

# CAMPUS Firewatch™

MAY 2000

From the Editor .....2  
Legislation Update .....3  
College Fire Log .....6  
Resources & Organizations ....10

## USFA/NFPA College Fire Safety Forum

On August 25th and 26th, 1999, a forum focusing on college fire safety was held at the headquarters of the National Fire Protection Association. Sponsored by the U.S. Fire Administration and coordinated by NFPA, this forum brought together a cross-section of people involved in college fire safety. The purpose of this forum was to provide a focal point for discussing the fire safety efforts that are going on, across the nation, and was the first of its kind that brought a diversity of concerned parties together.

Among those attending the forum were college administrators, fire chiefs, insurance professionals and fire marshals. Representatives also included the fraternity community, USFA, NFPA and college fire safety specialists, among others. This diversity of people allowed for a range of views and needs to be discussed. The attendees shared their extensive experience, some of which they learned the hard way through tragic fires in their institutions or communities.

Continued on page 5

## The Teachable Moment

Ed Comeau, *writer-tech.com*



On May 12, 1996, five students were killed at a fraternity fire in Chapel Hill. This incident, which occurred on graduation day and Mother's Day, has become a rallying point for those promoting stronger fire safety in student housing.

One of the most strident advocates has been Fire Chief Dan Jones of the Chapel Hill Fire Department. Chief Jones has been a longtime supporter of improving the protection in both on- and off-campus housing, and this tragic fire provided him with even more impetus to make change happen. He has been instrumental in having legislation passed requiring sprinklers to be retro-fit into fraternities and sororities in Chapel Hill, and has played a role in the recently introduced federal legislation that will address all college housing.

In an interview with Campus Firewatch, Jones recounted his efforts over the years to get this important legislation implemented, and the terrible toll that had to occur before it could become a reality.

Continued on page 11

## PREMIER ISSUE!

# FROM THE Editor

Fires at colleges and universities are not rare events. On a regular basis, there are fires in dormitories, Greek housing, academic buildings and other facilities. According to the National Fire Protection Association, there are an average of 1,600 fires per year in dormitories, sororities and fraternities.

There have been enough tragedies occurring in these facilities to spur our legislators to look at the issue of college fire safety on a nationwide basis. The two recent tragedies, coming exactly two months apart, at Seton Hall, New Jersey, and Bloomsburg University, Pennsylvania, only served to reinforce the need for stronger efforts.

At a forum recently held at the National Fire Protection Association headquarters in Massachusetts, experts from across the nation were brought together to discuss the common problems faced in providing a fire-safe environment at our nation's colleges and universities. This forum, which was sponsored by the U.S. Fire Administration, was the first of its kind, and I had the opportunity to be closely involved.

One of the comments expressed by all of the participants was about the difficulty networking with other professionals across the country. There is a wealth of information out there, and a lot of institutions are doing excellent fire safety work that they are willing to share with their peers. However, because of the lack of an established network, this valuable information is not always easily available, or even known about.

The goal of this newsletter is to help facilitate the exchange of information. By joining together to share information and resources, we can all work towards making the campuses and their communities as fire-safe as possible. In these days of shrinking budgets, this will help everyone make the most of the limited dollars available.

How do we plan on doing this?

By listening to you, the reader. The campus fire safety professional. The college housing administrator. The fire department. The parents. We need to know what you need to do your job better.

Future issues will include model legislation, updates on pending legislation and code changes. Interviews with noted experts in the field. Profiles of successful programs. Information on recent incidents across the country where you can get "lessons learned" that will help you in your efforts.

We are going to work on harnessing the power of the Internet in helping you to provide the level of fire safety that you need for your students. Through this newsletter, and its companion site, [www.campus-firewatch.com](http://www.campus-firewatch.com), we are going to provide you with the information you need.

I encourage you to let us know what you would like to see in future issues. Visit the Resources section of our web site. There is a wealth of information there, and it is growing regularly. Feel free to send us any contributions that you believe others would find useful.

*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](mailto:publisher@campus-firewatch.com).*

## CAMPUS MAY 2000 Firewatch™

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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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# LEGISLATION

# Update

In the aftermath of the two recent tragic fires at Seton Hall and Bloomsburg, legislation has been filed at both the state and federal levels. These bills are focusing on various aspects of the fire safety issues relating to dormitories, Greek housing, and other educational-related housing issues.

All of this legislation can be found on the Campus Firewatch web site at [www.campus-firewatch.com](http://www.campus-firewatch.com). Follow the links to the RESOURCE page.

## FEDERAL LEGISLATION

*The progress of any of the federal legislation bill can be tracked, online, through the Thomas Legislative Information website at [www.thomas.loc.gov](http://www.thomas.loc.gov).*

### College Fire Prevention Act S2100

This bill has been proposed by Senators John Edwards (D-North Carolina) and Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-New Jersey). The aim of this bill is to require that all dormitories be equipped with automatic fire sprinklers. The bill, at this stage, is proposing \$100,000,000 in federal funds over a five-year period to support the installation. Institutions would have to provide matching funds, which would be awarded using competitive grants.

Chapel Hill Fire Chief Dan Jones has been working with Senator Edwards's office on this legislation and has been soliciting support from the fire service and the college fire safety community.

For more information on this bill, or to register your support, you can contact the following offices:

**Senator John Edwards**  
United States Senate  
225 Dirksen Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20510  
PH: (202) 224-3154  
[senator@edwards.senate.gov](mailto:senator@edwards.senate.gov)

**Senator Frank Lautenberg**  
506 Senate Hart Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
PH: (202) 224-4744  
FX: (202) 224-9707  
[frank\\_lautenberg@lautenberg.senate.gov](mailto:frank_lautenberg@lautenberg.senate.gov)

### Fire Safe Dorm Act of 2000 S2178 (Senate) HR3831 (House)

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.

The bill proposes that institutions adopt plans to install sprinklers, smoke detectors and flame-resistant furniture within ten years of the adoption of the bill. Within six months of adoption of the bill, the USFA would be required to establish standards for dormitory fire safety.

For more information on these bills, or to register your support, you can contact the following offices:

**Senate: Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-New Jersey)**  
506 Senate Hart Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
PH: (202) 224-4744  
FX: (202) 224-9707  
[frank\\_lautenberg@lautenberg.senate.gov](mailto:frank_lautenberg@lautenberg.senate.gov)

**House: Representative Carolyn Maloney (D-New York)**  
2430 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
PH: (202) 225-7944  
FX: (202) 225-4709  
[rep.carolyn.maloney@mail.house.gov](mailto:rep.carolyn.maloney@mail.house.gov)

## STATE LEGISLATION

### New Jersey

*The status of these bills can be tracked at [www.njleg.state.nj.us](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us)*

### Senate Bill S799 Assembly Bill A2259

After Seton Hall, a series of bills were introduced in the New Jersey legislature relating to campus fire safety. Over the past few months, these bills have been merged together, and now there are two bills waiting legislative approval, one in the senate, and the other in the assembly.

Both bills are proposing the sprinklering of dormitories at educational institutions across the state and offering financial support for this. Where they differ in some respects is the timeframe for implementation, and whether they include Greek housing and boarding schools.

Jerry Naylis from the New Jersey Fire Safety Commission gave Campus Firewatch some

background on how these bills came to be and the chances for their success.

According to Naylis, a number of legislators were shocked to find out that new buildings were required to be sprinklered, but that there was nothing in place for the older buildings. In the weeks following the Seton Hall fire, both the Assembly and the Senate worked on developing bills that would make it through the legislature before the summer recess. "Governor Whitman realizes the magnitude of this issue," said Naylis, "and she has been sensitive to fire safety issues in the past. She supported the legislation that authorized the purchasing of thermal imaging cameras for every department across the state."

Both bills are moving rapidly through the legislature in an effort to have them in place before summer. Strong support has also been voiced in the media across the state. "There hasn't been one person at any of the hearings that I've attended opposed to these bills," said Naylis.

*(NOTE: A copy of the testimony given by Jerry Naylis before the New Jersey legislature can be found on the RESOURCE page of the Campus Firewatch website.)*

For more information on these bills, or to register your support, you can contact the following offices:

#### **Senate**

##### **Senator John A. Girgenti**

507 Lafayette Ave.  
Hawthorne, NJ 07506  
PH: (973)-427-1229  
sen.jagirgenti@worldnet.att.net

##### **Senator Louis F. Kosco**

441 Market Street  
Saddle Brook, NJ 07663  
PH: (201)-712-1221

#### **Assembly**

##### **Assemblyman John V. Kelly**

371 Franklin Ave.  
2nd Fl.  
Nutley, NJ 07110  
PH:(973)-667-6123  
asmkelly@njleg.state.nj.us

##### **Assemblyman John S. Wisniewski**

3145 Bordentown Ave.  
Suite B  
Parlin, NJ 08859  
PH: (732) 316-1885  
ASMWISNIEWSKI@njleg.state.nj.us

## **Pennsylvania Legislation**

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

For more information on this bill, or to register your support, you can contact the following office:

##### **Representative Michael McGeehan**

221B South Office  
Harrisburg, PA 17120  
PH: (717) 772-4029  
mcgeehan@pahouse.net

## **Wisconsin Legislation**

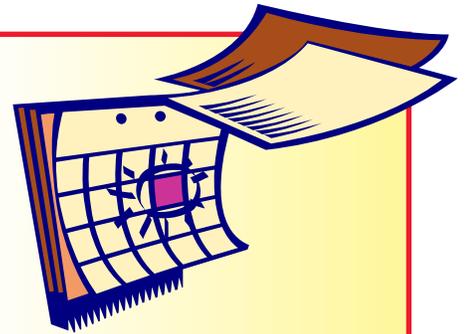
A bill was recently passed in the Wisconsin Assembly that mandates retrofit sprinkler installation in all University of Wisconsin high-rise dormitories by the year 2006. It also requires that all future dormitories, regardless of height, be equipped with automatic fire sprinklers. The bill now moves to the Wisconsin Senate for action.

A fiscal estimate, prepared by the state government, on the cost of implementation is available on the Campus Firewatch web site.

For more information on this bill, or to register your support, you can contact the following office:

##### **State Representative Rob Kreibich**

107 West State Capitol  
P.O. Box 8952  
Madison, WI 53708  
PH: (608) 266-0660  
rep.kreibich@legis.state.wi.us



## **At press time...**

As this issue of *Campus Firewatch* was going to print, it was announced by the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education's Board of Governors had approved a plan to install sprinkler system in all 147 dormitories under their jurisdiction.

A fire occurred at Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts that damaged several suites.

A fatal fire at Murray State University in 1998 was the result of a hazing prank.

Officials investigating the fatal fraternity fire in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, had tentatively identified the area of origin for the fire. They believe it started in the president's bedroom, but admitted they may never know the cause of the fire.

Information on these incidents, and others, will be available in coming issues of *Campus Firewatch*.

# USFA/NFPA College Fire Safety Forum

USFA/NFPA - continued from page 1

## Recommendations

After two days of discussions and presentations, there were three specific recommendations that emerged which the participants believed would help move the issues of campus fire safety forward.

**Umbrella organization** Everyone believed that there are very good efforts in fire safety being made across the country at many colleges and universities. What is lacking, however, is a national focus on the issues of campus fire safety. What the participants expressed is the need for an umbrella organization to be developed that could serve as a clearinghouse for information and coordination. They strongly believe that someone needs to assume a leadership role in this area and to begin drawing together all of the necessary resources, information and organizations.

**Develop a toolbox** Many organizations have excellent material that they have developed for their own use at their own institutions. Others are searching for material, and are "making do" with brochures and videos that aren't exactly appropriate for the campus environment. The participants thought that it would be a major step forward if a toolbox of material could be developed containing ready-made material such as lesson plans, brochures, videos, posters, handbooks, model legislation, and press releases. The toolbox would be designed to take advantage of existing material, such as the "Get Out and Stay Alive" video developed by the Eau Claire Fire Department or the "Ready to Respond" video produced by the University of Maryland.

**Develop a networking mechanism** The participants believed that if a formalized networking mechanism existed for sharing information, experiences, successes and failures that people would be able to maximize their own effectiveness.

## Actions since the forum

Unfortunately, since the forum, there has not been any significant progress made on the three recommendations that were brought out in the final report. USFA has reported that they do not have any funding available to support the development of a toolbox, and that there does not appear to be any efforts in the works to have a follow-up forum.

In the area of a toolbox, Campus Firewatch has set up a Resource page where there is a rapidly-growing collection of material that can be used for training and educating students, staff, administration and parents. Included on this page are legislative updates, lesson plans, PowerPoint presentations, handouts and fact sheets, among others. If you go to [www.campus-firewatch.com](http://www.campus-firewatch.com), and click on the link to "RESOURCES" you can view the complete list of material that is available, free of charge.

The NFPA is helping to keep these efforts continuing by sponsoring a session on college fire safety at its Fall Meeting in Orlando, Florida. The meeting will take place on November 11 to 15, 2000. A session on college fire safety, being organized by the Education Section, is scheduled to be held during this meeting. More information is available from the NFPA by visiting their web site at [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org).

Campus Firewatch has also stepped forward to help with the networking recommendation by setting up a listserv. By going to our website at [www.campus-firewatch.com](http://www.campus-firewatch.com), you can become a member of the list and have a chance to interact with other professionals and receive timely information directly from the staff of Campus Firewatch.

Another listserv is the International Association of Campus Fire Safety Officials. Run out of the University of Miami, Ohio, it provides a mechanism for sharing information among practitioners and others interested in campus fire safety. You can get more information on this list by contacting Randy Horman at [hormanrl@muohio.edu](mailto:hormanrl@muohio.edu).

Many people are hoping that this forum is not the last, but instead is the first of an ongoing effort. If you have any questions regarding the forum, or would like to register your support for ongoing activities in this area, please contact us via email at [publisher@campus-firewatch.com](mailto:publisher@campus-firewatch.com).

*Ed Comeau coordinated the College Fire Safety Forum for NFPA and wrote the final report. A copy of this report can be downloaded from the RESOURCE page at Campus-Firewatch's website ([www.campus-firewatch.com](http://www.campus-firewatch.com)).*



# COLLEGE Fire Log

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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](mailto:publisher@campus-firewatch.com).*

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 19, 2000

## Seton Hall University

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East Orange, NJ

**The Fire:** On Wednesday, January 19, 2000, a fire occurred at approximately 4:30 a.m. in a common area on the third floor of Boland Hall at Seton Hall University. The Seton Hall University Public Safety Department responded and notified the South Orange Fire Department of the fire. The fire was brought under control within 10 minutes of the first arrival of fire units from South Orange. As of 1/28/00, the cause of the fire has not been announced.

**Fatalities and Injuries:** Three male freshmen, all 18 years of age, died. Fifty-four students, two South Orange firefighters and two South Orange police officers were injured. As of Wednesday, January 26, 2000, four students are still hospitalized.

**The Building:** Seton Hall University is located in South Orange, New Jersey. The building where the fire occurred was a six-story, 350 room, structure, built in 1952 that housed approximately 600 students. It was equipped with smoke alarms, pull stations and fire extinguishers. There was also a standpipe system in the building that was used by the fire department in suppressing the fire. There were no reports of a sprinkler system in the building. An independent con-

tractor had tested the smoke alarms and pull stations the day before the fire.

Since September 1, 1999, there had been 18 alarms at Boland Hall.

On Friday, January 28, 2000, the University received an email reportedly threatening another fire. As a result, a computer was seized and an investigation was initiated.

Seton Hall University reported that five students have withdrawn as a direct result of the fire.

Because of this fire, legislation has been introduced in the New Jersey legislature regarding the installation of fire sprinklers in dormitories. More information can be found in the Legislation Update column in this issue, or by visiting the Campus Firewatch website and following the link to the NEWS page.

More information on this fire will appear in a future issue of Campus Firewatch.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 22, 2000

## Heidelberg College

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Tiffin, Ohio

A fire on the top floor of a three-story dormitory forced the evacuation of 63 students. The 93-year-old building suffered significant water damage from fire fighting operations.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2000

## Clemson University

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Clemson, South Carolina

*(NOTE: Information for this story was obtained from news stories and interviews conducted by Campus Firewatch.)*

At approximately 6:30 a.m., a fire was detected on the fourth floor of a six-story dormitory at Clemson University. The cause of the fire was determined to be an unattended candle. Use of candles in the dormitories is against university policy.

According to an interview by Campus Firewatch with the Clemson fire marshal, Chris Caracciolo, they have an aggressive program in place for sprinklering dormitories. They currently have 19 dormitories, seven of which are completely sprinklered. The remainder are equipped with partial sprinklers that are being upgraded to full sprinkler systems.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2000

## Atlantic Union College

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Lancaster, Massachusetts

*(NOTE: Information for this story was obtained from news stories and interviews conducted by Campus Firewatch.)*

A fire in a three-story, wood frame, dormitory completely destroyed the building. The building had 13 apartments, 11 of which were occupied by students and their families. A university official reported that there were about 20 to 25 people living in the building.

In an interview with college officials by Campus Firewatch, they reported that the fire started in an apartment on the first floor. The resident was cooking, and the grease ignited. They suppressed it with fire extinguishers, and since they thought the fire was out, did not call the fire department.

However, the fire had already extended into the walls around the stove and then it spread vertically through the building.

According to news reports, one of the third floor residents went downstairs, saw the fire, went back up to his apartment and returned with a fire extinguisher to fight the fire. He then tried to get back up to his apartment to retrieve some personal belongings, but was unable to do so because of the fire.

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2000**  
**Southern Illinois University**  
 Carbondale, Illinois

An unattended candle set an SIU dormitory room on fire. The extent of the damage is unknown at this time. According to press reports, there were 103 false alarms last semester with at least 22 of them deliberate activations.

Students were slow in reacting because of the number of false alarms, it was reported in the press.

It was also reported that the university does not have a policy against candles.

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2000**  
**Washington State University**  
 Pullman, Washington

A fire broke out on Wednesday afternoon, at about 3:30 p.m., in a room on the 13th floor of a high rise dormitory. The fire was suppressed by the operation of a sprinkler head. The cause of the fire, according to press reports, was electrical. There were no reports of any injuries or fatalities.

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2000**  
**Washington State University**  
 Pullman, Washington

*(NOTE: Information for this story was obtained from news stories and interviews conducted by Campus Firewatch.)*

A fire occurred at an off-campus fraternity. According to an interview by Campus Firewatch with Fire Prevention Officer Dragoo from the Pullman Fire Department, the cause of the fire was determined to be a candle that was ignited when a blanket was tossed over on top of it by a sleeping occupant. The three occupants in the room woke

up and found the blanket and the back of the couch on fire. They were able to stomp out the fire on the blanket, but were unable to extinguish the couch.

The building was a three-story structure. One portion was constructed in 1938, and an addition was added in 1968. The building was equipped with a fire alarm system that automatically transmitted a signal to a monitoring company. The building was not equipped with an automatic fire sprinkler system.

The fire occurred on the top floor of the new addition.

For up to an hour after the fire, occupants were being removed from the building. One occupant was found bound in a bedroom. Another was removed a half-hour later while attempting to silence the fire alarm system because he wanted to go back to bed.

Just minutes before this fire, the fire department had responded to another fraternity where a candle had started a fire. Fortunately, the occupants were able to extinguish this fire before any significant damage could be done.

Dragoo reported that there is a significant problem with false alarms in the off-campus fraternities. He stated that there had been 259 false alarms in these buildings.

**TUESDAY, MARCH 7, 2000**  
**University of Michigan**  
 Minneapolis, Michigan

A fire in an art building at the University of Michigan at 9:00 p.m. started in a locker containing oily rags and linseed oil. A student noticed the fire, activated a manual pull station, but the system failed to activate. Students attempted to unsuccessfully extinguish the fire by aiming fire extinguishers through the locker vents. One student donned a respirator that she uses for art projects.

**TUESDAY, MARCH 7, 2000**  
**Ohio University**  
 Athens, Ohio

A fire in Bromley Hall dormitory was started by a cigarette that was discarded into a trashcan. The trashcan's contents were ignited, which in turn ignited the bed. The

occupant was not in the room when the fire broke out.

The fire department was notified at 12:30 p.m. by an individual that heard the room's smoke detector. A maintenance worker also heard the smoke detector, entered the fifth floor room and then activated a manual pull station. The fire department was already enroute at this point in time.

**FRIDAY, MARCH 10, 2000**  
**Michigan State University**  
 East Lansing, Michigan

A candle started a fire in a resident assistant's room. The occupant had lit the candle while praying, and then looked up and saw a stereo on fire. The fire damaged the stereo, a mattress and the wall, and the remainder of the room suffered smoke damage.

One of the building residents, when interviewed about burning a candle or incense, said that she "usually blows it out if I'm leaving the room."

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15, 2000**  
**Western Michigan University**  
 Kalamazoo, Michigan

A fire at 1:30 a.m. on the first floor of Hoekje Hall gutted the room. Approximately 300 students had to be evacuated from the four-story building.

**SATURDAY, MARCH 18, 2000**  
**Chipola Junior College**  
 Marianna, Florida

A male student was charged with attempted arson. He is accused of pouring gasoline around the school buildings and shrubs and threatening to set them on fire.

**SUNDAY, MARCH 19, 2000**  
**Bloomsburg University**  
 Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania

A fire in an off-campus fraternity killed three occupants. This fire occurred in a two story, wood frame building that was not equipped with an automatic fire sprinkler system. There were six residents in the building at the time of the fire. Two were able to escape by jumping from upper story win-



## Campus Firewatch Website

The value of this newsletter doesn't stop with just this copy. Visit its companion website at [www.campus-firewatch.com](http://www.campus-firewatch.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](mailto:publisher@campus-firewatch.com)

See you there!

dows.

This is the second fire in a fraternity that occurred in Bloomsburg. A fire in 1994 killed five students at another fraternity. Following this fire, a special ordinance was enacted that addressed off-campus housing. An inspector was hired who was responsible for enforcing this ordinance.

More information on this fire will appear in a future issue of Campus Firewatch.

**FRIDAY, MARCH 24, 2000**

### **Boston College**

**Newton, Massachusetts**

*NOTE: Information for this report was gathered from news stories and interviews conducted by Campus Firewatch.*

An electrical fire damaged the north wing of a three-story dormitory. The fire occurred at 5:17 a.m., and forced the evacuation of 37 students. According to a university spokesperson, the damage was "significant." A number of students had to be rescued over ladders. Two students had fled to a sharply pitched roof, and had to also be rescued by ladders.

The building was a three-story structure that housed freshman students. It was divided into three sections-A, B and C. The fire occurred in a room on the third floor of the "C" section. The building was built in 1971 and was not required to have sprinklers. However, according to the spokesperson, the dormitory was scheduled to be equipped with sprinklers by June. The building also did not have a standpipe system.

A spokesperson for the Newton Fire Department told Campus Firewatch that the cause of the fire was electrical. There were three power strips connected together that, in turn, were plugged into a wall socket. There were 19 appliances, such as computers, a microwave and a refrigerator, that were plugged into the three power strips. The origin of the fire was in the vicinity of a mass of wires that were located behind a pile of books and papers. The fire department determined that one, or more, of the wires' insulation failed, the wires overheated, arced and then ignited the combustible materials.

There were two occupants in the room at the time of the fire. One of them awoke and saw the fire. The two then fled the room,

leaving the door to the corridor open. As the fire developed, the smoke spread into the hallway, activating a smoke detector that was connected to the building fire alarm system. When the fire alarm system was activated, it notified Boston College security and automatically transmitted an alarm to the Newton Fire Department, who began responding with two engines, a ladder and a command officer.

BC Security responded, and reported that there was a fire on the top floor of the building. This information was relayed to the fire department, and the response was upgraded to a second alarm.

A problem that arose during the fire fighting operations involved the security screens over the windows. They were permanently affixed to the building, and the residents were not able to open them from the inside to escape the fire. Because of the heavy gauge of the metal used in these screens, fire fighters were unable to remove them from the exterior using forcible entry tools.

Because of this, Massachusetts State Fire Marshal Coan sent an advisory to all of the fire chiefs in Massachusetts. A copy of this advisory can be found on the Campus Firewatch website by following the NEWS link.

**MONDAY, APRIL 3, 2000**

### **Saint Joseph's College**

**Standish, Maine**

An arson fire at Saint Joseph's College in Standish, Maine, resulted in the arrest of a 20-year-old female student. According to press reports, the fire was the fifth suspicious fire over three days.

The fire on Monday, 4/3, gutted a resident-assistant's room on the first floor.

**SATURDAY, APRIL 8, 2000**

### **University of Massachusetts**

**Amherst, Massachusetts**

*NOTE: Information for this report was gathered from news stories and interviews conducted by Campus Firewatch.*

A fire in a high-rise dormitory was controlled with the activation of a single sprinkler head. A student was washing his clothes when there was a power failure. He took his wet clothes and proceeded to drape



### University of Massachusetts:

In the fire at UMass, the smoke detector was covered with a baseball cap, and never activated during the fire. Notice the athletic equipment hanging from the sprinkler head.

them over furniture and fixtures in his room to air-dry them. A t-shirt was placed over a halogen lamp (that was equipped with a guard), and a baseball cap was hung over the room's single station smoke detector. The student then went to bed.

Power was ultimately restored, and the lamp, which had been left in the "on" position, ignited the shirt. The shirt then fell down onto, and ignited, a couch and loveseat that the student had moved from the floor lounge into his room.

The student was awakened (unknown what awoke him) and he observed the fire. He proceeded to awaken his roommate, and they evacuated the room. As they opened the door to the corridor, smoke escaped from the room and activated a building fire alarm smoke alarm in the hallway. During this time, the room's sprinkler head activated, controlling the fire until it was completely suppressed by the Amherst Fire Department.

SUNDAY, APRIL 9, 2000

### Dormitory Fire

Pittsburgh, PA

A fire in clothing that was started when a resident fell asleep smoking was controlled by the activation of a sprinkler head. The fire occurred on the fifth floor of an eight-story building. Fire damage, according to published reports, was estimated at \$5,000.

Fire officials were quoted as saying there were problems with evacuating the structure, and with the audibility of the fire alarm system.

APRIL 12, 2000

### Montclair State University

Little Falls, New Jersey

A fire in a desk lamp ignited a small fire on the desk. The occupants of the room were woken by "a crackling sound," observed the fire and evacuated the room. A sprinkler head activated directly over the desk, controlling the fire until the arrival of the Little Falls Fire Department.

The fire damage was limited to a part of the desk, papers, books and articles of clothing. Water damage was confined to the room of origin and several adjacent rooms.

The building had been inspected by the state Division of Fire Safety on March 24. This inspection was prompted by an order from Governor Whitman, following the Seton Hall fire that killed three students in January.



### University of Massachusetts:

A t-shirt, which had been draped over the top of a halogen lamp to dry, was ignited when the power to the dormitory was restored. It fell down and ignited the couch next to the lamp

# RESOURCES & Organizations

This column provides you with a list of resources and organizations that can assist you in your mission of developing a fire-safe college community. Each issue will focus on a different area such as Greek, risk management, fire service organizations, and more. If you have any organizations or resources that you feel should be included, please forward them to us at [publisher@campus-firewatch.com](mailto:publisher@campus-firewatch.com)

## Greek Life

*The following are a list of organizations relating to Greek life at universities and colleges. The synopsis of each organization is taken right from their web sites. Links to these sites, and more, can be found by going to the Campus Firewatch website [www.campus-firewatch.com](http://www.campus-firewatch.com) and following the links to RESOURCES.*

*This list is for informational purposes only. Campus Firewatch does not necessarily endorse any of these organizations, their websites, or the information contained on them.*

## Greek Fire Safety @UNC [www.unc.edu/depts/greek/fire.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/greek/fire.html)

This is a page devoted to fire safety within the Greek system at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. It lists the fraternities and sororities that had perfect inspections, as well as a wealth of fire safety information that they can use.

## GreekPages.com [www.greekpages.com/index2.cfm](http://www.greekpages.com/index2.cfm)

Our purpose is simple: to provide useful services and good information to fraternity and sorority members, their alumni, pledges, prospective members and those interested in Greek life. We believe that the Internet provides bountiful opportunities to further greek life across chapter, campus and orga-

nizational lines and to use this medium to promote what is finest in the greek tradition and to help build a more solid foundation for the future.

## Association of Fraternity Advisors

3901 West 86th Street, Suite 165  
Indianapolis, IN 46268  
PH: (317) 876-1632  
FX: (317) 876-3981  
[www.fraternityadvisors.org](http://www.fraternityadvisors.org)  
[info@fraternityadvisors.org](mailto:info@fraternityadvisors.org)

The Association of Fraternity Advisors exists to support and stimulate persons who advise fraternities and sororities in higher education and to enhance the positive influence of the fraternity and sorority experience in student development by providing definition and recognition for the profession, encouraging research, establishing networks among related interests and creating forums for interaction and learning.

## North American Interfraternity Conference

3901 W. 86yh Street, Suite 390  
Indianapolis, IN 46268-1791  
PH: (317) 872-1112  
FX: (317) 872-1134  
[nic@nicindy.org](mailto:nic@nicindy.org)  
[www.nicindy.org](http://www.nicindy.org)

The North-American Interfraternity Conference, a federation of 66 men's

national and international fraternities, is headquartered in Indianapolis, Indiana.

The NIC provides a variety of services to support and enhance the fraternity movement throughout the United States and Canada, including:

- Educational conferences for undergraduates, alumni, and fraternity staff
- Videotapes on a variety of contemporary fraternity issues
- Printed workbooks and manuals to assist chapters and IFCs/IGCs
- Campus consultations where NIC staff visit campuses and present educational programs and provide advice on a number of different topics

## National Pan-Hellenic Council

International Headquarters  
Memorial Hall W108  
Bloomington, IN 47405  
PH: (812) 855-8820  
[gordonm@indiana.edu](mailto:gordonm@indiana.edu)  
[www.nphc.org/index2.htm](http://www.nphc.org/index2.htm)

The National Pan-Hellenic Council shall serve as the official coordinating agent of the nine (9) constituent member Greek letter fraternities and sororities in the furtherance of their program unity on college and university campuses and within the several communities wherein graduate and/or alumni(ae) chapters of said fraternities and sororities are located.

## National Panhellenic Conference

NPC Headquarters  
3905 Vincennes Road, Suite 105  
Indianapolis, IN 46268  
PH: (317) 872-3185  
[www.npcwomen.org](http://www.npcwomen.org)  
[npccentral@npcwomen.com](mailto:npccentral@npcwomen.com)

National Panhellenic Conference, founded in 1902, is an umbrella organization for 26 inter/national women's fraternities and sororities. Each member group is autonomous as a social, Greek-letter society of college women and alumnae. Members are represented on over 620 college and university campuses in the United States and Canada and in over 5,300 alumnae associations, making up over 3 million sorority women in the world.

### **Center for the Study of the College Fraternity**

Franklin Hall 206  
Bloomington, IN 47405  
PH: (812) 855-1228  
cscf@indiana.edu  
www.indiana.edu/~cscf/

The Center for the Study of the College Fraternity was formed in 1979 to encourage and support research of the highest quality and educational significance on the role of the fraternity and sorority in higher education. The Center fulfills this mission in part through research grants, publication of monographs and the Update newsletter, and the indexing and collection of completed research projects.

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#### **The Teachable Moment** - continued from page 1

"First, we have to turn the clock back," said Jones when he started to relate how they were able to implement such a strong sprinkler ordinance. In 1993, Jones made his first attempt at introducing a sprinkler ordinance. However, there was strong opposition to it from the building interests, and unfortunately it did not pass.

Three years later, in 1996, a fire occurred at the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity at the University of North Carolina. As the death toll grew throughout the morning of the fire, Jones realized that the time was right to try again to push through legislation requiring all fraternities and sororities be sprinklered.

According to Jones, during recovery operations after the fire was out, the city manager came up to him and told him "this was the time to try again,"

and that he would support the chief in his efforts to get it through. Jones knew exactly what had to be done at that moment. It was time to send the message home to the media, the public and the politicians.

Throughout the day, whenever there was a media interview, Jones and his staff kept stressing that this tragedy could have been avoided if the building had been equipped with automatic fire sprinklers. "The media took this and ran with it," said Jones. "With the support of the city manager and the mayor, the ordinance was placed at the top of the city's agenda."

Because North Carolina is not a home rule state, it was necessary to go to the state legislature to get authorization to pass a sprinkler ordinance. The fire occurred in May, and by September all of the hearings had been held, which was a record time, according to Jones. The council passed a requirement for retrofit in fraternities, sororities and any new construction in multifamily occupancies that were three units or greater, or that were greater than 5,000 feet. "This time," said Jones, "the ordinance passed without opposition."

There is a five year timeframe in which the fraternities and sororities must all have sprinkler systems installed, or they will lose their certificates of occupancy. The deadline is September, 2001, and all of the sororities, with only a couple of exceptions, have their sprinkler systems in place.

Unfortunately, it is not the same with the fraternities. They were very cooperative for the first two years, and then that cooperation tapered off. The lesson taught by the Phi Gamma Delta fire had been forgotten by today's students.

As an example, Jones recounted an incident where the furnace had broken down in a fraternity, and was apparently not being repaired. "They bought thirteen space heaters and had them running to keep the place warm. We

received a call from a parent and did a surprise inspection. The furnace was fixed." In another case, a fraternity was having a party with a "jungle" theme, so they purchased bamboo and were decorating their basement with it for the party. Fortunately, the fire department's fire marshal learned about this and was able to correct it before the party.

Immediately after the fire in 1996, Jones thought that he had a four-year window of time to make any changes because the fire would stay in people's minds. In retrospect, he said, "It is a two and a half-year window to make any changes because of the institutional memory. As the student body changes, it becomes another story in the university history. A lot of the people that dealt with it have moved on, and the commitment also dwindled."

Chief Jones concluded by stressing that you must always be vigilant. "You have to be constantly diligent in student housing, because the conditions can change from day to day. You literally cannot assume because you inspected them within the past month that conditions are still the same."

The one lesson that Jones would like to pass on is that "when you have a significant fire, you have to use that opportunity to send the message. 'Teachable moments' is a concept that needs to be used to leverage some progress. We don't do enough of it in the fire service, we don't educate enough through tragedies. When you can do a press conference with smoke rising in the background, you get the attention that you need."

*Chief Dan Jones is the fire chief in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and the editor-in-chief for National Fire Rescue Magazine. He can be reached at [djones@nfrmag.com](mailto:djones@nfrmag.com).*

*A copy of the Chapel Hill sprinkler ordinance can be found on Campus Firewatch's Resource page at [www.campus-firewatch.com](http://www.campus-firewatch.com).*