CAMPUS Firewatch™

DECEMBER 2000

Campus Fire Safety Forum II

***Ed Comeau**, writer-tech.com*

The following is the second of a two-part story on the Campus Fire Safety Forum that was held at the NFPA Fall Education Conference in Orlando, Florida. These are summaries of the presentations that were given at the Forum. Part One was in the November issue of Campus Firewatch.

The Impact of an Ordinance

Rich Barr

In Lawrence, Kansas, there had been a long road leading up to the implementation of a mandatory sprinkler ordinance (see a related story in the September, 2000 issue of Campus Firewatch). Fire Marshal Rich Barr from the Lawrence-Douglas County Fire and Rescue Department outlined the impact of the ordinance and what some of the "fallout" was for the Greek community.

The Lawrence-Douglas County Fire and Rescue Department had responded to several fires in Greek houses, one in 1976 and another in 1987, that helped create a catalyst for trying to implement legislation. They put together a package that illustrated the dangers that had been found in the Greek occupancies over the year.

For example, over the years there had been 25 fires. Also, some of the dangers that had been identified were how the occupants would customize their rooms. They would do their own wiring and build lofts-"privatize their dwelling unit, so to speak," said Barr. In 1987, they even found one student in the basement, excavating a space that was going to become his room!

The department reviewed statistics such as fire loss and violations for congregate residences. Over a four-year period from 1984 to 1988 and they found that approximately a half a million dollars in fire damage had occurred in these occupancies. Furthermore, they were finding an average of 14 violations per building, as opposed to approximately five for hotels and motels, and about one for apartments. The risk was clearly in the congregate residences, and the decision was made to have the program apply to all congregate residences, not just the Greek houses.

According to Barr, one of the important factors in successfully implementing a program is to be able to take advantage of the teachable moment. “As I see it, people who are trying to advocate change are like surfers waiting for the big wave. You get out there, you have to be ready to go, you have to be ready to paddle. If you are not ready to paddle when the big wave comes along, you're not going to ride it in.” John Kingdon originally stated this, and Barr felt that it aptly illustrated the need to be ready to move at the right time.

It was also important to decide what type of approach you are going to take towards trying to implement change. “The two approaches are to be creative and comprehensive versus incremental,” said Barr. Each has distinct advantages and disadvantages.

Continued on page 5

HISTORY OF THE NEW YORK STATE GOVERNOR’S TASK FORCE ON CAMPUS FIRE SAFETY

Paul D. Martin
Fire Protection Specialist
NYS Office of Fire Prevention and Control

As colleges, universities and governments across the nation learned of the details of the tragic Boland Hall fire at Seton Hall University in early 2000, everyone expressed the same reaction -- "what if it had happened here?" Sprinklers, or more aptly the lack of sprinklers, became a recurring theme during the post-incident analysis. While several states quickly began to evaluate and react to the sprinkler issue, George E. Pataki, the Governor of New York State, decided to take a more far-reaching approach by commissioning a study that would report on all aspects of fire safety in colleges in his state.

With Executive Order #103, he created the "Task Force on Campus Fire Safety". The Task Force consisted of officials and student representatives from both public and independent colleges and universities, leaders of the government agency that constructs

Continued on page 3

FROM THE Editor

Year in Review

What has happened this year in campus fire safety?

A lot-some good, some, unfortunately, tragic.

As we are going to press, Campus Firewatch has identified nine fires in 2000 that killed 15 people. It is unfortunate that it requires these tragedies to serve as a catalyst for the legislation and changes to occur. However, whatever the motivation, we should take advantage of this heightened awareness to drive home the message on campus fire safety. (More information on these fatal incidents is going to be contained in the January issue.)

Because of these tragedies, we saw some of the most sweeping changes made in fire safety. Within less than five months, major legislation was enacted in New Jersey. This legislation requires that all dormitories and Greek housing in the state be sprinklered within four years. This was not just another unfounded mandate handed down by a state legislature, either. Along with it came a fund of $50,000,000 in the form of low-interest or no-interest loans that the institutions can tap into. At Campus Firesafety Forum II, New Jersey State Fire Marshal George Miller reported that this fund was just about going to cover all of the required installations.

No other legislation has ever been enacted so broadly and quickly that will so dramatically change the level of fire safety. Within five months of the tragic Seton Hall fire, New Jersey leaped into the forefront of fire safety.

Along with the efforts in New Jersey, there were other pieces of legislation put forward at both the state and federal levels. A number of bills were introduced in the United States Congress. Unfortunately, it would appear (as of this issue) that none of them was successful. It is not clear what the prospect is for this type of legislation in the next session of Congress.

On the state level, there were some gains. Besides New Jersey, Wisconsin passed legislation requiring that sprinklers be retrofit into high-rise dormitories. Furthermore, new dormitories will all be required to have sprinkler systems installed in them.

Pennsylvania introduced legislation requiring sprinklers in all dormitories and Greek housing. After passing the House with only one dissenting vote, it moved to the Senate where it died in committee. However, the State System of Higher Education mandated that all of its dormitories be equipped with sprinkler systems.

In Massachusetts, Governor Celluci introduced supplemental legislation to provide $50 million in funding for sprinklers in state dormitories. However, this never was approved or implemented. Studies were commissioned in New York state and Pennsylvania to look at the present level of fire protection at campuses in their states. (An article on the New York task force appears in this issue of Campus Firewatch.)

Because of the heightened interest in campus fire safety, the National Fire Protection Association and the United States Fire Administration agreed to again sponsor Campus Fire Safety Forum. This landmark program now in its second year, was again organized by Campus Firewatch and was held in conjunction with the NFPA Fall Educational

Continued on page 4

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Campus fire safety is a complex issue. The information in this newsletter is provided to help you in your efforts to provide as fire-safe a community as possible. However, it is no replacement for professional advice. For further assistance, contact your local fire department.

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Task Force - continued from page 1

many college residential facilities, along with fire service officials.

The Task Force was specifically charged to review the following issues for public and private colleges and universities in New York State:

1. The adequacy of building and fire codes as applied to student residence halls
2. The record of compliance by colleges and universities with fire safety laws and code requirements applicable to student residence halls.
3. Fire safety policies and procedures with respect to student residence halls, including student orientation, fire drills, evacuations and staff training.
4. Statutory and college disciplinary penalties for false alarms, misuse of fire safety equipment and setting of fires in student residence halls
5. The extent and adequacy of fire suppression and detection systems, including but not limited to sprinklers and smoke detectors, in student residence halls.
6. The potential costs associated with any recommended upgrades of fire suppression and detection systems or related programs in student residence halls.
7. Any other matters relating to fire safety as the Governor may direct.

In addition, the Task Force was directed to develop a comprehensive statewide Campus Fire Safety Plan. The Plan includes changes in laws, regulations, policies and practices relating to fire safety in residence halls at public and independent colleges and universities throughout New York State.

Throughout the spring and into the early summer of 2000, the Task Force held meetings, public forums and work sessions as it went about its business. One of the first issues to be addressed involved the question, "What is the status of fire safety on campuses today?" The job of answering this question fell to the state Office of Fire Prevention and Control, which created a comprehensive survey to be completed by the campuses throughout the State. The results of this survey began to paint a picture of fire safety on New York's campuses. A picture that ultimately exposed that the level of fire safety on campuses needed to be raised. With this information in hand, the Task Force was able to start evaluating where the holes existed and chart a course of suggested actions to fill them.

The first charge the Task Force considered was the extent and adequacy of existing building codes regarding college residential structures. The Task Force came to the conclusion that all newly constructed college residential buildings should have complete sprinkler coverage along with fully integrated fire/smoke detection systems regardless of size, construction type or design style.

The Task Force went on to propose a ten year program to upgrade fire and smoke detection systems in all existing residential buildings as well as to suggest that building codes be modified to require installation of a complete sprinkler system upon renovation.

One of the most glaring issues the Task Force found was an exemption from mandatory annual fire inspections for colleges located in the large metropolitan cities in the state. State Education Law requires institutes throughout the state to be inspected annually for fire hazards, while excluding those in the major cities. The Task Force found no logical reason for this exemption and quickly decided to advocate it be removed from law. The members of the Task Force also felt that the inspection process as it currently exists; allowing a college to basically choose its inspector, simply report the findings of the inspection to the State Education Department and not be subject to any follow-up or enforcement practices should be changed. It felt that a single entity should be charged with such inspection and enforcement responsibility. In its final report, the Task Force recommended that the State Office of Fire Prevention and Control (New York's equivalent of a state fire marshal's office) be statutorily designated as the government agency with responsibility and authority for fire inspections at all colleges and universities in the state.

During the course of its work, the Task Force linked together several of its concerns - student fire safety education, housing policies and procedures and residential staff training. Education and training of student and campus staff is critical in helping to ensure a fire safe environment exists. Orientation programs for students varied widely in content and message while at the same time those individuals providing this life safety message may not have been properly trained themselves. Task Force members felt that the best way to address these issues was through development of guidelines and models, with direction to the colleges that programs at least equal to these minimums must be initiated. The effort to address these concerns lead to another key suggestion from the Task Force, the creation of a Campus Fire Safety Advisory Board. This Board's mission would be to create these models and guidelines. Representatives from the various disciplines with interest or responsibility for fire safety on campuses, along with student advisors, would be invited to serve on the Board.

Through the survey that was conducted by the Office of Fire of Fire Prevention and Control, it became apparent that the inspection, testing and maintenance of fire detection and suppression systems per NFPA standards were not taking place. Questions regarding the quality of these processes were also expressed. It was not surprising to find campus employees who had received a cursory "on-the-job" orientation conducting the inspection and testing on fire protection devices. At the same time, other campuses had programs that relied on highly trained or experienced employees or had contracted this type of work out. This again confirmed that there were no standards in place to ensure the competency of people working on fire safety systems. The Task Force followed the same path it had before – recommending the creation of standards that will make sure those individuals who have the task of testing, inspecting or maintaining fire protection systems possess the knowledge and skill to do so properly.

The Executive Order also directed the Task Force to evaluate penalties for false alarms, tampering with fire safety equipment and setting fires. During the public forum a recurring message was voiced to the Task Force – there is a widespread problem on campuses of tampering with fire protection equipment, and "why isn't it a crime?" A closer look revealed that while false alarms and setting fires have long been recognized as crimes, tampering with fire safety equipment was only specifically addressed as a violation of the fire and building code. It did not take much deliberation for the Task

Continued on page 4

Task Force - continued from page 3

Force to come to conclude the Penal Law should be amended to make the intentional tampering with fire safety equipment a crime.

Comments published in the media in the days following the public release of the Task Force's report consistently hailed its recommendations. Many of the articles asked why some of the proposals were not implemented long ago. An editorial in the Kingston Daily Freeman said, "There is a price to be paid for turning a blind eye. Students and families at Seton Hall have paid that price. The lessons learned need not be exacted on New Yorkers."

Governor Pataki took a big step toward meeting just such a challenge when he created the Task Force. His bold order for a Comprehensive Campus Fire Safety Plan has been filled.

A follow-up article is planned for a future issue of Campus Firewatch that will cover the progress New York State makes as it heads toward implementation of the Task Force's suggestions. In the meantime, the final product of the Task Force's work, "The Report of the New York State Governor's Task Force on Campus Fire Safety" can be downloaded from the New York State Department of State's web page at www.dos.state.ny.us.

From the Editor - continued from page 2

Conference in Orlando, Florida. A new co-sponsor was welcomed this year-the Campus Safety, Health and Environmental Managers Association (CSHEMA).

Forum II was held before a packed room of campus fire safety professionals. The six presenters provided a wealth of information, and the exchange and networking opportunities were invaluable according to many of the participants. In addition, along with Forum II, the NFPA Education Section sponsored a session that focused on campus fire safety.

Finally, one more event happened in 2000-the startup of Campus Firewatch!

Campus Firewatch was created because of the lack of a focal point for campus fire safety. This was identified in the final report of Forum I as a pressing need, but no organization had stepped forward. The success of this newsletter, and its companion website, has demonstrated the demand and the need for the information that we provide.

Our subscribers include, among others, campus fire safety professionals, housing administrators and fire chiefs. Each month, Campus Firewatch is sent to every fire marshal in the state of Washington by the office of the Washington State Fire Marshal. In addition, starting in 2001, through an arrangement with the National Association of State Fire Marshals, it will be distributed to every state fire marshal in the United States. Campus Firewatch has appeared in publications such as Engineering News-Record and University Business magazines.

The following are some other accomplishments that we are proud to have been a part of in the year 2000:

- NFPA asked Campus Firewatch to organize Forum II because of its recognized role as a leader in the area of campus fire safety. This forum was an outstanding success.
- Campus Firewatch assisted state and federal legislators that were introducing campus fire safety legislation.
- NFPA asked me to write the new chapter on campus fire safety for the 19th edition of the NFPA Fire Protection Handbook.
- The National Association of State Fire Marshals has asked Campus Firewatch to update its innovative CD-ROM, "Meeting of the Minds." This CD will contain a wealth of information to help those involved with providing campus fire safety by providing them with information about what others in the field are doing. This will serve as a means to "share the wealth" and help people take advantage of successful programs being used elsewhere in the country
- I have presented at programs from Pennsylvania to Washington State, as well as testified before legislative hearings on campus fire safety.

What will 2001 bring?

Hopefully, no fatalities. Unrealistic? Perhaps, but we need to strive towards that as our goal, using whatever means are at our disposal. Whenever the opportune moment arises, the "teachable moment," we need to grab hold of it and drive home the message of fire safety. This will translate to not only improved safety on our campuses, but will hopefully create a change in the mindset of a new generation as they move forward.

Ed Comeau, the editor of Campus Firewatch, is the former chief fire investigator for the National Fire Protection Association. He began his involvement in campus fire safety as a fire fighter with the Amherst, Massachusetts, fire department while pursuing his degree in civil engineering. He can be reached at publisher@campus-firewatch.com.

Campus Fire Safety Forum II - continued from page 1

By using a creative and comprehensive approach, you are able to take advantage of a crisis or an incident, such as a serious fire. People are more receptive to your message, and time is of the essence when you are using this approach.

If you are using an incremental approach, you should plan to spread out your efforts over time. Changes that occur are going to be due to providing information and educating people. Compromises are likely when using this tactic.

The program that they were initiating with the Greeks did not apply to apartment buildings. The reasoning for this was that they were able to demonstrate, through their fire history, that the congregate residences presented a greater fire risk than did the apartment occupancies.

In 1989, the fire department started working with the various Greek corporation boards (corp boards) in an effort to educate them on the fire dangers in the buildings and to help raise them up to a basic level of fire safety. This included items such as housekeeping, improved compartmentation and similar fire safety features and practices. However, the fire department kept reminding the corp boards that the ultimate goal was to sprinkler the buildings and that the fire department would keep working towards this goal.

They also stepped up the inspection program in the fraternities and sororities and had a "zero tolerance" policy for violations. If they found serious violations, a firewatch would be implemented, the occupants would be given 24 hours to make the necessary repairs and a notice to appear would be issued to the person in charge of the building.

There were several things that the fire department did to help facilitate the passage of the ordinance. One was putting all of the commissioners through a sprinkler trailer. By doing so, they were able to see, firsthand, how effective a sprinkler system is in suppressing a trash can fire.

Barr summarized his presentation by pointing out that time is of the essence if a crisis, such as a catastrophic or tragic fire, is the impetus of the policy. Otherwise, it is best to use the incremental approach to try to make the change. He added:

Be sure to define the scope and extent of the policy

Research the effects the policy will have on other problems or issues

Develop coalitions that support the policy.

You can view or download Major Barr's presentation from the RESOURCE page of the Campus Firewatch website.

Greek Commitment

The Kappa Alpha Theta women's fraternity has chapters on 123 campuses with 175,000 alumnae and undergraduate members. Jeff Rinck, the assistant director for administration for Kappa Alpha Theta provided an overview on this fraternity's efforts to install sprinklers in all chapters, nationwide.

In the year 2000, the fraternity's Facility Corporation District Directors attended the North American Interfraternity Conference National Housing and Risk Management Conference. Chapel Hill Fire Chief Dan Jones spoke at this conference about the tragic fire that struck his community on Mother's Day in 1996. He discussed how a sprinkler system would have saved the lives of the five men and women that were killed in the fire, and this impressed the committee.

Because of this program, the committee proposed that all Kappa Alpha Theta facilities should have a sprinkler system installed by the end of summer, 2002. The fraternity's Grand Council unanimously approved this mandate.

However, the real work was now beginning, according to Rinck. The first hurdle was to get the word out to the volunteers in Kappa Alpha Theta. The fraternity is divided into three tiers, comprising of national, regional and chapters. Each chapter is overseen by a Facility Corporation Board, which is comprised of volunteers. There are 60 facilities that would fall under this mandate. There was one saving grace, however-about 40% of the facilities already had sprinkler systems installed in them!

Rinck said that they had identified three challenges that had to be overcome in making the mandate a reality:

Selling the mandate

Financing the mandate

Realizing the mandate

In selling the mandate, two actions were undertaken. The first was to educate the volunteers, the undergraduate members and the parents of the undergraduates about the value of sprinkler systems in protecting the occupants and the property of the facilities.

A packet of information was sent to the Facility Corporation Presidents with information about the value of sprinkler systems and the video Ready to Respond that was produced by the University of Maryland. A sample fundraising letter was also included to help the chapters in raising funds to support this endeavor.

Kappa Alpha Theta holds nine District Leadership Conferences each year that are attended by each chapter president as well as other officers. This was an opportunity to educate the undergraduates on the importance of fire safety and sprinklers. Each chapter was given a copy of the video Get Out and Stay Alive, which is targeted at college-age students, as well as other educational material.

The parents were the third group that was provided with fire safety information in an effort to develop support for the mandate. A letter was sent to the parents from the Grand Council telling them about the work that was being done in this area. The parents also receive a copy of the Kappa Alpha Theta Magazine, which had an article on the new sprinkler program. This magazine was distributed not only to the parents, but to each of the undergraduate members and the volunteers as well.

Education was only one component. Providing an incentive and the financial ability to install the sprinkler systems was as equally important. The national organization is offering financing to support the projects, which is being done through

Continued on page 6

Campus Fire Safety Forum II - continued from page 5

loans that have no interest in the first year and then only 7% each year for the length of the loan. The chapters can use these funds for not only the sprinkler systems, but to also help consolidate debt and do other needed projects.

The insurance carrier CGU Insurance and their agent, M-J Insurance, are offering the chapters an incentive through insurance reductions. Any facility with a fully operational sprinkler system will received a 15% reduction in property insurance and the deductible for property damage resulting from system failure or discharge will be waived. The videos that were used in the educational phase of the program were provided by M-J Insurance.

As an organization, providing the funding to the chapters was important. However, obtaining the funds to make this a reality was a major hurdle. The national headquarters staff discussed the various options available to it.

Possibilities included using internal funds, such as operating surplus, conducting fund raising or requesting funds from the fraternity's Foundation. Each had significant factors influencing whether they would be viable options.

For example, while using operating surplus funds would be the easiest solution, this would reduce the amount of money available for other projects and there would be a loss of interest income to consider. Fund raising would be an avenue that would place the least financial burden on the organization. However, the fraternity does not have a lot of expertise as fundraisers. Furthermore, since many people donate only once a year, the amount of money available from donations for other projects would be reduced.

Requesting funds from the fraternity's Foundation was initially thought to be a very practical solution. However, because of the tax code restrictions on the Foundation, a sprinkler retrofit project would not fall within the educational and charitable cause requirements that the Foundation must use in disbursing its funds. However, Rinck pointed out that this restriction might be unique only to the Kappa Alpha Theta Foundation and not necessarily universally true for other organizations.

Since there were no options internally, the next step was to look towards funding sources outside of the fraternity. A commercial bank loan was the easiest route, but one that would result in high interest fees being charged because of the short-term nature of the loan.

A bond offering would entail lower interest terms because it would be long term. However, it would require a lot of documentation and higher upfront fees. Kappa Alpha Theta had hoped to offer tax-free bonds because they are a non-profit organization. However, to do so they would have to be licensed in all 50 states and Canada, which would require a significant amount of work (and costs) to accomplish this.

The final alternative that was considered was that of a taxable draw note. This is a form of a taxable bond issue with some advantages over a typical bond issue.

One was that the money could be drawn out over a long period and only as needed. Perhaps more importantly is that the interest only accrues on the money that has been drawn out. There are no pre-payment penalties and it has a low interest rate. While the initial fees may be higher, the overall advantages of a taxable draw note made it the vehicle of choice for providing funding.

Now that the national headquarters had addressed the issues of educating the chapters, providing incentives and financing, the final step was, as Rinck called it, "Realizing the Mandate."

To accomplish this they attempted to do some of the initial work for the chapters to help "streamline" the process. Based on the experience of working with Grinnell Corporation on installing sprinklers in two of the fraternity's facilities, they signed a contract with Grinnell to make them the national account. "This only means that each facility must get a bid from Grinnell, not that they must use them," said Rinck. "They are free to use whomever they choose." By developing this relationship with Grinnell they are hoping to obtain "national account pricing and corporate oversight of each job," continued Rinck.

You can view or download Jeff Rinck's presentation from the RESOURCE page of the Campus Firewatch website.

Tragic Fire

Randy Hormann is an active voice in campus fire safety. Through his listserv for the International Association of Campus Fire Safety Officers, he has provided a forum for the exchange of information among people involved in providing campus fire safety.

Unfortunately, just before he traveled to Orlando to speak at Forum II, a serious fire struck at one of the Greek houses at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. Randy was able to provide a very timely and informative account of the fire based on his inspection of the scene immediately following the fire.

See the November issue of Campus Firewatch for more information about this fire.

Great Escape-On Campus

Following his presentation on the fire, Randy provided an excellent overview on the new program that they had implemented at the University of Miami this fall. Using the NFPA's Great Escape program, he adapted it to use in training students in the dormitories at Miami University.

The Great Escape is a theme that the NFPA has been using for several years to help promote awareness of the importance of knowing how to get out of a fire. The focus of the NFPA program is on residences, but Hormann felt that there were applications for the college environment, and so the Great Escape On Campus was launched.

The objective of the training program was to familiarize the students with the type of conditions that they would encounter in a real fire. The challenge was to do it in as realistic a manner as possible, yet still provide them with a valuable learning

Continued on page 7

Campus Fire Safety Forum II - continued from page 6

experience. A dormitory corridor was selected as the optimal location for providing this training.

According to Hormann, the following equipment was needed:

Equipment required:

- (One) - Smoke Machine or device able to produce a non-toxic safe fog (smoke) type of product.
- (Three) - Exhaust type fans (industrial or fire fighting quality) to remove the smoke from the hallway in a timely manner.
- (Several) - Towels large enough to cover the bottom parts of all doorways of the area used for the smoke drill.
- (Four) - Extension cords large enough to power all three fans and the smoke machine.
- (One) - Laptop computer and projector or device capable of presenting a lecture based program to the students and staff before doing through the program.
- (One) - VCR player, and projector or television large enough to view the "Get Out and Stay Alive" video.
- (One) - Screen (if not provided) at your lecture location to view the video and the lecture presentation.
- (One) - Room large enough to present a lecture comfortably to all who attend.
- (One) - Corridor or part of the building capable of putting on the Great Escape program.
- (Several) - People to assist in putting on the program, but more importantly to be in the corridor or hallways where you present the program to make sure that if some one gets claustrophobic, disoriented, scared, lost or needs assistance someone is right there to help them out.

One of the first steps in getting the site ready was to remove all obstructions from the corridor. Since the participant's vision had to be obscured sufficiently to make it a challenging exercise, this also meant that there was the possibility of injury if they should encounter any obstructions.

Another step was to put towels at the base of each of the room doors to avoid any smoke migration into the rooms. This would reduce the amount of time required to clear the atmosphere following the exercise.

By using a smoke generator similar to that used by theaters or fire departments, it was possible to fill a corridor with enough smoke that obscured the participant's vision. It was also important to ensure that the smoke was not toxic in any manner.

The student's were checked into a large lecture hall and provided with a briefing on the exercise as well as some basic fire safety information. During the lecture, staff members were in the process of filling the corridor with smoke from the smoke generator.

The students were then broken into small groups and brought up to the smoke-filled corridor. They were given final instructions, as well as told what to do in the event that they should have some problems during the exercise. They then opened the door and started down the hall on their hands and knees to the other end.

Once they emerged from the corridor, the students were brought back together to discuss the experience and what they learned. The reaction from the students was a positive one.

Once the exercise is completed, the smoke was then removed from the corridor in about 30 minutes. From start to finish, the entire exercise took about 2 hours.

Hormann finished his presentation with the following suggestions to make similar programs a success, based on his experience:

Administration support for the program.

Make sure the students know about the program - talk about the fun and success.

NO surprises. Outline the whole program in detail during your lecture.

Student cooperation is imperative.

The residence hall staff makes an excellent resource.

Put forth the effort to make it an excellent program. Don't waste their time and yours.

Randall Hormann can be reached at rmanrl@muohio.edu

An article by Randy Hormann about the Great Escape-On Campus was published in the September issue of Campus Firewatch

The following are the websites of organizations that were referenced in the two-part article on Campus Fire Safety Forum II

Campus Firewatch
www.campus-firewatch.com

NFPA
www.nfpa.org

USFA
www.usfa.fema.gov

CSHEMA
www.cshema.org

CGU Insurance
www.cguusa.com

Grinnell
www.grinnell.com

Kappa Alpha Theta
www.kappaalphatheta.org

Lawrence-Douglas County Fire and Medical Department
www.ci.lawrence.ks.us/citygovt/fire_medical/

M-J Insurance
www.mjinsurance.com

Miami University
www.muohio.edu

National Fire Sprinkler Association
www.nfsa.org

New Jersey State Fire Marshal
http://www.state.nj.us/dca/dfs/

North America Interfraternity Conference
www.nicindy.org

University of Maryland
www.umd.edu

LEGISLATION Update

Due to the last-minute legislation that was being introduced in Washington, it was not possible to provide an accurate update on the legislation relating to campus fire safety. The following is a list of the legislation that was in the pipeline. An update will be provided in the January issue.

Legislation

S 2100
College Fire Prevention Act

Jurisdiction
Federal

Sponsor
Sen. John Edwards (D-NC)
United States Senate
225 Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-3154
senator@edwards.senate.gov

Cosponsors

Senator Spencer Abraham (R-MI)
United States Senate
329 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
Phone: (202) 224-4822
Fax: (202) 224-8834
michigan@abraham.senate.gov
http://www.senate.gov/~abraham/

Senator Christopher Dodd (D-CT)
448 Russell Office Bldg.
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510
(202) 224-2823 (tel)
(202) 224-1083 (fax)
Senator@dodd.senate.gov
http://www.senate.gov/~dodd/

Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL)
364 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-2152 (tel)
(202) 228-0400 (fax)
dick@durbin.senate.gov
http://www.senate.gov/~durbin/

Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ)
United States Senate
506 Senate Hart Building
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-4744 (tel)
(202) 224-9707 (fax)
frank_lautenberg@lautenberg.senate.gov
http://www.senate.gov/~lautenberg/

Senator Robert Toricelli (D-NJ)
United States Senate
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-3224 (tel)
(202) 224-8567 (fax)
senatortorricelli@torricelli.senate.gov

Funding
$100,000,000

Facilities
Dormitories, fraternities or sororities

Summary
Authorizes appropriations for competitive grants to help provide fire sprinkler systems in student housing and dormitories.

Authorizes the Secretary of Education to award such grants to States, private or public colleges or universities, fraternities, or sororities to assist them in providing such systems.

Requires grant recipients to provide matching funds equal to at least one-half of project costs.

Directs the Comptroller General to gather, and report to Congress, data on the number of college and university housing facilities and dormitories that have and do not have fire sprinkler systems and other forms of built-in fire protection mechanisms.

Legislation

S 2108
HR 3895
Campus Fire Safety Right to Know Act

Jurisdiction
Federal

Sponsors

Senator Robert Toricelli (D-NJ)
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Funding
N/A

Facilities
Campuses nationwide

Summary
Amends the Higher Education Act of 1965 to require each eligible institution participating in any program under title IV (Student Assistance) to: (1) prepare, publish, and distribute to all current students and employees, and to any applicant for enrollment or employment upon request, an annual fire safety report which discloses specified types of information about that institution's campus fire safety standards and practices; (2) make timely reports to the campus community on fires that are reported to local fire departments and the incidence of false fire alarms on campus, to aid in preventing sim-

ilar occurrences; (3) maintain a log recording all fires reported to local fire departments and all false fire alarms, open to public inspection except where disclosure of such information is prohibited by law; and (4) submit annually to the Secretary of Education a copy of statistics on campus occurrences of fires and false fire alarms.

Directs the Secretary to: (1) review such statistics; (2) make copies available to the public; (3) identify exemplary fire safety policies, procedures, and practices, and disseminate information concerning those policies, procedures, and practices that have proven effective in the reduction of campus fires; and (4) report to the Congress analyses of the current status of fire safety systems in college and university facilities, and of the appropriate fire safety standards to apply to these facilities, as well as cost estimates and recommendations.

Legislation

S 2178
HR 3831
Fire Safe Dorm Act of 2000

Jurisdiction
Federal

Sponsors
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Funding
N/A

Facilities
Campuses nationwide

Summary
The objective of this bill is to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to require colleges and universities to disclose to students and their parents the incidents of fires in dormitories, and their plans to reduce fire safety hazards in dormitories, to require the United States Fire Administration to establish fire safety standards for dormitories, and for other purposes.

Legislation

HR 4504
Higher Education Technical Amendments of 2000

Jurisdiction
Federal

Sponsor
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Funding
N/A

Facilities
Campuses nationwide

Summary
This legislation has several amendments attached to it pertaining to campus fire safety. They include providing a description of campus fire safety features, reports on the number of fires and false alarms, and an analysis of current fire safety systems and plans for upgrading fire protection.

Legislation

HB 2458
Dormitory Automatic Sprinkler Act

Jurisdiction
Pennsylvania

Sponsors
Representative Michael McGeehan
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Funding
$100,000,000

Facilities
Dormitories and Greek housing

Status
This legislation died in committee in the Senate.

Summary
Representative Michael McGeehan introduced House Bill 2458, the Dormitory Automatic Sprinkler Act, on April 11, 2000. This bill calls for the installation of sprinklers in all new dormitories, existing dormitories and Greek housing within five years. It proposes the appropriation of $100,000,000 to fund a sprinkler loan fund for low interest loans.

Seen Elsewhere....

Some of the following stories were seen on the news wires…

On the international front, there was a fire in Coventry, England, that was caused by an unattended candle. The fire ignited combustible materials and caused an aerosol can to explode. A 41-year old Coventry University student, who was sleeping upstairs in the apartment, was wakened by the smoke alarm and was just getting up as the aerosol can exploded.

While we're still overseas, Edinburgh University in the United Kingdom was recently put on notice by the local authority to improve the level of fire safety in university-run apartments. Violations included "faulty fire doors, corridors used as storage areas, poor electrics and windows which would not open," according to press reports.

Milford Academy in Milford, Connecticut apparently has some of the same problems. Officials closed down two dormitories for 17 "major safety violations," including blocked exits. The buildings are equipped with fire sprinklers, but officials were concerned about the ability of the students to safely exit the building if a fire should break out.

The University of Rhode Island is going to ban smoking in campus housing starting on June 1.

CAMPUS Fire Log

The following are brief summaries of incidents that have occurred in college occupancies. Unless noted otherwise, they have been taken from press accounts and have not been verified for accuracy. Several of these incidents will be profiled in future issues of Campus Firewatch.

If you have an incident that you would like to contribute for this column, please contact us at publisher@campus-firewatch.com.

November 17, 2000

Washington State University
Pullman, Washington

Two fraternity men were arrested for allegedly breaking into the Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority and setting off a smoke bomb that ignited a portion of the carpet. Smoke alarms were activated because of the fire. Both men admitted they were intoxicated at the time of the incident.

November 20, 2000

Montclair State University
Montclair, NJ

An electrical fire forced the evacuation of 600 students for one hour. According to press reports the students were using a microwave when the plug short-circuited, causing the fire.

November 22, 2000

New York University
New York, NY

A graduate student was killed in an apartment fire. The fire was started by three candles at the foot of her bed that ignited her mattress. The woman, Helen Carnegie, 25, was found lying on the floor next to the bed. At the time of the press account, an autopsy had not been completed, but it was reported that she appeared to have died of smoke inhalation.

According to Fire Commissioner Thomas Von Essen, there have been 239 fires started by candles this year. This fire was the 13th fatal candle fire, an increase of eight from the previous year.

November 23, 2000

University of Nevada-Las Vegas
Las Vegas, Nevada

A fire in a residence hall on Thanksgiving morning was controlled by the activation of a sprinkler system. The fire broke out during Thanksgiving break and caused water damage to six rooms. The room was unoccupied at the time of the fire.

November 26, 2000

Oregon State University
Corvallis, Oregon

An OSU senior was able to escape an early morning fire that caused significant damage to her house. She was the only one of the five occupants that was home at the time of the fire. According to press reports, she was wakened by the sound of breaking glass, opened her door and was faced with a wall of smoke. She was able to make it through the smoke and escape from the building.

December 4, 2000

Washington State University
Pullman, Washington

A fire in an apartment at the University of Washington was started when a mattress was left on a baseboard heater. The fire was contained to the room of origin because of a closed door, according to a spokesperson. The other two apartments in the building were not damaged by the fire.

November 30, 2000

Tennessee Tech University
Cookeville, Tennessee

Two fires occurred in Prescott Hall. The first was believed to have been started by a fan motor. The second was discovered four hours later by a security guard and destroyed a four-room office. Other areas of the building were damaged by smoke and water and classes had to be relocated to other buildings.

November 30, 2000

University of California-Berkeley
Berkeley, California

Two fires in a dormitory are suspected to be arson. The fire department responded to fire alarms in the building shortly after 3:00 a.m. where they found two separate fires. One had been ignited in the laundry room while a second was occurred in a pile of papers in a second floor hallway.

Continued on page 9

Campus Fire Log - continued from page 8

December 8, 2000

Seton Hall University
South Orange, New Jersey

A small trash can fire in Boland Hall, the site of the tragic January 2000 fire that killed three students, was extinguished by the activation of the sprinkler head. Six hundred students were evacuated.

December 9, 2000

Bryant College
Smithfield, Rhode Island

A fire started by a candle in a four-story dormitory injured two students. Two public safety officers were also taken to the hospital for evaluation. The fire occurred when the candle was knocked over onto the bed. Bryant has a policy against the use of candles.

December 9, 2000

University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

The following information was provided in an interview by Campus Firewatch with Fire Chief Dan Jones.

A fire in the Sigma Nu fraternity was controlled by the activation of two sprinklers. According to an interview by Campus Firewatch with Fire Chief Dan Jones, the occupant had discarded an ashtray into a plastic wastebasket and then left the room. The contents of the wastebasket were ignited, which subsequently spread to adjacent combustibles. Two sprinkler heads in the room of origin operated, extinguishing the fire.

The occupants of the house were unaware that a fire had occurred, and contacted the fire department because they believed a sprinkler head had failed. Upon investigation by the fire department, the fire was discovered.

The sprinkler system had been connected to the water supply only two days before the incident. All fraternities are under a mandatory sprinkler ordinance, and must have sprinkler systems installed by September 2001.

Sigma Nu is immediately adjacent to the Phi Gamma Delta house, which was the site of the fatal fire in 1996 that killed five students.

December 10, 2000

University of Dayton
Dayton, Ohio

The following information was obtained from press accounts and an interview by Campus Firewatch with Dayton Fire Department officials.

A fire in a house owned by the University of Dayton killed a student on Sunday, December 10. Austin Cohen, 21, of Loveland and a senior at the university, died in the fire. There were eight students living in the house at the time of the fire. According to reports, an earlier fire at the house had been extinguished by the residents. One of the occupants, a University of Dayton student, was later arrested and charged with involuntary manslaughter and arson.

According to fire department officials, the fire alarm system was disconnected at the time of the fire.

The building was a two-story, wood frame building that was owned by the University of Dayton. According to fire officials, the university was buying a number of properties to use for student housing.

December 10, 2000

University of Texas
Austin, TX

A fire caused $1.5 million in damage following a holiday party in the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity. It was caused when someone discarded a cigarette onto shredded paper that had been strewn on the floor to simulate snow. The fraternity system had agreed to undergo fire department inspections before such gatherings, but the Austin Fire Department had not been contacted before this fire.

It was reported that the floor was covered with 18 inches of confetti.

December 12, 2000

University of Missouri at Columbia
Columbia, Missouri

The following information was provided by Lt. Steve Sapp, public information officer/assistant fire marshal for the Columbia Fire Department.

On December 12, 2000 at approx. 10:15 PM the Columbia Missouri Fire Department responded to a fire at the Rollins Cafeteria. Rollins Cafeteria is a central dining hall adjoined at common entrances to two 7-story residence halls.

The fire was in a utility room just off the kitchen. The contents in a dryer caught fire when employee's placed cleaning towels in the dryer for an extended period. The towels should not have been dried but rather hung to dry on a clothesline. A five gallon plastic bucket on top of the dryer added to the fuel load.

The fire was controlled and all but extinguished by a single sprinkler head activation. This is a limited area sprinkler for the cafeteria only and does not cover the residence halls themselves.

Residence hall assistants performed well during the fire and the building was evacuated in short order with little trouble from the residents despite the fact it was 8 degrees outside. Residents were displaced to nearby residence halls for about 1-_ hours.

The University of Missouri at Columbia is proposing a major renovation to all residence halls on campus to the Board of Curators this week that will include state of the art fire alarm systems as well as automatic fire sprinkler systems. A joint funding arraignment between the Columbia Fire Department and the University will also place an Assistant Fire Marshal from the Columbia Fire Department on half time University staff to address campus fire safety issues in the next few weeks. This is a permanent position that we feel will enhance relations as well as fire safety on our campus.

Sunday, December 17

George Washington University
Washington, DC

A fire in an underground electrical vault on the GWU campus forced the evacuation of three dormitories.

Power strips-what is the story?

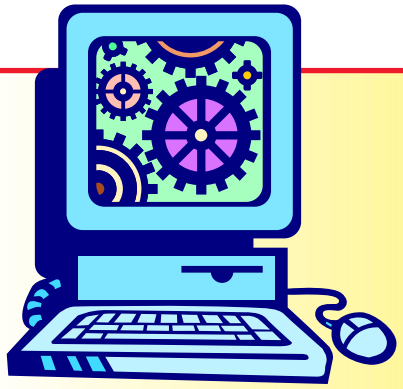
Recently there has been a debate on the International Association of Campus Fire Safety Official's listserv about the appropriate use of power strips/power taps.

The issue is a serious one that everyone responsible for campus fire safety probably encounters. The electrical systems in older dormitories and residences are not designed to handle the number of appliances, computers and stereos being brought in by today's students. Or, as one person put it, "…residents trying to power the equivalent of a 2500 sq ft. house off of a single outlet…"

One specific concern was that of connecting power strips together, or what is called "daisy chaining" them so that there are more outlets available. There was quite a discussion as to whether this was a dangerous practice because, as was pointed out by several people, each strip was equipped with circuit breakers that would theoretically open in the event of an overload.

To help resolve this, Campus Firewatch called Underwriters Laboratory. According to Joe Hirschmugl, a spokesperson for UL, daisy chaining is not an acceptable practice. Power strips, or power taps as they are sometimes called, are considered temporary wiring and by connecting them together you "decrease the safety of the ground" and increase the impedance.

This is echoed by another electrical specialist who told Campus Firewatch that the power strips are intended to be plugged directly into a wall receptacle.



Campus Firewatch Website

The value of this newsletter doesn't stop with just this copy. Visit its companion website at www.campus-fire-watch.com, where you will find a wealth of information relating to campus fire safety. Included on the site is….

- *Model legislation from Chapel Hill, North Carolina*
- *Lesson plans*
- *Pending federal and state legislation*
- *Testimony given before state legislatures*
- *Breaking news*
- *Fire facts*

…and more!

If you have something that you would like to contribute, please send it to us at publisher@campus-firewatch.com

See you there!