

# FIRE PREVENTION AND SAFETY

The Division of Housing and Conference Services, the Department of Residence Life, and the Department of Emergency Services have established guidelines to maintain a safe living environment.

We need your cooperation in complying with both the common sense rules of safety and the specific rules established by the university.

Fire and Life safety codes change periodically. The most up-to-date and official residence hall fire safety regulations as well as information on violations and penalties are available electronically through the Emergency Services website: [www.rci.rutgers.edu/~emergsvc](http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~emergsvc).

## Safety Information and Equipment

Fire extinguishers, smoke and heat detectors, fire alarm bells or horns, and pull stations are located throughout each building. **This equipment is critical to life safety and should be used only in emergency situations.**

Be aware of the location of fire extinguishers, fire alarm pull stations, and emergency exit routes from your room so that you may act promptly in any emergency.

In the event of an actual fire, evacuate the building immediately. Pull the fire alarm if not already sounding and, once evacuation has begun, call university police at 911. **Because of the importance of fire safety equipment, individuals who misuse or tamper with it face immediate expulsion from housing and disciplinary action under the student code of conduct, as well as possible fines and prosecution.**

## Smoke Detectors

ALL residence hall sleeping rooms are provided with local sounding smoke detectors for your safety. Housing inspects these detectors **monthly**. Fire inspectors also evaluate these devices for proper operation. The small red light on the detector blinks every 2-5 seconds.

## Emergency Evacuation Drills

Emergency evacuation drills are conducted each semester to familiarize you with evacuation procedures. During an evacuation, you are requested to follow emergency procedures and staff instructions. ALL occupants of buildings, or portions of buildings, where fire alarms are sounding must evacuate immediately. Residents who do not evacuate are subject to disciplinary action in addition to a fine of \$100.

## Prohibited Items

These items are prohibited in residence halls, suites, and apartments:

- In residence hall rooms, as well as in bedrooms, bathrooms and living rooms of apartments: cooking devices such as electric toaster ovens, broilers, skillets, hot plates, hot-dog and hamburger cookers, electric woks, rice cookers, immersion coils, hot pots, or similar items. Microwave ovens are not permitted in residence halls except where provided by the university. Microwave ovens, woks, and rice cookers may be used **only** in apartment kitchens if the appliance is UL listed and properly connected. **Cooking is not allowed in residence hall or apartment sleeping rooms.**
- Room-heating or open-flame devices, including all space heaters, kerosene/oil lamps and alcohol burners.
- Wall hangings made of burlap or any other flammable materials, tapestries, fish netting, flags, wicker ornaments.
- Firearm, other weapons, and explosives.

### **Prohibited Items (continued)**

- All candles (including decorative candles), fireworks, sparklers, incense and smoke bombs. Using candles in university housing rooms for religious purposes is prohibited because of fire hazard. Alternative appliances, electrically powered, exist to permit the resident to observe religious holidays without creating a fire hazard.
- Posters/decorations with combined coverage of more than 1/3 available wall space, and/or placed on the ceiling. ALL flammable and combustible liquids, including art supplies such as thinners, etc.
- Gasoline-powered items, such as motorcycles, mopeds, or their components.
- Electrical wiring that is "homemade" or otherwise modified or transformed, creating a fire hazard.
- Extension cords exceeding six (6) feet. ALL extension cords must be maintained exposed in plain view. Cords may not be run under rugs, closet doors, or be secured to building surfaces or furniture.
- Painting walls or murals.
- Pets/laboratory animals of any kind.
- Lofts, liquid-filled beds, or any other Structures.
- Light dimmers, ceiling fans, or any other device that replaces, adds to, or interferes with any building apparatus.
  - Combustible or plastic lampshades or light fixture covers.
  - Torchiere-style lamps with halogen bulbs. Desk lamps with halogen bulbs are allowed. Torchiere-style lamps with incandescent bulbs are allowed.
  - Devices that overload electrical receptacles (more than three appliances per outlet or multiple-plug adapters or power strips with more than two cords attached). Fused, multi-outlet surge protectors commonly used for protection of personal

computers are permitted. However, multi-outlet surge protectors may not be plugged into an existing power strip (piggybacking), nor shall more than one (1) fused, multi-outlet surge protector be plugged into a building wall outlet. Surge protectors or power strips without built-in fuses are not permitted.

- Traffic and road signs observed in residence hall rooms or apartments will be reported to the University Police Department. Students in possession of traffic and road signs are subject to prosecution.

### **Approved Items**

Only hot pots meeting the following specification are permitted in university housing. Units purporting to be "automatic" have failed and caused fires here and at other colleges and universities. To be approved for use in housing, a hot pot or electric kettle must automatically shut itself off if the fluid boils off or if the pot is emptied. Usually, this type of pot does not contain a conventional heating element, but rather the water completes an electrical circuit between two conductors, which sustains the heating process. Approved hot pots must be capable of accepting only water. Units capable of heating soup, etc. are not approved.

Conduct the following field test to determine compliance. Plug the empty unit into a power source and turn it "on." If the interior of the appliance heats up, the device fails the field test. When purchasing a hot pot for use in a university residence hall or apartment, first read the precautionary messages. If the appliance or package states, "do not operate when empty:" the unit is not approved.

UL-listed popcorn poppers are permitted.

### **High-Rise Fire Alarm System**

As part of an extensive Life Safety program, high-rise residence hall building fire alarm systems have been replaced and automatic sprinklers added to provide a sophisticated state-of-the-art fire protection and life safety system. Since the design and operation of these systems depart from the familiar "evacuate the entire building" practice, students have felt the alarms were not operating properly. The confusion results from the special operation of a high-rise system as compared to that found in a "low-rise" structure.

A high-rise building fire alarm system operates as follows:

1. Audible alarms consisting of a prerecorded evacuation message and a siren sound will activate on the floor where the alarm originated, the floor above, the floor below and within the elevator cars and exit stairways. Signals are not designed to sound on all floors; this operation is structured to limit the number of people in the stairways to enable safe movement. The flashing strobe lights will operate on all floors.
2. The elevator cars will return to the first floor where the doors open and remain in that position for fire department use.
3. The stairway pressurization system operates automatically upon activation of the fire alarm system. The purpose of this system is to prevent the migration of smoke into the exit stairs thus ensuring a safe and secure exit.
4. The smoke exhaust system engages on the three floors where the alarm signals are sounding. The purpose of this system is to evacuate any smoke from the corridors to assist persons exiting and to aid with the operations of the fire department.
5. From within the fire command center, located on the first floor, the fire department has complete control over all building emergency systems. The commander may selectively cause the evacuation signals to sound on additional floors, may provide verbal directions or information through use of the public address function of the alarm system, may control the elevators and emergency power generator and may selectively control the smoke control systems.

If the fire alarm system should activate you should evacuate only if the signals are sounding on your floor. Experience gained from high-rise building fires resulted in the modern systems in use today. Evacuation of an entire building is contrary to recognized practice and creates greater life hazards.

Please be assured that this type of fire alarm system does not compromise your safety. If you would like further information, call the Fire Safety Division offices at 732/445-5325.

### **Inspection of Residence Hall Rooms**

The responsibility of the university to provide for the safety of all persons living within university-owned or operated residence halls and apartments is enforced through unannounced inspections conducted by university staff. Enforcement of state and university fire safety regulations is the responsibility of the Department of Emergency Services.

University Fire Inspectors are state-certified fire officials with full authority to enforce the provisions of the New Jersey State Uniform Fire Code and established university fire safety regulations. University Fire Inspectors are obligated to inspect all university buildings, including every residence hall room and apartment. Because of the magnitude of this task, and to ensure the highest level of safety for all residents, fire inspections are *unannounced*.

Inspections will be conducted during normal weekday business hours. For your convenience, inspections commence after 10:00 AM. Rooms and apartments will be entered for the purpose of conducting the scheduled unannounced fire safety inspection even in the absence of the resident. As a security measure, doors to all vacant residence hall rooms or apartments will be locked upon the departure of the Fire Inspector (even if the door was found unlocked).

### **Violations**

A Notice of Inspection will be left for, or given to, residents of a room or apartment whenever a fire safety violation is found. If the room is unoccupied at the time of inspection, a Notice of

Inspection will be left even if no violations were observed; this is a security measure for your safety. If any prohibited items are found and cited during the course of an inspection, the residents must discontinue use of cited hazards immediately, but are allowed seven (7) working days to remove the prohibited items from the resident hall.

Cited violations will be forwarded to the appropriate Office of Residence Life. Students will be issued a Fire Code Violation Follow-Up Form, which must be completed and returned verifying the violation has been corrected. Failure to return forms will result in a consultation with the Residence Life staff. Students who violate the fire code a second time will be placed on probation and/or other appropriate sanction as determined by an Administrative Hearing/Conference. Students who violate the fire code a third time will be removed from residence.

In addition, residents are reminded that under the provisions of the New Jersey Uniform Fire Code (N.J.A.C. 5:18-2.17) they may be held financially liable for the actual costs of extinguishing a fire directly or indirectly caused by a violation, which had been cited and remained unabated at the time of the fire and additional dedicated compensatory penalties in accordance with N.J.A.C. 5:18-2.12A.

#### **Holiday Decoration Policy**

During the holiday period of October through December, special emphasis is placed on life safety hazards associated with holiday decorations. Each year, colleges and universities across the country experience disastrous fires in housing facilities caused by unsafe decorations. The Fire Safety Division distributes annually guidelines for the safe decoration of university housing facilities. Inspectors conduct frequent checks to assure compliance with these reasonable guidelines. For current advice on decorating safely, look for the annual poster or read the electronic posting available through the Emergency Services website.

#### **Life Safety Don'ts**

**We ask that students and their parents review and discuss the following important recommendations.**

- Use common sense for guidance in making decisions, which could affect your safety and the safety of others.
- NEVER pull a fire alarm as a prank. Fire safety is no joke.
- NEVER deliberately set a fire, no matter how small. Fires quickly grow and get out of hand.
- NEVER discharge a fire extinguisher as a prank.
- ALWAYS leave your room and your building when a fire alarm sounds. Don't ignore a warning that could cost you your life.
- Don't smoke in bed!
- Don't place or hang anything over lighting fixtures, fire detectors, or on fire sprinkler piping.
- Don't store personal belongings in corridors, vestibules, or stairwell landings.
- Don't block access to doors and windows. Furniture must be arranged to permit full opening of all doors.
- Don't chain bicycles to stairways or landings: they will be removed and confiscated.
- Don't attempt to prop elevator doors.
- Don't cover desks or standing lamps with scarves or drapes. The heat of the bulb may cause a fire.
- When using a space heater borrowed from the housing office, be sure to keep it well away from bedding, curtains, and other flammable items.
- Don't park in a designated fire zone.

#### **Questions?**

We'll be happy to answer any questions and/or concerns you have about fire safety. Please call the **Department of Emergency Services Fire Safety Division** offices at 732/445-5325 and visit the Emergency Services website at: [www.rci.rutgers.edu/~emergsvc](http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~emergsvc).