Senate in the morning, on the north side of Capitol Hill, and then with the House in the afternoon on the south side. We even went so far as to try and keep each team in the same building (there are three on each side) to avoid too much travel time between meetings. Apparently, it worked because we were able to squeeze in 80 meetings, the most we have ever done in five years. In 2008, the first year we did this, we met with just 24 offices with 39 people, a testimony to how efficient we are getting at scheduling and making our points!

We do not often meet with the actual Member of Congress, it is almost always with a staffer. While this may seem counterintuitive, the person you really want to educate and inform is the person that is going to be writing the position paper on the issue, which is a staff member, and making the recommendations to the Senator or Representative's chief of staff. While it is certainly helpful, and nice, to meet with a Member, the real work gets done by the staff, and they are key to moving any bill forward.

Getting legislation passed is a multi-year effort. The Campus Fire Safety Right-to-Know Act, which was first introduced in 2000, took eight years to be signed into law as part of the Higher Education Opportunity Act. It takes a concerted

effort each year to move legislation along and to get co-sponsors and momentum behind it. In 2013, it is going to be a whole new Congress which means that any legislation that does not pass in 2012 will have to be reintroduced. It also means that we'll be meeting with any legislator that has co-sponsored it in the past and asking them to do so again, and meeting with new Members of Congress and asking for their support.

However, along with getting legislation moving, another part of the program is for the students to learn what working on Capitol Hill is all about. This has always been an area that the students have shown a lot of interest and also served as an incentive for coming to DC. Some students have changed their academic and career plans because of the experience of spending a day on the Hill.

This was the second trip for Ben Hartwell, a senior from the University of Mount Union in Ohio. "The first time (last year), a 20-year-old student going to DC lobbying to Congress, that was enough to sweep me away," said Hartwell. "It left a big impression on me and I remember saying to my friends, over and over, 'I have to get back here, I have to get back to Washington.'" After his experience in 2011, he got an internship with a firm in Washington which only further convinced him that this is what he wanted to do as a career. "I kind of switched my career directions. My dream job is working in or around in government."

A contingent of students from the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill has always taken part in Capitol Hill Day. In 1996, five students were killed in a fraternity fire and, since that time, there has been a strong emphasis on fire safety on the campus and in Washington. The team that comes includes Bonnie and Leon Woodruff, who lost their son, Ben, in the fire, and they are joined by students and administrators from the university.

One of the students that went to DC for the first time was Kyle Noyes, a freshman majoring in Economics and Health Policy and Management. "This was an eye opening experience," said Noyes, "something I could really see doing in the future. We had a good reaction from the staffers,

and a lot of them seemed to have a connection with the fire at Phi Gam." When Noyes' team met with the staffer from North Carolina Senator Kay Hagan's office, he had heard of Ben's fire and was only a few years out of college himself. This type of connection helped tremendously when making the request for the Senator to support the various bills.

Another first-time student was Julie Rossman, a senior from Eastern Kentucky University with a double major in Fire, Arson and Explosion Investigation and Fire Protection Administration. Her reaction was the same as Kyle's – "Eye opening, I felt like we were making a difference and I always wanted to feel like we were doing something that would help other people," said Rossman. "A lot of the staffers were very enthusiastic."

Dillon Joyce, another student from UNC Chapel Hill also saw a strong reaction from the staffers. "They were very compelled by the story we intertwined with the legislation. We ran through the list of statistics, the past fires, the benefits of the bills that we were proposing. Obviously, hearing it first hand from a college student about the importance of fire safety made for a convincing testimony for the staffers when they are considering the issues."

## Campus Fire Safety Capitol Hill Day 2013

The next Campus Fire Safety Capitol Hill Day will be held on Monday, March 25 and Tuesday, March 26. The education session will be in the afternoon on Monday and the visits to Capitol Hill will take place on Tuesday. The headquarters hotel will be the Phoenix Park Hotel, which we have used several times in the past, which is right down the road from Capitol Hill and convenient to Union Station where Amtrak and the Metro subway system stop. As we start plans for it this fall, you will be able to follow us and get more information through Campus Firewatch or the special Facebook page we have created at [www.facebook.com/capitolhillday](http://www.facebook.com/capitolhillday).

Think about joining us in 2013, it is a great experience!

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## TOPICAL ISSUES

# Escape Planning

Getting out of a building when there is a fire is important for students to know, no matter where they are, whether it is their residence hall, classroom, fraternity, a restaurant, a movie theater – everywhere. Teaching them to identify two ways out is a basic, yet important, skill that they can carry with them for the rest of their life.

The following are fire safety messages developed by the NFPA Educational Messages Advisory Committee that you can use in your outreach efforts. In addition to the messages, as part of its RA Guide to Teaching Fire Safety, the Minger Foundation developed additional explanatory material to help explain the “reasons behind the rules” for students. (A copy of the Guide is available at [www.mingerfoundation.org](http://www.mingerfoundation.org).) You can also see a video developed on escape planning that was developed for a project on fire safety for students with disabilities that can be used with any demographic.

The United States Fire Administration has developed a series of training bulletins focusing on a wide variety of issues relating to means of egress. These are available for free download. The National Fire Protection Association also has a page focusing on escape planning as well with free resources.

Message	Why (Minger Foundation)
4.1.5 Know at least two ways out of every room, if possible. Make sure all doors and windows that lead outside open easily.	In some rooms, your bedroom for example, the second way out might be through a window. Make sure you can open it, make sure it hasn't been painted shut, make sure it is big enough for you to climb through. If you are on an upper floor, you can buy an escape ladder so that you can climb down. If your room is in a basement, make sure your second way out is not blocked by stuff on the inside of your house or by snow on the outside. Also, are the basement windows big enough that you can climb out of them if you need to?
4.1.6 Windows with security bars, grills, and window guards should have emergency release devices.	What good is a second way out if you can't use it? Make sure the release works by testing it periodically and so you know how it works when you have to use it during an emergency.
4.1.9 Have an outside meeting place (something permanent, like a tree, light pole, or mailbox) a safe distance in front of the home.	This is so that you can make sure everyone has gotten out safely. If someone is missing, do not go back into the house, let the fire department know IMMEDIATELY that someone is missing and where they might be.
4.1.10 Make sure your house number can be seen day or night from the street.	You would be amazed at how many houses do NOT have their numbers on them. This just makes it that much harder for emergency responders to quickly find your address when there is an emergency.
4.1.12 Have a plan for everyone in your home who has a disability.	It is important that everyone knows what to do during an emergency, and if someone has a disability, you might need to make additional plans to accommodate their needs.
4.2.1 When the smoke alarm sounds, get out fast. You may have only seconds to escape safely.	Fire spreads incredibly fast, most people just don't understand how fast and they think they have more time to get out than they really do. When you hear the alarm, get up, get out, stay out.
4.2.2 If there is smoke blocking your door or first way out, use your second way out.	This is why it is so important to have identified a second way out BEFORE the emergency happens. That is also why it is important to do this when you go into a nightclub, restaurant, movie theater, classroom. Wherever you go, always know what your second way out is. In some cases, it might not be a door but a window.
4.2.3 Smoke is toxic. If you must escape through smoke, get low and go under the smoke to your way out.	By staying low to the floor, the air is cleaner and clearer. If you go low and it is too smokey, don't try to go through it. Go back or use your second way out.
4.2.4 Before opening a door, feel the doorknob and door. If either is hot, leave the door closed and use your second way out.	This means that there might be a fire on the other side or that it is too hot for you to survive. Do not take the chance.
4.2.5 If there is smoke coming around the door, leave the door closed and use your second way out.	This means that there is fire and smoke on the other side of the door and you might not be able to make your way through it.
4.2.6 If you open a door, open it slowly. Be ready to shut it quickly if heavy smoke or fire is present.	Even though a door may feel cool, there could still be a lot of smoke on the other side. Smoke travels far from a fire.
4.2.7 If you can't get to someone needing assistance, leave the home and call 9-1-1 or the fire department. Tell the emergency operator where the person is located.	Don't become trapped yourself. You might be able to help that person the most by getting out and calling for help. By trying to go to their aid, you could be overcome and now there are two people trapped.
4.2.9 If you can't get out, close the door and cover vents and cracks around doors with cloth or tape to keep smoke out. Call 9-1-1 or your fire department. Say where you are and signal for help at the window with a light-colored cloth or a flashlight.	Sometimes it might be safer to not try to move through the smoke. Get in a room, close the door, seal it up if you can, call 911, and go to a window and signal for help.

**CAMPUS FIREWATCH****Couch, porch and deck fires**

*Couches on front porches in college towns are a common site.*

Fires in off-campus houses starting on decks and porches continue to be a significant concern in communities across the nation. You can drive down the streets in many college communities and see upholstered furniture on front porches or on decks as well as gas grills. The problem with this type of furniture is a large fuel load that is outside of the building and a fire that starts in it often grows quickly into a large fire before it is detected. When it gets so large, it then gets into the house and has a tremendous head start before any of the occupants might be alerted. In fact, in a number of the fires that have happened, it is often a passerby that sees the fire, calls 911 or alerts the residents.

Several of these fires have become fatal ones, including:

- September 2003, three students were killed in Minneapolis, Minnesota
- April 2005, a student was killed in College Park, Maryland
- May 2006, a student was killed in Ithaca, New York
- July 2006, a student was killed in Stillwater, Oklahoma
- March 2007, a student was killed in Brookline, Massachusetts
- October 2007, a student was killed in Arkansas City, Kansas
- October 2007, six students were killed in Ocean Isle Beach, North Carolina
- November 2007, a student was killed in Madison, Wisconsin
- March 2010, two students were killed in Gunnison, Colorado
- April 2010, a student was killed in Ann Arbor, Michigan
- December 2010, a student was killed in St. Paul, Minnesota



*A couch and a grill on a front porch in a college town can be a dangerous mix.*

Another problem with having upholstered furniture outside of a building is a health one since they can get wet and start growing mold and become a home for insects. A number of communities have taken action to control the proliferation of furniture outside of buildings for either fire safety, health or blight reasons.

Columbia, Missouri, put an ordinance in place in 1991. "It wasn't a fire issue at that point in time," reported Steven Sapp, fire marshal with the Columbia Fire Department. "What was happening was that we were looking at a lot of off-campus housing and seeing that they weren't being maintained as well as some of the adjacent properties that were owner occupied. It has been used to clear off the combustibles from front porches and decks." This ordinance originally started out in response to aesthetic problems but it also provides a fire safety component as well.

Another community that has addressed this problem through an ordinance is Boulder, Colorado. Unlike Columbia, the Boulder ordinance only addresses specific problem areas around the University of Colorado. "We didn't feel there was a need to have a citywide ordinance," said David Lowrey, fire marshal for Boulder Fire Rescue. "You get into some of the other neighborhoods where there isn't a large collegiate population and there isn't a problem."

When this ordinance was first proposed over 14 years ago, the main driving force behind it was fire safety. During celebrations, the students were taking the couches from the porches and setting them on fire in the streets, but this ordinance has had a dramatic impact on reducing these type of incidents, but not necessarily eliminating them. Lowrey reports that they had 35 couch fires last year, but they are in streets and alleys. When looking at the ordinance and trying to measure if it is effective or not, Lowrey said that

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since they have not had a structure fire that started in a couch, perhaps that is a measure of its success.

East Lansing, Michigan also has an ordinance that came about more because of the blight issue than a fire safety one. However, it has definitely served the purpose of helping to reduce the number of potential couch fires. According to Fire Marshal Gerald Rodabaugh, they have not had a couch fire on a porch in the last four or five years since the ordinance was put in place.

However, they are having more couches on the curb. In the past, someone would pay \$25 to have a couch picked up by the city. The couch would be placed on the curb, tagged and the city would pick it up the same day. However, with the cutback in city services, the pickup time is now several days which is leading to more couches being set on fire on the curb.

Another community that addressed this problem through an ordinance was Farmville, Virginia, home of Longwood University. As with many of these ordinances, it started with the year-round residents complaining about how the off-campus student housing looked, reported Farmville Fire Chief Ben Sears. A code ordinance was put into place several years ago, "and fire safety was an added bonus," he observed. "Enforcement has not been that big of a problem," said Farmville Property Inspector Kim Thompson. "I can usually drop off a letter, or if I catch someone there at the house, they usually take care of it."

When it comes to educating the students about the ordinance, Longwood University has a mandatory orientation for students that are moving off-campus and this is one of the issues that is covered. "We do catch a few of them in the fall," added Thompson, but the word does get out pretty quickly that it is not allowed.

Ann Arbor, Michigan, had originally tried to put forward an ordinance in 2003, but it was unsuccessful. Following the fatal fire in 2010 that claimed the life of a student, the fire department tried again and was able to get it in place, but not without some strong pushback from the students. However, when the final hearing was done on the ordinance, even though there was a large turnout of students, according to Ann Arbor Fire Marshal Kathleen Chamberlain, no one spoke against it after testimony from the family of the student that died in the fire.

A critical part of this effort was a study done by one of the fire fighters about the use of couches on porches where they were being used, how they came there in the first place, and the number of fires that had originated in couches. One of the interesting findings was that 60% of the couches had been left by the previous tenant – in other words, the students didn't even



*Fraternities are noted for having upholstered furniture on front porches and decks.*

try to find one, it was there when they rented the house. This led to the problem of couches being a self-perpetuating problem.

Fires on porches, whether from a grill or careless disposal of smoking materials, can be quickly exacerbated by the presence of upholstered furniture. There certainly are enough of these fires that have grown quickly and spread into the house, placing everyone at risk, to be a concern to any community. For more information, visit the RESOURCE page on Campus Firewatch for a Firelog of incidents going back to 2000 involving porches, decks and couches.

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**CAMPUS FIREWATCH**

# Couch Ordinances

## East Lansing, Michigan

302.10 *Outdoor storage.* Outdoor storage of an appliance, firewood, furniture or building materials is prohibited except when the material is properly covered and screened from view. Furniture which is not intended or designed for outdoor use shall not be placed outdoors or on exterior balconies, porches, decks, landings, or other areas exposed to the weather.

## Columbia, Missouri

Sec. 11-327. Display of Certain Items Prohibited.

It shall be unlawful for the owner or occupant of any residential premises within the city to allow any of the following items to remain on such premises, for longer than 48 hours, in any location outside of the residence which can be viewed from a ground location off the premises: appliances, bedding, bottles, boxes, broken glass, cans, cardboard, cartons, furniture manufactured for indoor use only, household appliances, jars, lumber and building supply materials that are not neatly stacked, machine parts, motor vehicle parts, pallets, paper, plumbing fixtures, rags, scrap metal, tire rims, tires, water heaters. (Ord. No. 13000, § 1, 6-17-91)

## Boulder, Colorado

5-4-16 Outdoor Furniture Restriction.

(a) No person shall place, use, keep, store, or maintain any upholstered furniture not manufactured for outdoor use, including, without limitation, upholstered chairs, upholstered couches, and mattresses, in any outside areas located in the following places:

- (1) In any front yard;
- (2) In any side yard;
- (3) In any rear yard or other yard that is adjacent to a public street. However, an alley shall not be considered a "public street" for the purpose of this subsection; or
- (4) On any covered or uncovered porch located in or adjacent to any of the yards described in paragraphs (a)(1) through (a)(3) of this section.

(b) The provisions of this section shall apply within the following described area: Those portions of the University Hill neighborhood bordered by Baseline Road on the south, Arapahoe Road on the north, Broadway on the east, and, on the west by the western boundary lines of those properties located on the west side of Ninth Street.

(c) For the purpose of this section, yards are defined as follows:

- (1) The terms "front yard," "rear yard," and "side yard" refer to the open space between buildings and property lines at the front, rear, and sides of a property, respectively.
- (2) A side yard extends the full length of a lot as if a line running along the edge of a building was extended to intersect with the rear property line.
- (3) On a corner lot, the open space adjacent to the shorter street right-of-way shall be considered the front yard.
- (4) The rear yard is that yard located on the opposite side of the lot from the front yard.

(d) The interior of any fully enclosed porch (including, without limitation, a porch enclosed by screening material) that cannot be accessed from outside except through a door that can be locked shall not be considered an outside area for the purpose of this section.

(e) Placement of upholstered furniture on balconies or porches located on the second floor, or any floor above the second floor, of a building is not precluded by the provisions of this section.

(f) The following shall constitute specific defenses to any alleged violation of this provision:

- (1) That such furniture was placed in an outside location in order to allow it to be moved during a move of a resident or residents or removed as part of a trash or recycling program on a day scheduled for such moving or removal.
- (2) That such furniture was located in a yard other than a front yard and was placed in such a manner that it could not be seen from ground level by a person located on a public right-of-way (excluding public alleys) and that it was not visible by such a person unless that person took extraordinary steps such as climbing a ladder or peering over a screening fence in order to achieve a point of vantage.

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(3) That such furniture was temporarily placed in an outside location in order that it be offered for sale at a yard or garage sale if each of the following conditions exists:

(A) The furniture is located in an outside location only during the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

(B) The person attempting to sell the furniture, or that person's agent, is outside during the period of the yard or garage sale in order to monitor the sale.

(C) A sign is placed on or near the furniture indicating that it is for sale.

(D) This defense shall not apply if upholstered furniture is located in an outside location for more than two days in any six-month period.

(g) If the city manager finds that any upholstered furniture exists on any property in violation of this section, the manager may require that the owner and the lessee, agent, occupant, or other person in possession or control of the property correct the violation and bring the property into conformity with this section, using the following procedure:

(1) The manager shall notify the owner and the lessee, agent, occupant, or other person in possession or control of the property that such persons have seven days from the date of the notice to make such corrections. Notice under this subsection is sufficient if it is deposited in the mail, first class, to the last known owner of the property on the records of the Boulder County Assessor and to the last known address of the lessee, agent, occupant, or person in possession or control of the property.

(2) If the person notified fails to correct the violation as required by the notice prescribed by paragraph (g)(1) of this section, the manager may correct the violation by removing and disposing of the upholstered furniture and charge the costs thereof, plus an additional amount of \$25.00 for administrative costs, to the owner and to the lessee, agent, occupant, or other person in possession and control of the property.

(3) If any property owner fails or refuses to pay when due any charge imposed under this section, the manager may, in addition to taking other collection remedies, certify due and unpaid charges, including interest, to the Boulder County Treasurer to be levied against the person's property for collection by the county in the same manner as delinquent general taxes upon such property are collected as provided by section 2-2-12, "City Manager May Certify Taxes, Charges, and Assessments to County Treasurer for Collection," B.R.C. 1981.

(Ordinance Nos. 7125 (2002); 7360 (2004))

## **Farmville, Virginia**

### **Sec. 17-16. - Household appliances and household furniture prohibited outside any dwelling.**

It shall be unlawful for any person residing in or having charge or control of any dwelling within the town to leave or permit to remain outside of any such dwelling any household appliances or household furniture in such a manner that same are exposed to the elements.

*(Ord. No. 78, 12-10-2003)*

### **Sec. 17-17. - Exceptions.**

The following shall constitute specific exceptions to any alleged violation of this provision:

(1) That such furniture was placed in an outside location in order to allow it to be moved during a move of a resident or residents or removed as part of a trash or recycling program on a day scheduled for such moving or removal.

(2) That such furniture was temporarily placed in an outside location in order that it be offered for sale at a yard or garage sale if each of the following conditions exists:

a. The furniture is located in an outside location only during the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

b. The person attempting to sell the furniture, or that person's agent, is outside during the period of the yard or garage sale in order to monitor the sale.

c. A sign is placed on or near the furniture indicating that it is for sale.

d. This exception shall not apply if upholstered furniture is located in an outside location for more than two (2) days in any six-month period.

*(Ord. No. 78, 12-10-2003)*

**Sec. 17-18. - Penalty.** Any person violating any provision of this article shall be guilty of a class 4 misdemeanor.

*(Ord. No. 78, 12-10-2003)*

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**CAMPUS FIREWATCH****CAMPUS FIRE LOG****March 26, 2012****Residence hall  
Colorado State University  
Fort Collins, CO**

A fire in a residence hall caused \$10,000 in damages and is being considered suspicious. The fire broke out in the Ingersoll Residence Hall and was confined to a closet. Smoke and water damaged eight adjacent rooms. The students were allowed back into their rooms by the end of the day.

**March 6, 2012****Support Building  
Lycoming College  
Williamsport, PA**

A fire destroyed the general services building at about 9:00 p.m. The fire is not considered suspicious and caused an estimated \$1 million in damages in the one-story, 10,000 square foot structure.

**March 8, 2012****Off-campus  
University of California,  
Berkeley**

A fire broke out in an off-campus apartment building at approximately 4:15 a.m. The fire caused significant damage to the building.

**March 12, 2012****Residence Hall  
Bloomfield College  
Bloomfield, NJ**

A fire in a college-owned, converted single-family home, displaced eight students. The fire was reported at approximately 1:30

a.m. A student who discovered the fire alerted the resident assistant, who in turn notified the college's Public Safety Department who in turn notified the fire department. Prior to the fire department arriving, an occupant attempted to put out the fire using a fire extinguisher. The damage was confined to the back deck and basement.

**March 13, 2012****Off-campus  
Old Dominion University  
Norfolk, VA**

A fire in an off campus house was started by an electrical problem with a water heater. Four students who lived in the house were displaced for the night.

**March 13, 2012****Off-campus  
Ohio State  
Columbus, OH**

A fire in an off-campus house displaced 12 residents, some of which were students.

**March 15, 2012****Residence hall  
University of North Florida  
Jacksonville, FL**

A fire in an elevator was determined to be arson.

**March 17, 2012****Off-campus  
Colorado State University  
Fort Collins, CO**

A fire in an off-campus apartment building caused significant damage. The cause of the fire was care-

less disposal of smoking materials on a balcony on the east side of the building. About 30 occupants were displaced during the fire and were sheltered in a nearby Catholic university center.

**March 18, 2012****Off-campus  
Unknown school  
Bryan, TX**

Five college students were displaced when a fire destroyed their off-campus house. The fire broke out at approximately 4:30 p.m. on a Sunday afternoon.

**March 19, 2012****Support - dining commons  
Gardner-Webb University  
Boiling Springs, NC**

A fire in an industrial dishwasher broke out in the cafeteria. Workers were able to contain the fire until the fire department arrived to extinguish it. The fire damage was limited to the machine itself.

**March 20, 2012****Street fires - charges  
West Virginia University  
Morgantown, WV**

Three WVU students have been charged with malicious burning. These charges were filed following a series of 35 street fires. Morgantown has an unfortunate history of street, couch and dumpster fires and has attempted to curb the behavior. If convicted, each individual could be fined up to \$1,000.

**March 21, 2012****Residence Hall  
Paul Smith's College  
Brighton, NY**

A fire in a residence hall caused minor damage. The fire was detected by a carbon monoxide detector alarm at 12:30 a.m. and when the campus officers responded they found a small fire outside one of the first floor windows. They were able to extinguish the fire using fire extinguishers.

**March 22, 2012****Support - Dining commons  
Indiana State University  
Terre Haute, IN**

A fire broke out in a dryer in a dining commons. A manager tried to extinguish the fire using a fire extinguisher, but when it reignited, he then called the fire department. The fire was extinguished prior to the arrival of the fire department.

**March 22, 2012****Academic - Classroom  
Amarillo College West Campus  
Amarillo, TX**

A fire in a storage room caused \$300,000 in damage to a classroom building. The fire was caused by a malfunction in a motorcycle batter charger. The building will be closed for a week.

**March 22, 2012****Street Fires  
Michigan State University  
East Lansing, MI**

A series of couch and garbage fires broke out after Michigan State

**CAMPUS FIRE LOG**

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University's loss to Louisville in the basketball West Regional semifinals. One person was arrested.

**March 24, 2012****Off-campus****Texas Bible College****Lufkin, TX**

A fire in an off-campus apartment complex injured one person. The building was fully involved when the fire department arrived on the scene and they were forced to do a defensive fire attack. The cause of the fire is under investigation.

**March 24, 2012****Hospital - Sprinkler Save****Medical University of South****Carolina****Charleston, SC**

A fire that broke out in an office on the eighth floor of the Medical University of South Carolina was brought under control by the building's automatic fire sprinkler system. About 30 patients had to be relocated to other areas of the hospital but were going to be able to return the next day.

**March 26, 2012****Off-campus****Western Michigan University****Kalamazoo, MI**

A fire broke out at approximately 2:00 p.m. and heavily damaged the rear of an apartment building. The cause of the fire has not been determined.

**March 26, 2012****Off-campus****Unknown school****Black Hawk, SD**

A fire in an off-campus house occupied by three students was damaged by a fire that broke out at 7:30 a.m. No one was injured.

**March 28, 2012****Off-campus****University of Illinois Urbana****Champaign****Champaign, IL**

A fire in an off-campus apartment was started by careless disposal of smoking materials on a first-story apartment. The fire spread up the exterior of the building and then into the interior. One couple, while evacuating, left the door to their apartment open, hoping that their cats would run out. The fire extended up the exterior of the building and into this apartment. The building was destroyed by the fire at an estimated cost of \$1 million.

**March 29, 2012****Residence hall****Dickinson State University****Dickinson, ND**

A fire in a university-owned apartment building was extinguished by a resident assistant. A grease fire broke out at approximately 9:45 a.m. and left the cooking unattended. The smoke alarms were activated and the RA stepped out into the hallway she saw the smoke and was informed that there was a fire in the apartment. She then used the fire extinguisher and extinguished the fire as well as calling the fire department. She had received training from the Dickinson Fire Department in how to use a fire extinguisher.

**March 31, 2012****Residence hall****Bryant University****Smithfield, RI**

A fire broke out in a common room at 2:30 a.m. Everyone was able to escape safely but students were not allowed back into the build-

ing. The cause of the fire is under investigation.

**March 31, 2012****Street riot****University of Kentucky****Louisville, KY**

Following the University of Kentucky's victory in the NCAA basketball Final Four, students swarmed out onto the streets and proceeded to turn over cars and burn couches. Approximately 150 police officers were deployed and used pepper spray to disperse the crowd. There were 13 arrests, several of them for arson. The riot was caught in real-time through Twitter postings by the Lexington Professional Firefighters IAFF Local 526 and the Lexington Herald-Leader.

**April 1, 2012****Residence hall - sprinkler save****Louisiana State University****Baton Rouge, LA**

A fire broke out in a kitchen in a university-owned apartment. The students had left the pot on the stove unattended and when it caught fire. They tried to extinguish the fire but were unsuccessful and the building's automatic fire sprinkler system was activated, which put out the fire.

**April 2, 2012****Off-campus****Binghamton University****Binghamton, NY**

A fire in an off-campus apartment displaced five BU students and a family of seven. The fire was caused by materials being too close to a stove. It is unclear in which apartment the fire started.

**April 2, 2012****Residence hall****Ohio University****Athens, OH**

A former student was indicted on charges relating to setting a chair on fire in a residence hall on June 3, 2011. Nathan Cencula, 21, pled guilty to arson and was sentenced to 14 days in jail and four years of community control probation and \$46,609 in restitution to the university.

**April 3, 2012****Academic - classroom -****Sprinkler Save****Arizona State University****Tempe, AZ**

A fire was caused by a laptop that was being charged while inside of a backpack. It is believed the computer overheated, igniting the bag. The fire was controlled by the activation of the building's automatic fire sprinkler system.

**April 3, 2012****Academic - classroom****University of Colorado****Boulder, CO**

Two arson fires were started during spring break. One was found at 5:45 a.m. by a custodial crew where a burned newspaper was found inside of a building. The other fire occurred on the outside of a building and was extinguished with a fire extinguisher. Both fires caused minor damage.

**April 5, 2012****Residence hall - sprinkler save****Colby College****Waterville, ME**

An unattended candle was the cause of a fire in a residence hall. The candle burned down and ignited nearby combustibles on

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**CAMPUS FIRE LOG**

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fire. The fire was brought under control by the activation of the building's automatic fire sprinkler system.

**April 9, 2012****Off-campus****Purdue University  
West Lafayette, IN**

A fire in an off-campus apartment trapped one student. The fire broke out in the afternoon and the student was alerted by a smoke alarm. When she opened the door to her bedroom there was too much smoke and she almost jumped from her third story apartment when fire fighters placed a ladder to the window and rescued her.

**April 10, 2012****Off-campus****Oklahoma State University  
Stillwater, OK**

A fire in an upstairs duplex of an off-campus house was contained to the bedroom. The fire broke out at approximately 11:30 a.m. The cause of the fire is unknown at this time.

**April 13, 2012****Residence hall****Western Carolina University  
Cullowhee, NC**

A fire broke out in the basement of a residence hall between 8:45 and 9:00 a.m. A worker was cutting rebar in the area which may have been the cause of the fire.

**April 14, 2012****Academic - classroom****Springfield Technical  
Community College  
Springfield, MA**

A fire broke out on the roof of a classroom building early in the morning. It is believed that the

cause of the fire was careless disposal of smoking materials.

**April 17, 2012****Residence Hall****Michigan State University  
East Lansing, MI**

A student disposed of the ashes from his pipe in the trash, which caught fire. He then removed the trash bag from the can, rushed it outside and put it in the dumpster. There was no damage to the apartment or the dumpster.

**April 19, 2012****Academic - classroom****University of Texas  
Austin, TX**

An elevator motor overheated and caught fire. The damage was limited to the motor.

**April 19, 2012****Apartment****University of Scranton  
Scranton, PA**

A grease fire was extinguished by students using a fire extinguisher. One resident had minor leg burns from a grease splatter and was treated on the scene. There was no damage to the apartment.

**April 19, 2012****Off-campus****University of Southern Maine  
Gorham, ME**

A fire in a bathroom fan damaged the upper floors of a three-story apartment building. Six students were displaced by the fire.

**April 23, 2012****Off-campus****University of Kentucky  
Lexington, KY**

A fire in an off-campus apartment broke out at approximately 9:00

a.m. The fire caused little damage but was believed to be suspicious.

**April 23, 2012****Off-campus - Fatal****Southern Illinois University  
Edwardsville  
Edwardsville, IL**

On Sunday, April 22, a fire broke out in an off-campus house, killing two students from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, Lacy Siddall, 21, and Lauren Peterson, 19 of Bethalto, Illinois. According to Edwardsville Fire Chief Rick Welle, the two-story, wood frame building was a single-family home that had been converted into two apartments, one on each floor. There were two students living upstairs and the tenant on the ground floor was in the process of moving out at the time of the fire.

At approximately 3:42 a.m., a neighbor heard breaking glass and saw the fire coming from the second floor. When fire fighters arrived on the scene they report that there was moderate smoke coming from the second floor. They were able to make rapid entry into the building and quickly found the two victims on the second floor. It appeared that they were trying to escape from the fire when they were overcome.

Both victims were removed from the building and advanced life support was immediately started on the fire ground. They were transported to a local hospital and then flown to St. Luke's hospital in St. Louis for more advanced care. Both died from their injuries.

The cause of the fire is still under investigation but is believed to be electrical. The initial investiga-

tion was considering a laptop that was plugged in and charging as a possible ignition source, but is has subsequently been ruled out. The area of origin was one of the bedrooms on the second floor, but not the bedroom where the victims were found.

The building was not equipped with residential sprinklers. There were two single-station, battery operated smoke alarms present, one in each bedroom on the second floor. However, one smoke alarm did not have a battery in it and the other one had a battery that had expired over a year ago. Fire fighters reported that they did not hear smoke alarms sounding when they arrived on the fire scene.

**April 27, 2012****Off-campus - Porch****Westfield State University  
Westfield, MA**

A fire in an off-campus house started on the porch on the second floor and is believed to have started in rubbish on the second floor. The fire damaged the second and third floor porches and had begun to extend into the house when fire fighters arrived.

**April 28, 2012****Off-campus****Ohio University  
Athens, OH**

An off-campus house caught fire during the Palmer Fest celebration. When fire fighters and police officers arrived on the scene, party goers began throwing bottles at them. The mayor declared the area a riot area at 7:35 p.m. and the crowd was dispersed by 8:20 p.m. Twenty-one people were arrested

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**CAMPUS FIRE LOG**

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and most of the charges were alcohol-related.

**April 28, 2012**

**Residence hall**

**Ball State University  
Muncie, IN**

A fire in a laundry facility at a university-owned apartment complex. The fire was contained to the dryer and ventilation system.

**May 1, 2012**

**Residence Hall - Sprinkler**

**Save**

**Drexel University  
Philadelphia, PA**

A fire in a light fixture was brought under control by the activation of the building's automatic fire sprinkler system. However, the subsequent water damage has forced the relocation of 90 students.

**May 13, 2012**

**Off-campus**

**University of Maryland  
College Park, MD**

A fire in an off-campus house broke out at 11:00 p.m., displacing five students the evening before final exams started. The fire, which caused \$13,000 in damage, was believed to have been started by a malfunction in a light fixture in the basement bedroom.

**May 14, 2012**

**Residence Hall - Sprinkler**

**Save**

**Georgetown University  
Washington, DC**

A fire in a kitchen on the third floor of Copley Hall was extinguished by the building's automatic fire sprinkler system.

**March 18, 2012**

**Academic - Classroom**

**University of Massachusetts  
- Lowell**

**Lowell, MA**

A fire in an engineering building took three alarms to bring it under control. The fire broke out on the top floor of the building at approximately 8:30 a.m. There was only one student in the area at the time because classes had already ended for the semester.

**March 19, 2012**

**Greek - Fraternity**

**Louisiana Tech University  
Ruston, LA**

A fire that started in the vicinity of the chimney destroyed the Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity. There were six people living in the house at

the time of the fire and no one was injured. The local police department received at call at 4:30 p.m. about a fire but, upon arrival, were told it was under control. However, as police officers were evacuating the building, the fire grew and eventually the roof collapsed. Media reports state that students were burning class notes in the fireplace shortly before the fire broke out.

**Unknown Date**

**Off-campus**

**Binghamton University  
Binghamton, NY**

A fire in an off-campus house displaced four BU students. The fire started in the kitchen area of the other half of the duplex from where the students lived. The cause is under investigation.

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**CAMPUS FIREWATCH****National Campus Fire Safety Month Update**

*By Ed Comeau*

We have added to the number of states that have issued proclamations and we are on our way to the eighth annual Campus Fire Safety Month. This program has been an incredible success in helping to raise awareness about campus fire safety across the country. Each year we have about 35 states and the U.S. Congress issue proclamations in response to a letter signed by 25 people that have lost loved ones in campus-related fires.

- Colorado
- Idaho
- Illinois

- Massachusetts
- North Carolina
- Oregon
- Virginia
- Washington
- Wisconsin

More campuses are doing programs in September such as campus fire safety community service projects, side-by-side mockup burns, fire safety education and more. To date, 210 proclamations have been signed since we started this in 2005.

While many of the governors respond to the letter, hearing from constituents is a very powerful

way to get proclamations as well. If you want to help, please contact your governor's office and ask that they join with the 34 states that issued proclamations last year – let's see if we can get it up to 50 for 2012!

To keep progress of our efforts for proclamations, and to download copies of them, visit Campus Firewatch at [www.campus-firewatch.com](http://www.campus-firewatch.com) and click on the LEGISLATION link on the RESOURCES page. If you want to contact your governor's office, you can find contact information at the National Governor's Association web site at [www.nga.org](http://www.nga.org).

Thanks for your help!

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**CAMPUS FIREWATCH**

# LEGISLATION UPDATE

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## Federal - S 1766 Honorable Stephanie Tubbs Jones College Fire Prevention Act

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**Summary**

To establish the Honorable Stephanie Tubbs Jones Fire Suppression Demonstration Incentive Program within the Department of Education to promote installation of fire sprinkler systems, or other fire suppression or prevention technologies, in qualified student housing and dormitories, and for other purposes.

**Co-Sponsors**

- Senator Brown (OH)

**Status**

10/31/11 Referred to Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

## Federal - HR 3250 Honorable Stephanie Tubbs Jones College Fire Prevention Act

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**Summary**

To establish the Honorable Stephanie Tubbs Jones Fire Suppression Demonstration Incentive Program within the Department of Education to promote installation of fire sprinkler systems, or other fire suppression or prevention technologies, in qualified student housing and dormitories, and for other purposes.

**Co-Sponsors**

- Representative Fudge (OH-11)
- Representative Christensen (VI)
- Representative Davis (IL-7)
- Representative Jackson Lee (TX-18)
- Representative Johnson (TX-30)
- Representative Lewis (GA-5)
- Representative Moore (WI-4)
- Representative Norton (DC)
- Representative Price (NC-4)
- Representative Rangel (NY-15)
- Representative Sewell (AL-7)

**Status**

10/24/11 Referred to House Committee on Education and the Workforce

## Federal - S 1035 Fire Sprinkler Incentive Act of 2011

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**Summary**

To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to include automated fire sprinkler systems as section 179 property and classify certain automated fire sprinkler systems as 15-year property for purposes of depreciation.

**Original Co-Sponsors**

- Senator Carper (DE)
- Senator Collins (ME)
- Senator Lautenberg (NJ)

**Status**

5/19/11 Referred to the Senate Committee on Finance.

## LEGISLATION UPDATE

CONTINUED FROM THE PREVIOUS PAGE

## Federal - HR 1792 Fire Sprinkler Incentive Act

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### Summary

To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to include automated fire sprinkler systems as section 179 property and classify certain automated fire sprinkler systems as 15-year property for purposes of depreciation.

### Co-Sponsors

- Rep. Jason Altmire
- Rep. Timothy Bishop
- Rep. Dan Burton
- Rep. Jim Cooper
- Rep. Jerry Costello
- Rep. Robert Dold
- Rep. Christopher Gibson
- Rep. Raul Grijalva
- Rep. Maurice Hinchey
- Rep. Tim Holden
- Rep. Steve Israel
- Rep. Jesse Jackson
- Rep. Bill Johnson
- Rep. Peter King
- Rep. James Langevin
- Rep. John Larson

- Rep. Tom Latham
- Rep. Steven LaTourette
- Rep. John Lewis
- Rep. David Loebsack
- Rep. Nita Lowey
- Rep. Carolyn Maloney
- Rep. James McGovern
- Rep. Mike McIntyre
- Rep. Michael Michaud
- Rep. Brad Miller
- Rep. Jeff Miller
- Rep. Gwen Moore
- Rep. Eleanor Norton
- Rep. John Olver
- Rep. Bill Pascrell
- Rep. Ron Paul
- Rep. Chellie Pingree
- Rep. Todd Russell Platts
- Rep. David Price
- Rep. Allyson Schwartz
- Rep. Brad Sherman
- Rep. Paul Tonko
- Rep. Robert Turner
- Rep. Chris Van Hollen
- Rep. Frank Wolf
- Rep. Lynn Woolsey

### Status

5/5/12 Referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means

## Federal - Campus Fire Safety Education Act of 2011

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### Summary

The purpose of this Act is to help provide fire safety education and training to students attending institutions of higher education.

### Sponsors

- Rep. Bill Pascrell (NJ-8)
- Rep. Tammy Baldwin (WI-2)
- Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12)
- Rep. Peter King (NY-3)
- Rep. David Price (NC-4)
- Rep. Dennis Kucinich (OH-10)

### Status

3/17/11 Referred to House committee. Status: Referred to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce.

## Federal - Campus Fire Safety Education Act of 2011

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### Summary

The purpose of this Act is to help provide fire safety education and training to students attending institutions of higher education.

### Sponsors

- Senators Frank Lautenberg (NJ)
- Senator Robert Menendez (NJ)

### Status

3/17/2011 Referred to Senate committee. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.