

Illinois State Fire Marshal Reminds College Students Keep Fire Safety A Top Priority

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SPRINGFIELD - Many college students have returned to campuses across the state as COVID-19 prevention and safety remain a top priority. This school year and the protocols for returning to class may look different, but fire safety is still the same and just as important.

September is Campus Fire Safety Month and Illinois is among numerous other states urging students to create and practice a fire escape plan. The goal is to help prevent common campus fires and reduce fire hazards. According to Campus Firewatch, 85% of college-related fire fatalities have happened in off-campus housing, where most students live. Since January 2000, at least 175 people, including students, parents and children have died in college-related fires with 7 of those fatalities occurring here Illinois.

Fire Marshal Matt Perez says, "COVID-19 safety has taken center stage for college students this Fall as they have moved back on campus. A fire escape plan and practicing

fire safety is just as important as wearing a mask to class, practicing social distancing and washing your hands.”

OSFM encourages schools, universities, colleges and local municipalities across Illinois to provide educational fire safety outreach programs to all students throughout the entire school year, not just in September. This is also a good time for schools, universities, colleges and local municipalities to evaluate the level of fire safety being provided in both on and off-campus student housing and take the proper steps to ensure fire-safe living environments.

Here are some fire safety tips and ways to help keep students safe when choosing a residence:

- Look for housing on and off campus that has sprinklers.
- Make sure that you can hear the building’s fire alarm system.
- Check to make sure all sleeping rooms and common areas have functioning smoke alarms. For optimal protection, all smoke alarms in the home should be interconnected so that when one sounds, they all sound.
- Never remove batteries or disable the alarm.
- Test all smoke alarms at least monthly.
- If you live off campus, have a fire escape plan with two ways out of every room.
- Learn the building’s evacuation plan and practice all drills as if they were the real thing.
- When the smoke alarm or CO alarm sounds, exit the building quickly and stay out until given instructions to return.
- If you smoke, smoke outside and only in designated areas.
- Never leave the kitchen when cooking.
- Check with your local fire department, building management or campus office before using a barbeque grill or fire pit.
- Never overload electrical outlets and check with the school to make sure what electrical appliances are allowed.

More campus fire safety information can be found by visiting [OSFM’s website](#).