



Providence Fire Department offers fire safety tips for college students

Tuesday, April 19, 2016

With the elevated number of fires that have occurred in college areas of the city recently, the Providence Fire Department urges students to practice fire safety as the school year comes to a close

Over 35 college and university students have been displaced by multiple alarm fires during the past several weeks involving off-campus student housing in the City of Providence. These serious fires resulted in the destruction of several buildings, injuries to students and Providence Firefighters and endangered surrounding neighborhoods. The damage could have been worse had it not been for the aggressive and courageous actions of Providence Firefighters. The Providence Fire Department reminds our city's college and university community that many of the safeguards that are in place in on-campus housing are not present in off-campus housing. Sprinkler systems, fire alarm systems, and other safeguards may not be in place in off-campus housing and/or may not be working properly. According to the U.S. Department of Education, approximately 2/3 of college students live in off-campus housing and since the year 2000, 86% of college related fire fatalities have occurred in off-campus housing.

In an effort to end the academic school year safely and without any more life threatening fires, the Providence Fire Department asks every college student and their family members to check the following life safety items:

Smoke Detectors:

Ensure that there are smoke alarms in every bedroom and on every level of the building. In most fatal fires, the smoke alarms are missing, disabled or have a dead battery. Smoke detectors are the first line of defense. It is important that you test your smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors to ensure that they are working properly. It is recommended that you replace all batteries at least once a year.

Exits:

Ensure there are two ways out of every bedroom and keep in mind that the second way out may be a window. If a window is the second way out, does it open? Is it blocked by an air conditioner? Can you climb out of it? Are there security bars on the window? If the bedroom is on a second or third floor, do you have an escape ladder? These can be purchased online or in a home improvement store. Is there a second way out of the house or unit? Every apartment must have two ways out. Is the second way out blocked by storage in the stairs such as bicycles or trash cans? You should create a fire escape plan and keep stairwells and hallways clutter free to ensure a safe and quick escape route.

Fire Causes:

The leading cause of all home fires is cooking. Inspect the condition of the stove and do not leave cooking equipment unattended. What about the electrical service? Can the electrical service handle the load or demand of the outlets? Having multiple extension cords or strip cords can create a hazardous condition. Another leading cause of all fatal house fires is cigarette smoking. A contributing factor in college related fires starts with upholstered furniture on porches, decks, bedrooms and living rooms.

Please contact the Providence Fire Marshal's office with questions or concerns at 401-243-6050. The Providence Fire Department can provide smoke detectors to anyone who cannot afford one.