

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dorm Room Safety 101
***Recent death in frat house fire suggests student awareness
and responsibility are prerequisites!***

NORTHBROOK, Ill., USA – Aug. 27, 2002 – On Tuesday, Aug. 13, a 20-year-old student at Michigan Technological University (Houghton, Mich.) died in a fraternity house fire. Five other students narrowly escaped the fatal, early morning blaze. Authorities believe the fire started on an unattended stove and quickly spread, destroying the entire house.

This is the first reported campus fire of the new school year, but if statistics are any indication, it is certainly not the last. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), an average of 1,700 fires occur in dormitories and Greek housing each year. This means firefighters respond to fires on college campuses four times every day somewhere in the United States. Last year alone, 19 students died in fires in dormitory, Greek and off-campus residences, according to Campus Firewatch, a monthly electronic newsletter focusing on the issues of college and university fire safety. The safety professionals at Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (UL) are offering tips that will keep the more than 5.6 million students enrolled full time in colleges and universities safe no matter what their living arrangement.

“One tragic death is one too many,” said John Drengenberg, manager of Consumer Affairs, who reminds students that each year fire kills more Americans than all natural disasters combined. “Whether you live in a dormitory, sorority house or even a small off-campus apartment, your living area is likely overfilled with books, paper, bedding, clothes and other combustibles that make your room a bonfire waiting to happen. Even the smallest spark can be deadly. We urge students to start the year off by taking steps to decrease potential hazards and make sure a fire this tragic does not happen again.”

Electrical safety

- Do not overload extension cords, power strips or outlets.
- Get a power strip with an over-current protector.
- Be wary of electrical outlets that are too hot to touch.
- Do not connect multiple extension cords together.
- Do not route cords under doors or carpets.
- Do not staple extension cords.
- Look for the UL Mark on any electrical product you use.
- Use light bulbs with correct wattage for lamps.

Cooking

- Pay attention when cooking.
- Cook only where rules allow.
- Look for UL-Listed appliances that feature automatic shut-off buttons.
- Never plug more than one high-wattage appliance into a single outlet.
- Have plenty of fire-resistant potholders and oven mitts ready for use while cooking.
- Keep curtains, towels and potholders away from hot surfaces.
- Store solvents and flammable cleaners away from heat sources.
- Keep surfaces clean of grease.
- Never pour water on a grease fire.
- Keep an all-purpose fire extinguisher handy.

What if there is a fire?

- Never ignore a fire alarm.
- Never disable a smoke alarm by removing the battery.
- Always call the fire department or 911 immediately.
- Know your building’s escape plan.
- Know two ways to exit the building from your room.

- Memorize the number of doors to the nearest exit.
- Close, but do not lock, doors behind you as you leave the building.
- Protect yourself and your roommates before property and valuables.

For a complete list and further explanations of dorm safety tips, go to **www.UL.com/fallsafety**.

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