

College Safety Tips

College living is an exciting time in a person's life. For most students attending schools outside of their home town or state, it's their first sniff of independence--the first time many are away from their homes, families and friends for any length of time. But, while college opens many doors to new and exciting opportunities, it also introduces myriad new safety hazards, especially to students living in dormitories, apartments and other community living locations for the first time in their lives.

Growing up, you may have been the safest person in your school, house or neighborhood. But unfortunately, your impeccable safety record doesn't safeguard you against the actions of those sharing your college housing facilities. Therefore, it's extremely important to make sure you develop and practice an escape route should an emergency, such as a fire, occur.

Fire Safety

Fire is the third leading cause of accidental deaths in the United States. A residential fire occurs every 82 seconds in this country, and once burning, the size of a fire doubles every 30 seconds. If a fire should occur in your building, get out as soon as possible. Do NOT try to act bravely or put it out yourself. That is a fight too easily lost... and it's just not worth it.

If you have an escape plan, put it into motion at the first signs or smell of a fire. Never exit a door if it feels hot to the touch, you could walk right into flames. Also, it is a good idea to know where all the fire extinguishers are located in your building.

Fire Prevention

In community living facilities, everyone must do their part to make their dwelling a safer place. Here are a few easy steps you can take to help prevent fire or electrical hazards:

- Look for the UL Mark on all products. It means samples of the product have been tested for safety.
- Make sure outlets are not overloaded.
- Check electrical wires and cords on appliances, tools, lamps, etc. to make sure they're not worn or frayed.
- Never run electrical wires or extension cords under carpets or heavy items, and never bunch them up behind a hot appliance.
- Unplug appliances when not in use.
- Have your building's management install smoke alarms -- at least one on each level -- and make sure they're maintained and tested regularly.

Fire Facts

Fire is a chemical reaction involving fuel, oxygen and heat. Take away any of these three elements, and a fire cannot last. There are four classifications of fires, dependant on their fuels:

Class A: Ordinary materials like wood, paper, cloth, rubber and plastics. Most home fires fall into this category.

Class B: Combustible liquids such as gasoline, kerosene, alcohol, paint and propane. These tend to be more severe and dangerous than Class A fires because the liquid fuel is highly flammable and can propagate easily.

Class C: Electrical equipment like appliances, switches and power tools. These fires are extremely dangerous due to added shock hazards and because the source is energized--supplying a steady and constant ignition condition.

Class D: Combustible metals like magnesium, titanium, potassium and sodium. These fires burn at a very high temperature and can react violently with water or other chemicals.

For more consumer safety information, visit <http://www.ul.com/regulators/pubedu.html>