

**Leaving Home: College Fire Safety and Burn Prevention**  
**American Burn Association**  
**2004 Burn Awareness Week Campaign**

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**Leaving Home: College Fire Safety and Burn Prevention Campaign**  
**American Burn Association Burn Prevention Committee**  
**National Burn Awareness Week - February 1-7, 2004**

**Introduction/Background**

Remember when you were in college? Do you remember moving into your first dorm room or apartment? For many college students, concerns over fire safety and burn prevention take a backseat to things like studying, partying, and possibly working part-time. Planning for a potential emergency may not even occur to them or may be seen as an inconvenience. Many young adults in this age group believe that fires or burns are not something that could happen to them, therefore they do not understand the value of taking measures to prevent them.

Numerous fire injuries and deaths occur among college-age students every year. Some occur in residence halls on campus while others take place off-campus in apartments or houses. In 1998, there were 1380 fires in dormitories and fraternity/sorority housing alone.<sup>1</sup> Many off-campus apartment or house fires may not be reported or recorded as involving college students, therefore the true number of college students who experience a fire or are burned is most likely underreported.

Fires on college campuses are costly not only in personal injury, but also in property loss. In 1998, the dormitory and Greek housing fires in the United States resulted in about \$6 million in property damage.<sup>2</sup> Although most dormitories have smoke alarms that alert some students to exit the building, property damage and injuries still occur. In 1998, only 35% of dormitories that had a fire had sprinkler systems. According to the National Fire Protection Association, direct property damage per fire is 41% lower in dormitory fires when sprinklers are present and function as designed.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, installing sprinklers in addition to smoke detectors could save both lives and property. Unfortunately, to date, only three states have enacted college campus sprinkler laws.<sup>4</sup>

While property damage is a significant concern, the loss of life or a debilitating injury cannot be accurately measured in monetary terms. Often, the physical damage and loss from a burn injury is just a small part of the suffering; the grief and emotional damage often lasts a lifetime. According to Campus Firewatch, from January 2000 to June 2001, 26 college students lost their lives in fires. Most of these (65%) occurred in off-campus housing.

Whether you are a parent, a high school senior getting ready to leave home, or a college student, this campaign is for you. Parents must be informed so they can help prepare their children to live safely away from home. High school and college students need to learn common fire risks and basic preventative measures so they can make their living environment safe. It is every individual's responsibility to prevent fires and burn injuries.

Why are young adults at such a great risk for burn injuries? High school seniors and college freshmen are well on their way to becoming independent. They are learning to make decisions,

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<sup>1</sup> National Fire Protection Association, NFPA Online, Fact Sheets

<sup>2</sup> NFPA Online, Fact Sheets

<sup>3</sup> NFPA

<sup>4</sup> "The Nation Must Focus on Campus Fire Safety", Bruno, Firehouse, June 2003

deal with conflict, and think about the future. Peer relationships continue to be extremely important and influence many decisions they make.<sup>5</sup> Even though these young adults are learning to process these ideas, they don't have the amount of life experience required to understand the ramifications of all their actions. Therefore, they don't always make the best decision. Risk-taking behavior continues to be common and all too often alcohol consumption is involved. Cognitively these young adults may know that certain actions are inappropriate, but it doesn't stop them from carrying out the behavior if something is motivating them, such as peer pressure.

Alcohol is a major causal factor of burns in college-age students. In most cases where fire fatalities occurred on college campuses, alcohol was a factor. Alcohol use impairs judgment and hampers evacuation efforts.<sup>6</sup> For example, a student under the influence of alcohol is more likely to fall asleep while smoking or while a candle is burning. An intoxicated person is more likely to engage in unsafe behavior. And if a person "passes out" from alcohol, they are less likely to hear a smoke alarm and may succumb to the effects of smoke before being able to exit the building.

Besides alcohol, there are other factors that make this population of adults at higher risk for burn injuries. In dormitories and Greek housing, false alarms are common. Students will pull the fire alarm as a prank, with a "crying wolf" effect occurring. There have been cases of actual fires where the fire department still found students in a building as much as one hour after the alarm initially sounded<sup>7</sup>.

College students often "rig" their environment to suit their needs. They frequently use multiple extension cords that overload electrical circuits, which increases the risk of fires. They often use extension cords as "permanent" wiring, especially in older buildings. Appliances such as electric blankets, space heaters, coffee makers and hot plates are frequently used inappropriately or left on unattended. Students may disable smoke alarms by removing batteries, block fire exits with furniture, or prop open fire doors that should be left closed. Many students do this only in an attempt to make things more convenient, without realizing the hazard they are creating.

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<sup>5</sup> American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, Facts for Families, No. 58, 5/97

<sup>6</sup> USFA Fire Safety 101, Factsheet

<sup>7</sup> [www.campus-firewatch.org](http://www.campus-firewatch.org)

## Target Audience Information

***The information in this educational campaign is intended for the following target audiences:***

Parents of high school seniors and/or college students

High school seniors

College students

***The following organizations may be interested in using the material in this campaign:***

1. High schools
2. Church youth groups
3. Parent Teacher Associations
4. Hospitals
5. Fire Departments
6. Injury prevention organizations
7. University/College safety organizations
8. University/College residence hall associations and administration
9. University/College Greek organizations
10. Apartment managers/landlords
11. Property owners/landlords

***Note to injury prevention professionals:***

To find the names and contact information of colleges and universities in your area, go to

[www.anycollege.net](http://www.anycollege.net).

We have included a sample letter to send to local campuses to alert them of the availability of this campaign. You can insert your local contact information.

## The Nature and Characteristics of Burns

A burn is damage to the skin and underlying tissue caused by heat, chemicals or electricity – a very simplistic definition for a very complex injury. Burns damage or destroy one or more layers of the skin. Deeper burns may involve the fat, muscle or bone.

The temperature to which the skin is exposed, the length of time the skin is exposed to the burning substance, and skin thickness determine the depth of injury. Burns range in severity from minor injuries that require no medical treatment to serious, life-threatening or fatal injuries. Burns are categorized in terms of degrees, which are described below. Partial thickness injuries to the skin include first and second degree burns; full thickness injuries encompass third degree and deeper burns.

	<b>Degree</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
<b>Superficial Burn</b> <i>(First Degree)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>?? Causes: sunburn, minor scalds</li> <li>?? Generally heals in 3-5 days with no scarring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>?? Minor damage to the skin</li> <li>?? Color – pink to red</li> <li>?? Painful</li> <li>?? Skin is dry without blisters</li> </ul>
<b>Partial Thickness Burn</b> <i>(Second Degree)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>?? Damages but does not destroy the top two layers of the skin</li> <li>?? Generally heal in 10-21 days</li> <li>?? May not require skin graft</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>?? Skin is moist, wet and weepy</li> <li>?? Blisters are present</li> <li>?? Color: bright pink to cherry red</li> <li>?? Lots of edema (swelling)</li> <li>?? Very painful</li> </ul>
<b>Full Thickness Burn</b> <i>(Third Degree)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>?? Destroys all layers of the skin</li> <li>?? May involve fat, muscle and bone</li> <li>?? Will require skin graft for healing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>?? Skin may be very bright red or dry and leathery, charred, waxy white, tan or brown</li> <li>?? Charred veins may be visible</li> <li>?? Area is insensate – the person is unable to feel touch in areas of full thickness injury</li> </ul>

## Emergency Care for Burns

### For all burns

Stop the burning process. Remove all clothing from around the burned area – it can retain heat, hide underlying burns and increase the damage to the skin. If material is adherent (stuck) to the skin, cool the area with cool water and seek medical attention. Jewelry and metal such as belt buckles and zippers also need to be removed.

Run cool – not cold – water over the burned area for a few minutes.

- ?? Do **not** apply ice to the burn. Ice can lower the body temperature and make the burn worse.
- ?? Do **not** apply creams, ointments or salves. Such products hold heat in the tissue, making the burn deeper.
- ?? Do **not** break any blisters until seen by a physician.
- ?? Cover with a clean, dry cloth.

**Electrical burns** may be caused by household current, outside power lines, certain batteries or lightning.

- ?? Protect yourself! Do not go near or touch the victim until you are sure the power has been disconnected, the plug has been disconnected from the source, or the patient is free from the electricity.
- ?? Know the location of the main power grid and how to turn off the electricity in your own home.
- ?? Once the victim is free from the source, treat the burns as described above.
- ?? Electricity can cause the heart and breathing to stop. CPR may be necessary.

**Chemical burns** can be caused by contact with many household cleaners, lawn and garden products, fresh cement or other chemicals.

- ?? Wearing appropriate garments (gloves, eye protection), gently brush any dry chemicals off the skin.
- ?? Flush affected area with running water for at least 20 minutes or until an emergency worker tells you to stop. If the affected area continues to burn, continue to flush until the pain stops.
- ?? If the eyes are involved, continue to flush until help arrives.
- ?? Remove any contaminated clothing.
- ?? Be careful not to expose uninjured body parts or yourself to the chemical.

### When should you seek medical attention?

First and second degree burns smaller than the person's palm can usually be treated at home. Keep the area clean to prevent infection by gently washing with mild antimicrobial soap several times a day. Rinse thoroughly. Cover open areas with a clean, loose dressing. Consult with your family physician or local burn center if the burn does not heal in two to three days or if signs of infection appear.

Call your physician or go to your local emergency department for the following burns:

- ?? Burns bigger than the size of the person's palm
- ?? Burns that are circumferential (wrap around an arm or leg)
- ?? Burns that involve the face, airway, hands, feet, major joints or genital area
- ?? All chemical and electrical burns (since damage might not be immediately obvious)
- ?? Burns occurring in an enclosed space, such as a house or car (because there may be smoke inhalation)
- ?? Burns that are white, gray, leathery or painless

## College Fire Fact Sheet

- ? ? In 1998, there were 1380 structure fires in school, college and university dormitories and fraternity and sorority housing. (NFPA)
- ? ? An average of 141 structure fires occurs in fraternity and sorority houses every year. (NFPA)
- ? ? There are four fires a day in collegiate housing. (Senator John Edwards (D), North Carolina)
- ? ? From 1970 to mid 1980's, 88% of major college and university fires involving fatalities occurred in student residential buildings including fraternities and sororities. (Source: Fire Safety Manual, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill)
- ? ? The three leading causes of fire in collegiate housing are: (NFPA)
  1. arson
  2. cooking
  3. smoking
- ? ? The three leading causes of fire injuries in collegiate housing are: (USFA)
  1. cooking
  2. smoking
  3. arson
- ? ? 80% of all US fire deaths occur in residences. (USFA)
- ? ? Top three areas where residential fires most often occur: (USFA)
  1. Kitchen
  2. Bedroom
  3. Living room
- ? ? Candles and incense cause 12,000 residential fires annually. (College Fire Safety)
- ? ? Torchieres lamps burn at 1100 degrees Fahrenheit (College Fire Safety)
- ? ? Nationwide, flames or toxic smoke from smoldering mattresses and sofas kill 1500 people annually, and injure another 7000 (College fire Safety)
- ? ? About 33% of all dorm fires are deliberately set. (College fire safety)
- ? ? 9.2% of dorm alarms failed, or were disabled, in dorm fires from 1993 to 1997. (College Fire Safety)
- ? ? 73% of dorm fires last decade were in buildings without automatic sprinklers. (college fire Safety)
- ? ? Fire suppression technology is present in only 35% of collegiate housing fires. (JE)

## Candles/Incense Fact Sheet

Candles and incense are commonly used to create serene atmospheres. Unfortunately these tools can result in fire and burns and have devastating effects on students. Steps can be taken to prevent such tragedies.

- ?? Check your college policy on use of these items. If they are banned, do not use them.
- ?? Never leave a candle or incense unattended.
- ?? Keep candles away from items that can easily catch fire such as clothing, books, paper, curtains or other combustible items.
- ?? Keep candle wicks trimmed to ¼ inch in length.
- ?? Use candleholders that are sturdy, won't tip over easily and are made from non-combustible materials.
- ?? Do not place candles in windows where blinds and curtains can cover them or wind can blow them over.
- ?? Keep all candles and incense away from flammable liquids which include perfumes, cologne and aerosol sprays.
- ?? Remember that melted wax is extremely hot and should not be played with.
- ?? Keep hands and exposed skin away from open candle flames.

## Drinking, Smoking and Fires

Although drinking is not directly related to fires, alcohol intoxication may increase the risk of initiating a fire by impairing one's judgment and coordination. Someone who is intoxicated and smoking may succumb to the depressant effects of alcohol and fall asleep and drop a burning cigarette on furniture or in bed, which could smolder and start a fire. In addition, someone who has succumbed to these effects may not hear the fire alarm or be able to respond to it. Smoking fires are the leading cause of fire fatalities. The incidence of these fatal fires is higher when the victim has also been drinking. As a college student, you experience more freedom to engage in these activities, and need to be aware of their possible consequences so you can remain safe. In addition, careless smoking, even without alcohol consumption, can pose a significant risk of fires.

### ***Guidelines to Follow:***

- ?? If you smoke, smoke carefully; do not smoke in bed or in any residential building.
- ?? Use large ashtrays to extinguish your smoking materials and be sure that ashes, matches and cigarette ends are cold before you dump them.
- ?? Make sure you extinguish all cigarettes before leaving a room.
- ?? If smoking outside of the building, never throw a lit cigarette into bushes or grass, as conditions could allow it to smolder and catch fire.
- ?? Never smoke around flammable liquids or aerosol cans such as hairspray.
- ?? ***If you drink, be aware of the effects of alcohol.***
  - ?? Women, who generally have a lower body weight, will sustain more noticeable effects from fewer drinks than their male counterparts.
  - ?? Drinking numerous drinks in a short period of time without food will cause more noticeable impairment.
  - ?? If you have been drinking several drinks in a short period of time, you are impaired, even if you do not think you are.
  - ?? Have someone else accompany you home if you have been drinking.
  - ?? Do not mix alcohol and open flames. The flaming shot that you attempt may cause a flash burn to your face. Is it really worth the risk?
  - ?? Do not drink and smoke together. Should you fall asleep without extinguishing your cigarette you may become a victim of a fire that you caused.

## Electrical Fact Sheet

Electricity is such an important part of our day-to-day living that it is almost impossible to fathom a world without it. Unfortunately, when used improperly, it can cause fires, severe injury or death.

- ?? Do not overload outlets, power strips, multi-plug adapters or extension cords. One appliance per outlet is a good rule of thumb. With an approved power strip over-current protector, additional appliances may be used. Extension cords should be used for temporary situations (hours not days).
- ?? Be aware of outlets that feel hot to the touch: they are a potential fire hazard. Remove all appliances and contact your resident assistant or maintenance person immediately.
- ?? Do not route cords under carpets or walkways as wear and tear on the cord could damage the cord and cause a fire.
- ?? Do not use staples in any electrical cord as damage to the electrical components can cause sparking and, in turn, cause a fire.
- ?? Look for the UL mark on all appliances and cords to insure that they meet rigorous safety requirements.
- ?? If your appliance has a grounding plug, but your wall outlet does not, make sure you use approved adapters to plug the appliance in. Do not break off the grounding post.
- ?? Use light bulbs with the correct wattage for lighting fixtures. If you use a larger watt bulb in a fixture, you increase the potential for a fire.
- ?? Do not use electrical appliances in or near showers or bathtub as they might fall in the water and create an electric shock for the occupant.
- ?? Turn off all electrical appliances that produce heat, such as curling irons, clothes irons and stoves when you leave the room.

## Escape – Getting Out Safely in Case of a Fire

When you first enter your dorm, apartment or sorority/fraternity house you should take notice of all fire safety equipment. Notice where the fire alarms are located. Where are fire extinguishers? Is there a sprinkler system and smoke alarms or do you only have smoke alarms in the rooms? Make sure that your smoke alarm is working. Know if it is battery operated and make sure the battery is changed to keep it in working order. If you do have a fire in your building, your life will depend on getting out. The following steps will help you make a plan in case this scenario happens. It is important to make a plan and practice, just in case...

- ?? **Sound the alarm** – Know the routine in your building in case of fire. Is there a fire alarm to pull and where is it? What is the number you should call to set off an alarm?
- ?? **Leave the building** – Treat all alarms as if they are real. Your life depends on it.
- ?? **Leave all of your belongings behind** – They can be replaced, you cannot.
- ?? **Know your escape route** – When you first occupy the building, walk all escape routes. Make mental notes of numbers of doorways, etc. In a real fire there may be thick smoke and you will not be able to see.
- ?? **Crawl low** – You will be able to escape some of the toxic smoke and heat.
- ?? **Feel all doors before opening** – If it is hot, do not open it. If it is cool, open it slowly to check the condition of the hallway.
- ?? **Always use a stairway to exit the building, never an elevator** – Elevator shafts may fill quickly with smoke and the power may fail, leaving you stranded.
- ?? **As you leave, close doors behind you** – This helps contain the fire.
- ?? **Evacuate the building** – Don't try to stay and fight the fire.
- ?? **If you are trapped** –
  - ?? Keep the doors closed, seal cracks and vents if smoke comes in. If you are in a room and there is no smoke outside, open the windows to let heat/smoke out and fresh air in.
  - ?? Signal for help. Yell or scream to attract attention. Hang an object from the window that can easily be seen. If you have a phone, call the fire department and report that you are trapped. Be sure to give your room number and location.
  - ?? If all exits from a fire floor are blocked, go back to your room and follow the steps above.

## Halogen Torchiere Lighting

Halogen style lights emit high intensity light that is attractive and practical in small spaces. However, these light bulbs also emit an intense heat, up to 1100 degrees Fahrenheit. Only 10% of halogen energy burned yields light. The balance is heat – intense enough to ignite wood, plastic or cloth on contact.

?? Make sure an Underwriters Laboratory (UL) approved lamp is used.

?? Keep lamp away from all combustible materials such as curtains, papers and clothing.

?? Remember, the lamp stays hot long after it has been turned off.

?? Never leave a lighted Halogen lamp unattended.

## Cooking Safety Fact Sheet

Each year in North America, hundreds of people are killed and thousands injured by cooking-related fires. Most of these injuries could have been prevented if the individuals had followed a few basic, simple rules.

### ***In the Cooking Area:***

- ?? Never leave cooking food unattended.
- ?? Keep all pot handles turned back, away from the stove edge.
- ?? Appliance cords need to be kept coiled and away from counter edges.
- ?? When removing lids from hot foods, remember that steam may have accumulated. Lift the cover or lid away from your face and arm.
- ?? Check all handles on appliances and cooking utensils to guarantee they are secure.
- ?? Wear short sleeve or tight-fitting clothing while cooking.
- ?? Consider the weight of pots and pans. Attempt to move only those items that you can easily handle.
- ?? Always use oven mitts or potholders when moving pots of hot liquid or food.
- ?? Keep pressure cookers in good repair and follow manufacturer's instructions.
- ?? Avoid using area rugs in cooking areas, especially near the stove. If area rugs are used, ensure they have non-slip backing to prevent falls and scalds.

### ***In the Dining Area:***

- ?? During mealtime, place hot items in the center of the table, at least 10 inches from the table edge.
- ?? Use non-slip placemats instead of tablecloths – if anything pulls or tugs on the tablecloth, it can cause hot food to spill.

## Microwave Cooking Safety

Many college students use microwave ovens as a primary cooking method, especially in dormitories. Many perceive microwaves as “safer” than conventional ovens and stoves, but they heat foods and liquids to very high temperatures, and can result in burns from spills, splashes and release of steam.

Please read and follow manufacturer’s instructions for your microwave and follow the safety pointers listed below:

- ?? Place microwaves at a safe height, within easy reach, so all users may avoid spills. The face of the person using the microwave should always be higher than the front of the door. Microwaves installed above counters or stoves can be a scald hazard for anyone.
- ?? Steam, reaching temperatures greater than 200 degrees, builds rapidly in covered containers and can easily result in burns to the face, arms and hands. Puncture plastic wrap or use vented containers to allow steam to escape while cooking. Wait at least one minute before removing the cover. When removing covers, lift the corner farthest away from you and away from your face or arm.
- ?? Steam in microwave popcorn bags is hotter than 180 degrees. Follow package directions, allow to stand for one minute before opening, and open bag away from your face.
- ?? Foods heat unevenly in microwaves. Remember: jelly and cream fillings in pastries may be extremely hot, even though outer portions may feel only warm.
- ?? Microwaved foods and liquids may reach temperatures greater than boiling without the appearance of bubbling. Stir and test food thoroughly before serving or eating.

## Grilling Safety Fact Sheet

Every year, thousands of burn injuries result from the careless use of outdoor grills. These injuries occur primarily because of the use of unapproved lighter/starter fluids or gas and because of misuse of approved fluids. These injuries are preventable! Here are a few safety tips to remember when using grills.

### Charcoal Grills

- ?? Never use gasoline as a starter fluid or accelerant for charcoal grills.
- ?? Always use an approved lighter/starter fluid for charcoal grills.
- ?? After soaking your coals with lighter/starter fluid, wait for a minute before lighting the coals. This allows the heavy concentration of explosive vapors to disperse.
- ?? When using lighter/starter fluid, place the container well away from the grill before attempting to light the coals.
- ?? Be careful not to spill any fluid on your clothing or in the area surrounding the grill.
- ?? Wear an insulated, fire retardant barbecue mitt when lighting presoaked coals.
- ?? Never add lighter/starter fluid to hot or even warm coals. An explosion can result.

### Propane and Natural Gas Grills

- ?? When using a gas grill, check all connections leading from the fuel source to the inlet connection of the grill for leaks. Never use a match, candle or flame source to check for a gas leak. A leak can be detected by spraying soapy water at the connections. If bubbles surface, there is a leak. SHUT TANK VALVE OFF and tighten connections. If the connections continue to leak, have a certified dealer check the grill before using it again.
- ?? Open the valve only a quarter to one-half turn before lighting.
- ?? Always shut off the valve to a fuel source when it is not in use.
- ?? Never start a gas grill with the lid of the grill closed. The propane or natural gas may accumulate inside, and when ignited, could blow the lid off, causing injury.
- ?? Periodically, clean the Venturi tubes that displace the gas under the grill. When tubes become blocked by insects, gas is forced out somewhere else within the system. Use the manufacturer's instructions for cleaning.
- ?? Have a BC type fire extinguisher located in the grilling area.
- ?? Always store full or empty propane tanks in a well-ventilated shed away from the house or any habitable structure.
- ?? Always store propane bottles away from potential sources of flame such as furnaces, water heaters or any appliance with a pilot light.
- ?? Wear tight-fitting or short-sleeved clothing while cooking on a grill.

## **PARENTS GUIDE TO FIRE SAFETY: When your child leaves home for college**

Preventing fire and burn injuries is an important part of parenting. Remember all the hot items you moved out of reach of your children to keep them safe? The transition when your child leaves home for the first time is no different. You want your son or daughter to be safe in a college dorm, sorority/fraternity house or in his or her first apartment. Here are some fire and burn prevention tips for you and your child.

Facts:

- ?? 1400 fires occur on US college campuses annually
- ?? Arson or suspected arson is the #1 cause of dorm fires
- ?? Cooking is the #2 cause of dorm fires
- ?? Smoking is the #3 cause of dorm fires

You should have answers to these questions about your son or daughter's school:

- ?? What type of fire prevention training is done? How often?
- ?? How often are fire drills carried out?
- ?? What type of training has the residence hall staff received in fire safety?
- ?? Are the rooms inspected on a regular basis for fire hazards?
- ?? What type of fire alarm system does the building have?
- ?? Does the fire alarm system notify the fire department or campus security?
- ?? Are there smoke detectors in every room?
- ?? Do your residence halls have sprinklers?
- ?? How many fires occurred on campus last year?
- ?? How many false alarms happened on campus last year?

Dorm Life 101: Walk and talk through it with your child

1. Exits, escape plan, fire drill
  - ?? Have an escape plan.
  - ?? Know two exits from your room.
  - ?? Memorize the number of doors to the nearest exit.
  - ?? Never hang anything from sprinkler systems.
2. Smoke alarm and batteries
  - ?? Never ignore a fire alarm.
  - ?? Never disable a smoke alarm.
  - ?? Never borrow a battery from a smoke alarm.
3. Alcohol and drugs
  - ?? Alcohol reduces your ability to detect a fire and safely escape a fire.

4. Smoking
  - ?? Smoke in designated areas only.
  - ?? No smoking in bed.
  - ?? If you smoke, quit. If you don't smoke, don't start.
  - ?? Dispose of cigarettes in appropriate containers. Cigarettes smolder long after they are discarded.
  - ?? After parties, check cushions for smoldering cigarette butts before you go to bed.
  
5. Candles and incense
  - ?? Candles and incense may be prohibited in your dorm.
  - ?? Never leave burning candles or incense unattended.
  - ?? Keep candles and incense away from curtains, flammable materials, and unstable surfaces.
  
6. Cooking
  - ?? Cook in designated areas only.
  - ?? Never leave cooking items unattended.
  - ?? If fire breaks out in a microwave oven, keep the door closed and unplug it.
  
7. Electrical outlets and extension cords
  - ?? Do not overload electric outlets.
  - ?? Unplug electrical appliances when not in use.
  - ?? Extension cords are for temporary use only.
  - ?? Do not route cords under doors or carpets.
  - ?? Do not use electrical appliances near or around water.
  - ?? Check dorm rules before purchasing a halogen lamp.

## 25 Questions to Ask BEFORE You Sign a Rental Agreement!

1. Are smoke alarms installed? Working?
2. How old are the smoke alarms?
3. How often are the smoke alarms checked and batteries changed?
4. Are there at least two ways to exit your living space and your building?
5. Are exits marked and free from obstruction?
6. Are hallway doors closed and not propped open?
7. Do the upper floors have a fire escape or ladder available for each bedroom? (If there are multiple floors)
8. Are the doors fire rated?
9. Are the fire extinguishers available? Working?
10. Were the fire extinguishers inspected within the last year?
11. Is a sprinkler system installed?
12. Is the electrical wiring adequate? What is the electrical panel rated (200 amps or above)?
13. Are there ground fault interrupters (GFIs) in the bathroom and kitchen?
14. Is the building regularly inspected by the local fire department or college emergency management office for safety?
15. What is the owner's policy and method for correcting safety problems in the building?
16. Has there ever been a fire in this building? If so, identify the cause.
17. Does the residence have a gas or electric stove/oven?
18. Do you know how to use appliance(s) correctly?
19. Where is the nearest fire hydrant on the street? Who is responsible for keeping it cleared in the winter?
20. Did the school recommend the housing for students?
21. Is the owner a member in good standing in a landlord/tenant association or other housing association?
22. Has the city and/or university received any safety complaints regarding this building?
23. Do the windows easily open?
24. If the windows are secured with security bars, is there a quick release from the inside?
25. If there are dead bolt locks on doors, can you open without a key?

<DATE>

Dear University President:

Fire safety is just one of the responsibilities that a young person takes on when they leave home for the first time. The student is often unaware of fire safety and burn prevention. Each year, an estimated 1400 structural fires occur in school, college and university dormitories and fraternity and sorority housing. These fires cause \$9.1 million in direct property damage annually.

Your student-housing administrator works very hard to meet safety standards that reduce the chance of a fire on your campus. However, they cannot be responsible for the behavior of your students. Careless smoking and cooking by students are often the cause of dormitory fires.

The American Burn Association's (ABA) Burn Prevention Committee is encouraging you to provide the enclosed fire safety newsletter to all students and their parents. Including a copy of the newsletter when you send orientation packets or tuition statements to the parents of incoming students is an excellent way to deliver this highly beneficial message.

If you have questions or concerns about this public education program, please contact the Chairman of the ABA Burn Prevention Committee, Ernest J. Grant, RN, MSN at [egrant@unch.unc.edu](mailto:egrant@unch.unc.edu). Thank you in advance for keeping your students fire safe.

Sincerely,

Ernest J. Grant, RN, MSN  
Chairman, Burn Prevention Committee

Enclosure

## Media Guide

A key factor determining the success or failure of your burn prevention campaign is your ability to generate media interest and news coverage. The media is one of your most powerful links to the community. One news story can reach more people than the hardest-working volunteers could ever reach in person or at local health fairs. By gaining the interest and respect of the media, you can increase awareness in a large portion of your local community.

You may find that reporters react as positively to your Leaving Home Campaign as they do to such programs as bicycle helmet promotion and child passenger safety. The issue of college fire safety and burn prevention has gained some media attention in areas of the country where campus fires have occurred, but in some areas this issue has received very little to no recognition in the media.

Your campaign activities will be more interesting to various media sources if you augment national statistics with local data on college fires and burn injuries. Injury data, however, does not have to be statistics alone. Information about the experiences of being burned, the pain of treatment and rehabilitation, and the long-term emotional effects of burns are also compelling and meaningful story angles. Your first step should be to gather this and other data. This will enable you to create your own local college fire safety fact sheet.

### ***Publicizing the Leaving Home Campaign***

There are many ways to publicize your Leaving Home Campaign. The ABA Burn Prevention Committee recommends the following:

- ✂✂ Hold press conferences and provide written supplemental information
- ✂✂ Sponsor an event at a local university or college
- ✂✂ Suggest story ideas to your local reporters that cover health-related issues
- ✂✂ Send timely news releases to reporters and media contacts
- ✂✂ Use media support materials included in this packet
- ✂✂ Offer to do a guest appearance on a local radio or TV morning show
- ✂✂ Maintain a list of burn survivors who are willing to share their experiences and who have the attributes necessary to make good spokespersons

It is strongly suggested that you plan a local event and hold a press conference at the beginning of your campaign. You may want to hold your press conference to kick off National Burn Awareness Week (the first full week in February each year). It must be emphasized, however, that this "week" is only a kick-off. Burn awareness must continue to be promoted all year long. This is especially true with the Leaving Home Campaign, which could be used at the end of the school year for high school seniors, and in August/September for parents and college freshmen.

## ***Tips on Working with the Media***

1. It is very important to establish a close relationship with all varieties of news media in your region – newspapers, magazines, radio, and television. If you do not already have a media list, develop a complete list including the names, addresses, telephone and fax numbers, and email addresses of all media contacts. Be sure to get the name of the media representative at that publication or station that handles health and medical issues. These people tend to change positions and/or responsibilities fairly often, especially in the larger cities, so try to update the list at least once or twice a year. (Note: If your organization has a public relations department, they may have this information already.)
2. Establish deadlines with each contact. Know how much lead-time they need to receive articles for publication, for calendar listings, and for news conferences. (For example, community calendar and magazine notifications usually need a 4-6 week lead-time, whereas media advisories need a week, and press releases only a few days.)
3. Be concise but informative when using press releases. Try to make them no longer than one page. Make them more interesting by using local statistics when possible. Use quotes of key people involved. Be certain to include the date, contact names, and telephone numbers for further information. (See example on the following page.)
4. Allow sufficient time for a news release to be received and then follow up by telephone. Also, offer additional information if needed. If you are holding a special event, include a flyer, or be sure to include the “who, what, when and where”. If you are interviewed for a story, you can make it easier for the interviewer by providing supplemental written information or press packets. This also will make it less likely that you will be misquoted.
5. Sample public service announcements (PSAs) have been included in this packet. Issue these and/or develop your own (using local and/or regional data or examples of burn incidents among college students, when possible). A quote from the head of your local Burn Center, Chief of Staff, or Fire Chief will definitely add credibility and interest to the PSA.

### Press Conferences

In scheduling a press conference, plan ahead and try to ensure that your press conference does not conflict with any other event. Plan your conference at a convenient time, so that reporters, photographers and camera crews will be able to meet publication deadlines and scheduled news programs (e.g., the noon news and nightly news). If you send a press release announcing your press conference, follow-up on the morning (early!) of the event with a phone call reminder. Often, press releases are tossed aside, unread or forgotten, and a phone call may get you more attention.

Issue a “media alert” notifying the media of the conference, the reason for it, and the names and organizational affiliations of those who will be attending, as well as the date, time, location, and other details surrounding the conference. If possible, combine forces with other concerned groups (e.g., a burn center, a fire department, a local college or university, and parents). Because they are able to draw from personal experience, burn survivors can speak effectively about the pain and suffering associated with burns, and are able to capture and hold the media’s interest. Although

both burn survivors and their families are newsworthy, it is important to make certain they are willing to be interviewed and are prepared for the questions they may be asked. Do not add to their trauma by placing them in a situation for which they are not emotionally prepared.

#### Other Tips to Keep in Mind for Press Conferences

- ✂✂ Prior to the press conference, try to determine who is planning to attend and which media they represent. Make sure you have a sufficient number of informational packets on hand to distribute.
- ✂✂ If circumstances call for it, have your own photographer on hand who can quickly develop photos for distribution to press members who were not accompanied by a photographer. If advance photographs can be made available, this will add to the speed with which the news can be printed.
- ✂✂ Keep the press under control. Set an agenda, distribute it, and follow it. Allow for questions and answers at the end of the conference – not during it. If necessary, limit the number of questions from a reporter and/or the amount of time it takes to answer.
- ✂✂ It is helpful to provide some type of display or interactive safety demonstration that provides a good visual for either a still photo or videotaping. This way you will be more likely to have a picture along with your news story.
- ✂✂ Be sure to follow up with each person who attended the news conference. This will give you an opportunity to provide them with additional information they may need and also to determine when their story will run. Also, once their story has run – and especially if it was a favorable item – be sure to thank the reporter, either by telephone or with a brief note.

### **Effective ways to get fire safety messages out to 18-24 year-olds:**

1. Use real life stories and photos about fire-related incidents involving people in this age group (see [www.campus-firewatch.com](http://www.campus-firewatch.com) to find accounts of college campus fires.)
2. Put posters/flyers up in bathroom stalls at colleges/universities
3. Give presentations during Freshman Orientation (college students suggest having fellow students do skits that present the message in a somewhat entertaining manner)
4. Place fliers around campus on message boards, in libraries, student unions and cafeterias, that make students think and get them interested.
5. Use an informational web address that pops up on websites that college students use frequently.
6. Use college TV, radio and newspapers.
7. Bring in burn survivors to speak about experiences.
8. Offer free promotional items with fire safety messages on them with a website/phone number for more information. Examples of items would be buttons, notebooks, pencils, pens, frisbees, coozies, t-shirts, water bottles. These could be handed out at booths in common areas or given out at Freshman Orientation.
9. Set up a booth at a student union/center staffed by a person with information, free stuff, and an ongoing video or power point presentation playing stories about campus fires, burn survivors.
10. Place information in popular coffee shops and restaurants (for example in the plastic holders on restaurant tables that sometimes have drink/food specials or info on events – everyone reads these!)

This information was compiled by AmeriCorps\*NCCC, Team Silver One, team meeting, June 5, 2003. This is a group of young adults age 18-24 who are in this campaign's target audience.

**SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE**  
**For Immediate Release**

Contact: (Local contact and title) at (Local phone number)  
Or American Burn Association (800) 548-2876

**2004 Burn Awareness Week: "Leaving Home" – February 1-7, 2004**

Young adults all across America leave home for college every year. They arrive in their new dorm room, fraternity or sorority house, or apartment with all the tools they need for a successful semester – or do they? Fire injuries and deaths occur among college students every year. According to the National Fire Protection Association, there are about 1700 fires in dormitories and Greek housing each year. This number does not include fires or injuries that occur off-campus in apartments or houses. While college students may be well informed on political science, English literature, art history, or math, they may know very little about how to prevent fires or burn injuries. Unless they have already had a personal experience with fire or a burn, they may not even realize this is a risk.

According to (insert name and title of local contact, Burn Center Director, or Fire Chief), the three leading causes of fires and burn injuries in collegiate housing are cooking, smoking, and arson. Other common causes are candles and misuse of extension cords. Alcohol abuse is commonly associated with burn injuries to college students. High school seniors and college students need to be educated about fire risks and prevention methods so they can create a safe living environment for themselves, their roommates, and other housing residents.

The American Burn Association has some lifesaving tips that anyone living on their own for the first time should be aware of:

- ?? Do not overload extension cords, power strips, or outlets.
- ?? Do not leave cooking food unattended.
- ?? Do not use gasoline to fuel a fire or a barbeque grill.
- ?? Never disable a smoke alarm.
- ?? Do not play with fire, causing an unintended disaster.
- ?? Keep curtains, linens, and any other flammable material away from hot surfaces.
- ?? Make sure cigarette butts are fully extinguished before leaving a room or going to bed.
- ?? Never leave burning candles unattended. Make sure all candles are extinguished before leaving a room or going to bed.
- ?? Curb alcohol consumption to avoid "passing out" while something is burning or to avoid being so intoxicated that you can't react quickly in an emergency.
- ?? Never ignore a fire alarm.
- ?? Have an escape plan that includes two ways out of every room.

For more information on college fire safety and burn prevention, fact sheets, and safety checklists, contact (your local contact name and phone number). For the complete 2004 Campaign Kit entitled "Leaving Home", contact the American Burn Association at 1-800-548-2876 or visit the Prevention page of the ABA website at [www.ameriburn.org](http://www.ameriburn.org).

## Sample Public Service Announcement #1

### Subject

College safety for parents

### Contact

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Start use: Immediately

Stop use: Indefinitely

### **Reading Time: 10 Seconds**

Is your high school senior prepared to prevent a fire or burn injury? For free information on College Fire and Burn Prevention, contact (insert local contact) at (insert local phone number).

### **Reading Time: 20 Seconds**

Give your high school senior the gift of safety. Burn Awareness Week, February 1-7 2004, focuses on "Leaving Home: College Fire Safety and Burn Prevention." Protect your child and prevent a burn injury. Contact (insert local contact) for free information at (insert local phone #).

### **Reading Time: 30 Seconds**

The American Burn Association targets kids "Leaving Home" for the first time during Burn Awareness Week, February 1-7, 2004. College students are at risk of being burned from fires in dormitories, fraternity and sorority houses, and apartments. Start talking to your high school senior now about fire safety and burn prevention. Contact (insert local contact) at (insert local phone number) for free information on the Leaving Home Campaign.

## Sample Public Service Announcement #2

### Subject

**College safety for high school students**

### Contact

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Start use: Immediately

Stop use: Indefinitely

### **Reading Time: 10 Seconds**

Protect yourself from fire and burn injuries once you leave home. For free information on College Fire Safety and Burn Prevention, contact (insert local contact) at (insert local phone number).

### **Reading Time: 20 Seconds**

So, you're off to college in a few months. Do you know how to protect yourself from fire and burn injury in your new home? Burn Awareness Week 2004 focuses on students with its Leaving Home Campaign, February 1-7. Contact (insert local contact) for free information at (insert local phone number).

### **Reading Time: 30 Seconds**

Graduation is around the corner and you'll be leaving for college in the fall. You know how to make the grade, but what do you know about fire safety and burn prevention? College students are at risk of being burned in dormitories, Greek housing, and apartments. During Burn Awareness Week, February 1-7, 2004, the American Burn Association wants to teach students about home and dormitory safety. Call (insert local contact) at (insert local phone number) for more information.

### Sample Public Service Announcement #3

**Subject**

**Contact**

**College safety for college students**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Start use: Immediately

Stop use: Indefinitely

**Reading Time: 10 Seconds**

On your own for the first time? Learn how to prevent fires and burn injuries. For free information on College Fire Safety and Burn Prevention, contact (insert local contact) at (insert local phone number).

**Reading Time: 20 Seconds**

It's official. You're a college student and you're on your own. Do you know how to protect yourself from fire and burn injury in your new home? Burn Awareness Week 2004 focuses on students with its Leaving Home Campaign, February 1-7. Contact (insert local contact) for free information at (insert local phone number).

**Reading Time: 30 Seconds**

The semester's almost over. You've studied hard and you're ready for finals. You know how to make the grade, but what do you know about fire safety and burn prevention? College students are at risk of being burned in dormitories, Greek housing, and apartments. During Burn Awareness Week, February 1-7, 2004, the American Burn Association wants to teach students about home and dormitory safety. Call (insert local contact) at (insert local phone number) for more information.

## Resource List for College Campaign

### ?? U.S. Fire Administration

[http://www.usfa.fema.gov/public/cfs\\_04.cfm](http://www.usfa.fema.gov/public/cfs_04.cfm)

This resource contains information that is easily accessible from the website and can be downloaded to any computer using either a word or PDF version. Included is information such as Living with Fire: A program for campus and student fire safety project, lesson plans and resources and sample press releases. Some of the topics included are alcohol and fire safety, smoking and fire safety, evacuation, fire behavior and overview for the college student, on- and off-campus housing and many other appropriate topics. PowerPoint presentations are also available for downloading.

### ?? Campus Fire Watch

<http://www.campus-firewatch.com/documents/parents.htm>

Documents available at this website include:

- ?? "Harvard College 1999 Campus Alcohol Study"
- ?? "College Administrator Survey – What is being done to curb binge drinking?"
- ?? "Establishing a Relationship between Alcohol and casualties of Fire" (USFA study on links between fires and alcohol)
- ?? "Fire Safety 101: A Fact Sheet for Colleges and Universities" (Prepared by the USFA)
- ?? "Answer These 20 Questions" – A great list of questions that everyone should answer before signing a rental agreement.

### ?? College Fire Safety

<http://collegefiresafety.org>

This site contains safety tips and supporting information for fire safety issues for college age students that can be downloaded from the website. Some topics include: alcohol use, smoking issues, electrical use in dorm rooms, fire alarms, Halogen torchiere lights, candles/incense as well as others.

University of Maryland Environmental Safety

"Working Together for a Safe Campus"

<http://www.inform.umd.edu/CampusInfo/Departments/En.../rf.htm>

This site contains the University of Maryland plan for fire safety on campus. Additional sites talk about Greek housing also. This would be an example of what you might do for your campus if you do not already have a plan. You could use this site as a template for your plan.

## RESOURCE LIST

Campus Firewatch – electronic newsletter devoted to campus fire safety

[www.campus-firewatch.com](http://www.campus-firewatch.com)

1-414-323-6002

Living With Fire – United States Fire Association (USFA) website developed by Campus Firewatch, has free downloadable material for educators

[www.usfa.fema.gov/public/campus.shtm](http://www.usfa.fema.gov/public/campus.shtm)

National Fire Sprinkler Association

National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)

[www.nfpa.org/catalog/home/index.asp](http://www.nfpa.org/catalog/home/index.asp)

“Protecting Your Family from Fire” – educational website for parents from the USFA

[www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pyfff/index.html](http://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pyfff/index.html)

or

[www.usfa.fema.gov/public/index.shtm](http://www.usfa.fema.gov/public/index.shtm) then click on link for “Protecting Your Family from Fire”

## AUDIO VISUALS AND AVAILABLE MATERIALS

1. "Graduation: Fatally Denied"  
Video  
Target audience: College students  
Cost \$17.95 ea  
Emergency Film Group  
[www.efilmgroup.com/graduation](http://www.efilmgroup.com/graduation)
2. "College Fire Safety 101"  
Video  
Target audience: College students and administrators  
No cost  
Fax request on letterhead to USFA Publications Center (301) 447-1213
3. "Ready to Respond"  
Video  
Target audience: Campus housing administrators  
No cost  
Fax request on letterhead to USFA Pub Center (301) 447-1213
4. "Get Out and Stay Alive"  
Video  
Target audience: College students  
No cost  
Order online from USFA Publications Center [www.usfa.fema.gov/public/cfs\\_10.shtm](http://www.usfa.fema.gov/public/cfs_10.shtm) (under resources)
5. Photo Library  
Downloadable photos to use in developing your own programs  
USFA  
[www.usfa.fema.gov/public/cfs\\_07.shtm](http://www.usfa.fema.gov/public/cfs_07.shtm)
6. Power Point Presentations  
Eight available presentations with various topics and target audiences  
USFA "Living with Fire" website  
[www.usfa.fema.gov/public/cfs\\_08.shtm](http://www.usfa.fema.gov/public/cfs_08.shtm)
7. Brochures  
Downloadable information bulletins in Word or pdf format  
Target audience: Students and housing administrators  
School logo and contact information can be inserted  
No cost  
USFA "Living with Fire" website  
[www.usfa.fema.gov/public/cfs\\_03.shtm](http://www.usfa.fema.gov/public/cfs_03.shtm)

8. Lesson Plans  
Downloadable  
Target audience: Students living both on- and off-campus  
Educates on scope of problem, science of fire, and safety measures  
USFA  
[www.usfa.fema.gov/public/cfs\\_04.shtm](http://www.usfa.fema.gov/public/cfs_04.shtm)
  
9. ABA campaigns from past – Scald and Gasoline
  
10. Recommended materials available through NFPA Catalogue:
  - a. “10 Tips for Fire Safety” – video  
Targets: Off-campus, Greek housing  
Cost - \$299
  - b. “10 Tips for Fire Safety” – brochure, English and Spanish  
Cost – 100 for \$22
  - c. “Candle with Care” – brochure  
Cost – 100 for \$22
  - d. “E.D.I.T.H. (Exit Drills in the Home)” – brochure, English and Spanish  
Cost – 100 for \$22
  - e. “Fire Extinguishers: Fight or Flight” – video  
Cost - \$477
  - f. “Fire Power” – video  
Cost - \$299
  - g. “Fire Safety 101: College Safety Brochure”  
Cost – 100 for \$22
  - h. “Home Smoke Alarms” – brochure
  - i. “Kitchen Fire Safety” – brochure
  - j. “Survive Fire in Your Home” – video  
Cost - \$299
  - k. “Fire: Countdown to Disaster” – video  
Cost - \$299
  
10. Recommended materials from USFA website (order online)
  - a. “Get Out and Stay Alive” – brochure  
Target: College students  
no cost
  - b. “Smoke Alarms: What You Need to Know” – brochure  
No cost
  - c. “Escape from Fire – Once You Get Out Stay Out” – brochure  
No cost

## User Survey

We appreciate your suggestions and recommendations for future Burn Awareness Week campaigns. Please use the backside for additional comments. Please complete this form and return it to the American Burn Association, 625 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1530, Chicago, IL 60611 (Fax: 312-642-9130). Thank you.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Profession:  Nursing  Fire/Life Safety Educator  Public Health Educator  Other

1. Did the content covered in the campaign kit meet your learning needs?  
Yes    No  
If you answered no, please specify what we can include to meet your needs.
  
2. Was the length of the subjects adequate to cover all information you feel you needed?  
Yes    No
  
3. Were the handouts and resource materials helpful?  
Yes    No
  
4. What did you like most about the campaign?
  
5. What did you like least about the campaign?
  
6. How did you hear about the Burn Awareness Week Campaign Kit?  
Please check all that apply.  
 ABA website  Postcard mailed to institution  
 Journal of Burn Care and Rehabilitation  Word of mouth  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. How did you obtain the materials?  
 Requested hard copies from the ABA Central Office  
 Downloaded them from the ABA website  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  
8. What pieces of the campaign kit did you use? Please check all that apply.  
Educator's Guide  Public Education Materials  
 Statistics  Fact Sheets  
 What is a burn?  Newsletters  
 Emergency care for burns  Press Releases  
 Publicity guide  
 Public Service Announcements  
 PowerPoint slide presentation/instructor guide

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