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State Fire Marshal Encourages Higher Education Students To Create And Practice A Fire Safety Plan

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SPRINGFIELD- 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 of this month is to help prevent common campus fires and reduce fire hazards. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) fires in student housing cause an average of one death, 32 injuries, and \$15 million dollars in property damage each year. Three out of four of those fires begin in the kitchen. The likelihood of a fire is greatest on the weekends and on weekdays from 5-9 PM. 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 in Illinois.

“This month serves as a good reminder for schools, universities, colleges, and local municipalities to join together and evaluate the level of fire safety being provided in both on and off-campus student housing. It’s important that all the proper steps are being taken to ensure fire-safe living environments are available for students,” said Illinois State Fire Marshal Matt Perez.

The OSFM encourages schools, universities, colleges, and local municipalities across Illinois to come together and provide educational fire safety outreach programs to all students throughout the entire school year, not just in September. For many students, this could be their first exposure to a fire safety lesson since they were in elementary school. Since this is the first time many students have lived away from home, it’s more important than ever for students to understand how to create a fire safety escape plan and practice that plan.

“As a residential university, we understand and appreciate that keeping our students and employees safe is our top priority,” said Eastern Illinois University President Dr. David Glassman. “EIU is proud to have been recognized as the first state university to fully comply with the State’s residence hall sprinkler act in 2012. Participating in Campus Fire Safety Month events gives EIU even more opportunities to reinforce its fire prevention and fire safety best practices.”

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](#).