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Campus Fire Safety

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Campus

The Official Newsletter of the Center for Campus Fire Safety

FireZone

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Multiple Cases of the "Multi-colored Melter"

Multi-colored floor lamps have been getting a lot of attention on college campuses across the United States lately. For the New York State Fire Marshal's Office, the first reports of damaged lamps came the weekend of January 20, 2007 from the highly capable safety staff at SUNY Fredonia. They had responded to a report of a foul odor in the hallway of one of the residence halls. What they found was a shade on a five-arm, multi-colored floor lamp that had melted onto bedding. That same day, another lamp was found with a melted shade and according to the student who had that lamp, within 15 minutes of it being turned on, a poster on the wall started turning brown. Since then, the staff at Fredonia has found a total of 13 multi-colored floor lamps with melted shades on their campus alone.

In response to the Fredonia incident and several others, the state fire marshals' office

quickly broadcast a special Campus Fire Safety Bulletin, available at: <http://www.dos.state.ny.us/fire/CFSB.htm> which resulted in notification of similar incidents from schools throughout the state and nation. The office continues to remain in contact with the United States Consumer Safety Product Commission and Underwriters laboratory as this story unfolds.

Of the 13 damaged lamps found by SUNY Fredonia Residence Life staff during a "sweep" of the college, there were a total of four different models or designs found. All the lamps had 5 arms and each shade was a different color. The differences being either a smaller "cone" for the shade, one with a metal guard on the end of the shade, or colored braiding on the arms that coordinated with the shade color. The fourth style wasn't a "cone" but a flared out cone almost resembling a flower.

- Continued on page 8 -



"The Inspector"

by Philip Chandler



Consider the following scenario: At 12:23AM public safety received an activation signal from a heat detector on the second floor of Vernon Hall, a fully sprinklered four story student residence. 12:24AM: A water-flow signal was received. 12:24AM: The fire department was notified of the alarm transmission and public safety was dispatched to the location for investigation. 12:26AM: Public safety units arrived and were told by evacuating students that there was smoke on

the second floor. Officers quickly ran to the second floor, noting a moderate smoke condition and water on the hall floor in front of the trash room. They notified their dispatcher of their findings, and he in turn reported the same to the town's 911 dispatch center. The call was re-broadcast as a confirmed structure fire with additional units being assigned. 12:28: Public safety opened the rated door to the trash room. The sudden rush of air into the room of origin caused a rapid

eruption of fire in two oversized trash receptacles. Apparently, the fire had been smoldering for a while. The initial combustion was not detected by the smoke detector in the room because there was none; the installing contractor, deviating from the construction plans, substituted a rate of heat rise detector for the required smoke detector. The heat and smoke forced the officers to retreat; fortunately they thought to close the door.

- Continued on page 9 -



"The Campus Fire News Wire"

This page is only a snapshot of what is happening on college campuses around the country.

What you're reading is a brief overview of each news story. If you would like to see the entire article or view more news not listed in this section, please visit:

CampusFireSafety.com
click on: "News Wire".

Real Time Campus News - 24 hours a day

Visit:
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Information updated daily
(...well almost daily...)



February 27, 2007

Duquesne University
Pittsburgh, PA

An experiment in a science laboratory led to a fire that evacuated the building for nearly two hours. The small chemical spill included phosphorus oxychloride.

The Ohio State University
Columbus, OH

Officials are not commenting on the cause of a fire at the Chi Phi fraternity house. The fire caused only minor structural and cosmetic damages. None of the residents were at home during the blaze.

February 28, 2007

State University of New York
Binghamton, NY

Dormitory students were given 48 hour advanced notice of impending inspections by the New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control. Student rooms had not been inspected before this year. In the past, only the common areas of residence halls were inspected.

Ohio University
Athens, OH

Campus police are considering three campus fires arson and related. Two fires were started in an elevator while the other fire was found in a restroom trash can.

March 1, 2007

University of Southern Mississippi
Hattiesburg, MS

Maintenance work is the probable cause of a fire in a dormitory on USM's campus. No one was injured and nothing was badly damaged.

March 5, 2007

Longwood University
Farmville, VA

Two students are dead and four more are injured in an off-campus apartment fire. The fire is still under investigation.

March 6, 2007

George Washington University
Washington, DC

Campus police will install fire alarm covers to help stop false fire alarms in campus dorms.

March 8, 2007

Housatonic Community College
Bridgeport, CT

Smoke from a malfunctioning furnace caused the evacuation of a Connecticut Community College.

March 9, 2007

University of Texas
Austin, TX

A man set fire to purple softball and ignited a couch in the Alpha Chi Omega sorority house during a community service event. Damage was contained to the couch.

March 11, 2007

Central Georgia Technical College
Macon, GA

A Macon man has been arrested for spraying two people with a fire extinguisher at Central Georgia Technical College

March 13, 2007

University of Hawaii
Honolulu, HI

Seven chemical reaction devices exploded outside of a campus dormitory. Only one student was injured.

University of Texas
Austin, TX

Austin fire investigators say they know who sparked a fire at a sorority house in the West Campus area March 7 (reported on our website March 9). Arrest warrants were issued for Marcus Gaston Navarro, 21, and Hayley Ryan Mullane, 20.

March 14, 2007

Tulsa Community College
Tulsa, OK

A fake bomb found in the bathroom of Tulsa Community College caused the downtown campus to shut down for a day.

March 15, 2007

Tennessee Technical Univ.
Cookeville, TN

Tennessee Technical University experienced two fires which caused minor damage. The first incident happened in a campus dormitory where a computer laptop “blew up.” The second incident caused

by a table-top grill happened at an off-campus apartment. No one was injured.

March 17, 2007

University of Oregon
Eugene, OR

An explosion from a propane tank is the cause of a fire at the Sigma Chi fraternity house. No one was hurt; however, damage is estimated at \$80,000.

Boston University
Boston MA

For the second time in three weeks, Boston University students are mourning after a fatal off-campus apartment fire. The fire killed a visiting friend (student from PA) and injured two firefighters, while leaving several people homeless.

DePaul University
Chicago, IL

Two students got stuck inside an elevator Friday night as smoke spread in the upper floors of a building on the DePaul downtown campus the fire seems to have been a result of the elevator's motor overheating.

March 21, 2007

Boston University
Boston MA

A Boston University building was evacuated early Tuesday afternoon after an apparent fire in a ninth-floor research laboratory. No one was injured. the fire did not present a major hazard

Kent State University
Kent, Ohio

Kent State University students living off campus witnessed a fire Monday night and turned out in large numbers to watch firefighters battle a house fire at 241 E. College Ave. As firefighters arrived, heavy smoke was reported in the structure.

Heavy damage was reported in the structure. Fire officials are continuing their investigation. As of now the cause of the fire is undetermined.

March 23

Vanderbilt University
Nashville, TN

Branscomb residents living in Lupton and Scales dorms at Vanderbilt university campus were evacuated from the building when a roll of toilet paper was lit on fire in a Lupton sixth floor bathroom.

— NOTE —

CFZ would like to clarify the fire at Boston University on February 24, 2007 involved off campus housing. This property is not owned by BU.

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Help Them Get Ready for Off-Campus Living

Millions of college students soon will be making one of the most important decisions in their college career – where to live next year. As fire safety professionals, we know that on-campus living is much safer from the effects of fire than off campus. The fact remains though, that the majority of students will leave on-campus housing and move into residences in the surrounding community. While we may not be able to inspect off-campus housing, we can certainly arm our students with a list of questions to help them make safer choices before they sign their leases. Contacting the on campus paper, you should be able to provide them with a timely story that applies to all students who live or are considering living off campus.

All students should ask six principle questions before signing a lease.

1. Are fire sprinklers present in the building?

For a student moving off-campus, one of the best places to live is in a sprinklered building. The statistics speak for themselves. Contact your local fire department and ask them to provide local statistics on how much safer and less likely someone is to die in a building that has fire sprinklers.

2. Are smoke detectors in all bedrooms and all floors?

Students should look for working smoke detectors in the apartment or house they are considering. Ask the landlord to show testing records or ask to test the detector while you are touring the residence.

3. Do basement bedrooms have egress windows?

Most building and fire codes require egress windows to be at least 24 inches high, 20 inches wide, and not more than 44 inches off the floor. Many converted residences off-campus will have basement bedrooms and students should check with the local building or fire department to ensure the windows meet code. Give students a diagram in the newspaper that shows the height and opening requirements for basement egress windows.

4. Encourage students to obtain renters insurance.

Many students wrongly assume their parents insurance will cover them. This is not true in most cases. Refer students to local insurance agents or have the paper ask agencies if they would consider advertising on the same pages as the article appears on to help ensure they see the information. Students need to know they are financially responsible for other dwellings should they cause a fire that impacts others

5. Check for Fire Extinguishers.

Students touring a residence should find fire extinguishers in the garage, near the mechanical rooms/closet and near the kitchen. If they are not present, they should ask the landlord to provide new extinguishers and training on how to use them. If the landlord is not willing to provide training, encourage students ask the local fire department to come by and check the extinguisher placement and to provide training.

6. When was the property last inspected for fire safety?

Have students ask for a copy of the last property inspection. In some cases, they may not be able to obtain one since they are not the owner, but the landlord should be able to produce a copy of the inspection report.

Students need to know they have a right to safe housing. They would certainly return a car or electronic device if all the features were not working, the same holds true for their housing. They have a right to return it to the landlord, or not rent it at all, if the safety features are not working right or in place.



The Training Zone

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Topic:

Exit Doors—Clear Opening Width.

Learning objective: The student shall be able to describe the maximum obstruction size that may reduce required exit width.

For many business owners, the threat of break-in or robbery is more immediate to them than the likelihood of a fire.



As a result, inspectors will find many creative ways that owners try to enhance their business security, but that end up being clear violations of the fire safety regulations.

This picture illustrates an all-too-common problem. For reinforcement to the panic hardware locking device, the owner has installed a homemade security bar assembly across the door. A metal bar laid across the padded angled brackets holds the door shut so it can't be yanked open from the outside.

The angled brackets protrude 10 inches from the face of the door. All of the model fire and building codes limit the amount the door may project into the required egress width to 7 inches when the door is fully open. For example, if the required exit width is 32 net inches, it may be reduced to 25 inches when the door is fully open, not 22 inches as this arrangement shows.

If you look closely at the photograph, you also will see that there is no landing on the exterior side of the door. Current codes require a landing at least as wide as the door and at least 44 inches long in the direction of exit travel. A person stepping out of this door in the dark is likely to trip on the adjacent curb.

Fire inspectors should work closely with business owners to resolve conflicts between security issues and emergency egress protection.

For additional information, refer to International Fire Code®, Chapter 10; NFPA 1, Uniform Fire Code, Chapter 14; and NFPA 101, Life Safety Code®, Chapter 7.

U.S. Fire
Administration



Homeland
Security

From The President - Mike Halligan

As spring finds its way to campus, students start looking for off campus housing and our buildings start to become construction zones. These are just two of the predictable items that impact campus fire prevention programs. This month I'd like you to consider what kind of impact you can have on your students as they begin to think of moving off campus. This is your last chance to directly impact their fire safety. Think about placing stories in your campus paper that give them information they need to choose fire safe housing. The Center's website has a list of questions that can be used to help create the story. It is important to reach as many people in your community as possible so you may also think about working with local media to place stories in their publications as well. For more information on this topic, read this month's article about choosing safe housing.

On the topic of construction, take time to revisit site plans. Many individuals have shared stories about obstructed emergency access routes because construction operations took over more land than was originally planned. Touch base now with campus construction and design teams and ask that they pay close attention as well. No doubt some sites will need to encroach on emergency vehicle routes. Planning for this impact now becomes much easier now rather than on-site in the middle of the hot summer.

Lastly, I am writing this article the same night that we all just learned about the ten people who died in a fire in New York City. None of the victims were in college and there is not a connection to any campus. However, we do know that our campuses can learn from this fire. There are reports the smoke alarms were not in place or not working, at a minimum get word out on your campus for everyone to

check their detectors at home. Secondly, this fire appears to have started with a space heater or overloaded extension cords. Again, review your policies on campus for use of space heaters and ask those that use them to check on their condition. Overloaded cords and cords that are damaged can easily be corrected. Ask everyone on campus to take responsibility for checking his or her own use of cords. There are a wide range of heaters and cords on the market, so set your own campus standards high.

And in closing, consider active participation to change codes and standards for the types of products that can be sold. You see first hand the problems low cost and easily damaged products can cause and as a concern citizen, even you can lobby for change.



Career Connection



Safety and Compliance Specialist

Weill Medical College of Cornell University, Manhattan, New York

Position Summary — Under the general direction of the Director and Assistant Director, assists WCMC community in the development and implementation of construction and general safety programs. Develops and maintains safety plans, provides OSHA training, organizes and leads drills and exercises, and assists facility staff with inspections and audits. Assists personnel with understanding of requirements for the effective use of related plans, procedures, guidelines, federal, state and local requirements and codes. Develops program objectives, identifies corrective action strategies and

provides periodic status reports to management. Works closely with other staff to integrate safety program implementation.

Minimum requirements - Candidate must have at least three years experience in construction and general safety. Must have a Bachelor's degree in science, engineering or other safety-related area. Must have strong working knowledge of federal, state and local safety regulations and relevant codes. Must be skilled in assessing and implementing safety compliance programs and working with a diverse clientele of facility managers and building occupancies. Requires excellent oral and written communication skills, including training program delivery and program documentation. Must be organized, capable of working independently and as a supervisor in a service environment, and handle multiple assignments for independent operating units.

To Apply - Mail, fax or email cover letter and resume to the contact listed below.

Contact - Safety and Compliance Specialist Search Environmental Health and Safety Weill Medical College of Cornell University 1300 York Avenue, Box 354 New York, NY 10021

Tel: 212-746-6201, Fax: 212-746-8288, E-mail: jep2012@med.cornell.edu

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Director Environmental Health and Safety. Cornell University

Cornell University invites applications for the role of Director Environmental Health and Safety. Reporting to the Vice President of Business Services and Environmental Safety, the Director will lead, promote, and support a comprehensive environmental health and safety program for Cornell University. The Director must develop, maintain, and promote policies, procedures and programs necessary to maintain a healthy environment for the entire University community. The Director will serve as a liaison between the Central Administration and campus safety committees and is responsible for providing professional leadership and administrative direction to a staff of 59 as well as maintaining a budget of \$4.9 million including seven 'fee for service' programs. The Director also serves as University Safety Officer.

This position must possess a Bachelors in either physical or biological sciences, or engineering; and a Masters degree in management, or a related scientific, health or safety field such as environmental health, industrial hygiene, preventive medicine, safety engineering; as well as progressive experience in the management of comprehensive environmental health and safety programs at a comparable organization with a minimum of 7-10 years experience. The strong candidate must also possess a Board certification in a recognized professional health and safety discipline such as industrial hygiene (CIH), safety professional (CSP) and health physics society (CHP). Applicants must have a demonstrated ability to create an effective and positive team environment and the ability to lead effective change, exemplary communication skills and ability to exercise sound judgment, and proven successful fiscal experience managing operating budgets.

Interested candidates must apply online at: www.ohr.cornell.edu/jobs



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CampusFireZone®

Viewer Mail

- *Nice job on the newsletter, long overdue!!!!*

Robert Ryan, Director of Public Services
City of College Park, Maryland

- *I like the new format. Keep up the good work.*

Kenneth D. Harrison, CFI, Fire Safety Program Manager, Auburn University

- *It was impossible to finish reading Phil Chandler's article without my own sense of deja vu. I applaud Phil for his ability to articulate "THE PROBLEM." These attitudes we encounter and the indignation we can receive as we try to do our jobs competently are experiences that should be shared. But not to cry on each others shoulders. The inspiration in Phil's article is in how he responds and there are strategies there from which we can all learn when faced with similar circumstances.- Thank you Phil!*

David Hopka, Assistant Vice President, Safety & Risk Management, The Ohio University

Announcements

Announcement Sponsors



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Help Make "The Codes"

Make a difference in building safety and fire prevention at this year's Codes Forum. Scheduled for May 18-26 in Rochester, New York, the Forum features the Final Action Code Hearings, the Design Professional Institute and the 2006 Educational Updates.

The 2007 Final Action Hearings are the final step in the 2006/2007 Code Development Cycle and the results of these hearings will be the basis for the 2007 Supplement.



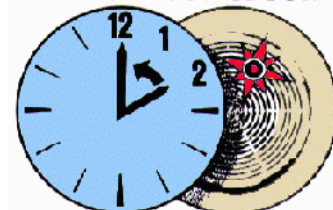
For more information go to www.iccsafe.org Is Your Smoke Alarm Working?

Change Your Clock Change Your Battery® is a national home fire safety program sponsored by Energizer® Max® brand batteries and the International Association of Fire Chiefs.

The program urges Americans to change smoke alarm batteries when changing their clocks to daylight savings time.

Unfortunately, even with a reminder as crucial as *Change Your Clock Change Your Battery*, we're increasingly challenged with reaching people where they live – in the community and at home.

CHANGE YOUR CLOCK



CHANGE YOUR BATTERY



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- Lamps continued from page 1-

The CPSC as part of its investigation has taken possession of four of the lamps for further examination and testing.

Recently Underwriters Laboratory released a bulletin stating that model number GX6409 with a UL number of E230863 had an unapproved UL tag. UL's bulletin can be downloaded at: <http://www.ul.com/newsroom/newsrel/nr030207.html> The lamp had the UL hologram sticker on it but the UL number was on a separate white sticker. There are three other models which are currently known to be under investigation by various agencies, so additional bulletins may be forthcoming.

In all but one of the damaged lamps, the lamps that were found with the correct wattage bulb installed. The question still remains; 'were the bulbs of the style (shape) recommended in the product instructions, if there were even any instructions provided at all?'

Because of the variety of models that have been found so far, it is a good idea to not limit inspections to just one type or brand. And remember, it is always good practice to exercise personal responsibility, to use ALL products safely and to monitor them for any signs of wear or other problems.



- The Inspector continued from page 1-

They were not able to extinguish the fire with portable extinguishers, as there were none on the floor. They had been removed in hopes of curbing vandalism. It was observed at this time that there was indeed an active sprinkler head in the room. Its spray apparently was not reaching the fire; it was later learned that duct work obstructed its pattern development.

At 12:30AM the first engine company arrived on the scene and immediately sent a crew to the fire floor wearing self contained breathing apparatus and carrying a fire extinguisher. They soon located the trash room, opened the door and were able to darken the fire with the extinguisher. Simultaneously, another company attempted to stretch a hose line from the stairwell standpipe connection, but was unable to charge the line, as the valve handle had been removed, also with vandalism prevention in mind. The local fire department long ago acquiesced to this removal and began to carry these handles on the apparatus. However, the company attempting to deliver water to the fire area was from a neighboring department and had no knowledge of this special arrangement. Likewise, neither public safety officers who had spare valve handles in their patrol cars, nor the host fire department officers were aware of the equipment they possessed. They were new in their positions and were never informed of the protocol.

At 12:35AM an additional company carrying tools and ventilation equipment down a long corridor leading to the fire area noticed a female student sprawled on the floor of an open dorm room. At the same time, public safety officers arrived at the coed's room after having been notified by her boyfriend that she apparently was not among the evacuees. The student was intoxicated and unresponsive. She was carried from the building. The fire department had not conducted a primary search of the premises, relying on assurances by public safety upon its arrival that the evacuation was complete.

At 12:47 the maintenance engineer on call arrived on campus. He had been summoned at the first verification of fire. His first job was to shut off the sprinkler system and the fire pump which was delivering 150psi to the open head. The fire department was unable to overcome this pressure and manually curtail the sprinkler flow. Firefighters were also unable to locate either of the two sprinkler control valves; on-duty public safety officers likewise were unaware of their locations. From the initial sprinkler activation to the time of system shutdown, a huge volume of water was discharged, causing extensive damage on two floors.

Fire investigators were unable to determine the cause of the fire. There was no evidence of unsafe disposal of smoking material; no cigarette butts were found at all in all the refuse that was carefully examined. During the investigation, a wall poster was found with singed corners and a security camera picked up a shadowy image of an individual playing with a lighter in the hallway in the hours leading up to the fire. The fire is still under active investigation. The school has had two intentionally set fires in recent years.

So what's the big deal anyway? All we're talking about here is a lousy, glorified waste basket fire, right? A dime a dozen. Get real! Forget about the \$143,000 bill for smoke and water damage. Forget about staff overtime and alternate housing expenses. Consider how fortunate the college was to have gotten off so cheaply. Consider the loss of life that could have so easily resulted! In the preceding narrative there are just enough elements present that with a little variation here or there, this incident might well have produced a real tragedy.

Fortunately, we can learn much from this, and for that matter, every incident. Accordingly, I propose the following questions as a mini check-up:

- Do you have vigorous plan and construction review procedures in place to assure that fire safety features, be they rated separations, fire detection or suppression devices, and are appropriate and in fact installed properly?
- Are all rooms containing controls for HVAC and all fire detection and suppression equipment clearly labeled for quick access by the fire department?
- Do you have adequate inspection, testing and maintenance of all fire safety equipment and systems according to accepted standards and required frequency?
- Are all of your own first responders, be they public safety or maintenance staff, well versed on the safest protocols for dealing with fires and hazardous materials incidents?
- Do you routinely conduct evacuation drills with evaluation of how effectively students and staff carry out evacuation and accounting of occupants afterwards?
- Do you aggressively investigate malicious false alarms, tampering with fire detection and suppression equipment and treat all mischievous fire-starting as the crime that it truly is, arson?

Needless to say, volumes can be written on the above issues. And in due time I might just do that. In the meantime every college and university must nonetheless prioritize the above issues; the Inspector surely does. After all, we must always be preparing for the "fire, next time.

- Philip Chandler is a long time firefighter and a fulltime government fire marshal working extensively in the college environment – from large public university centers to small private colleges. His primary responsibilities include code enforcement and education. Phil welcomes your comments, thoughts and opinions (whether in agreement or opposition) to his viewpoints. He may be reached at: theinspector@campusfire.org.