NFPA And The Center For Campus Fire Safety Raise Awareness On Campus Fire Safety Month

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September is Campus Fire Safety Month, and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and The Center for Campus Fire Safety (The Center) are working together to promote their national Campus Fire Safety for Students campaign. The campaign, which raises awareness about the dangers of fires among college-aged students who live in on- and off-campus college housing, serves as an important reminder for students, parents, fire safety professionals, and safety educators to review best safety practices and take action to reduce risk. September and October are the peak months for fires in dormitories.

**Lives lost in campus fires**

According to The Center, during the 2017/2018 school year, one student lost her life in a Portland, Oregon off-campus fire. The recent fire in San Marcos, Texas claimed the life of four additional students living off-campus during the school break in July 2018.

From 2000 through mid-August 2018, 132 students died in 92 fatal fires on college campuses, in Greek housing, or in privately owned off-campus housing within three miles of the campus. Of the 92 fatal fires, 79 of them occurred in off-campus housing claiming 113 victims.

**Fire Safety tips for students**

NFPA reports that roughly three of every four fires in dormitory, fraternity, sorority, or barracks began in the kitchen or cooking area. Kitchen fires caused almost half of the
injuries in these properties. Fires are more common between the hours of 5 - 9 p.m., and on weekends. To help reduce risk, NFPA and The Center offer the following tips for students:

1. Cook in designated areas only, and never leave cooking equipment unattended when in use.

2. Test smoke alarms monthly; in an apartment or house, make sure smoke alarms are installed in each sleeping room, outside every sleeping area, and on each level of the apartment unit or house. Do NOT remove or disable smoke alarms.

3. Keep combustibles away from heat sources and refrain from overloading electrical outlets, extension cords, and power strips. Electrical products like portable heaters and lighting (including halogen lamps) are the source of many fires.

4. Learn the building's evacuation plan and practice all drills; know two ways out of the building.

Campus Fire Safety Month

"Campus Fire Safety Month provides a great opportunity to share materials and action steps"
NFPA's latest statistics show that from 2012 - 2016, local fire departments responded to an average of 4,100 structure fires in dormitory, fraternity, sorority, and barracks properties. These fires caused an average of 33 civilian injuries and $15 million in direct property damage.

"As the school year kicks off and college students settle into housing in dorms and off-campus apartments, it's important they review fire safety tips to learn how to prevent fires," said Lorraine Carli, Vice President of Outreach and Advocacy for NFPA. "Campus Fire Safety Month provides a great opportunity to share materials and action steps, and have important conversations with students about fire safety."

**Fire safety in college housing**

The campaign provides a host of resources for students, parents, and fire safety educators that focus on fire safety in college housing. Many resources are customizable and have been designed for sharing via social media, on college websites, in school newspapers, and for posting in dorms and on common area bulletin boards. They include:

- Videos
- Checklists
- Tip sheets
- Infographics and flyers
Michael J. Swain, president of The Center for Campus Fire Safety, says the hope is that students share this information with their friends, because when they do, the message tends to resonate even more. “Still, there’s a great deal of work to be done as a large number of residence halls and dormitories still lack modern fire protection equipment such as fire alarm systems, bedroom smoke alarms, and fire sprinklers. The Campus Fire Safety for Students campaign is one important way we’re working to address this problem.”