Fire Safety in UNH Residence Halls and On-Campus Apartments

Your room is where you will spend most of your time while attending the University. Before you start making your room "your new home," take a moment to consider the regulations announced on this web page. Each year thousands of people are hurt or killed in fires. Most of the deaths and injuries are needless because most fires can be prevented. The best way to avoid fires is to avoid the hazards, which create them.

Appliances and Cooking

- Any appliance used in your room must be listed or recognized to a U.L standard by a national recognized testing laboratory. This includes clocks, radios, stereos, computers, etc.
- Appliances that are strictly prohibited in the residence halls include any item with a heating coil i.e. toasters and toaster ovens, hotplates, electric fry pans and electric heaters.
- Appliances that may be used in your room but CANNOT be plugged in unattended include: curling irons, hair straighteners, coffee pots, hot pots, irons and popcorn poppers. These items have heated exposed surfaces that have caused fires in the past.
- If an extension is needed for microwaves and refrigerators, it must be of construction-grade quality (generally the same size or larger than the units' own cord). Microwaves and refrigerators need to be plugged directly into an outlet or a fused power strip or a splitter with a fuse. If an adapter is used for a power strip or an extension cord, the ground lead must be connected. Refrigerators no taller than 35 inches in height and drawing no more than 1.5 amps of power are allowed. Microwaves with a power output of 800 watts or less are allowed.

Decorations

- If you use wall or door posters or hangings, they should be used sparingly. No more than 50% of the surface of any wall or exit door may be covered (this does not include furniture). This precaution eliminates excess combustible material which could cause fires to spread.
- Overhead hangings of any kind including items hung from the ceiling, walls or pipes running horizontally with the ceiling are strictly prohibited. If an item is hung from a wall, the item must be completely touching that wall. This precaution prevents the possibility of materials falling down during a fire.
- Candles, tarts, incense and other items with a wick (such as kerosene lamps) and other objects that create and hold a flame are prohibited. No exceptions will be made for cut wicks or removed wicks. Candles have caused many serious rooms fires in the past and are one of the easiest ways for a fire to start.

Electrical

- Multiple outlet adapters (splitters or cube taps) with a fuse or circuit breaker are acceptable. Powerstrips with a circuit breaker or a fuse are recommended.
- When using an extension cord, it must match the same size and type cord supplied with the appliance. Use only Underwriters Laboratories (U.L.) listed cord sets.
- Any style lamp using a halogen type bulb is strictly prohibited. The intense heat generated by these lamps can cause a fire.
- In residence halls with electric heat (Williamson, Christensen, Hubbard, Stoke and Babcock), no less than six inches is required between any furniture and the heater unit. While it may seem unlikely, a number of room fires have started due to items too close to a room heater.
- Electric blankets are not allowed in the residence halls.
- No wires may be run underneath a rug except low voltage wires such as speaker wire or cable wire.

Exits

- All pathways to room doors and windows must be kept clear. An item hanging to enclose or decorate a sleeping space is not permitted. Room doors must open at least 90 degrees.
- Hallways and stairs must be kept clear at all times. No bicycle parking or other items are permitted in the hallways or stairwells.
Smoking

- Smoking is not allowed in the residence halls nor is it permitted within 20 feet of the building. Residence halls and the perimeter surrounding a residence hall are smoke free areas.
- Incense and incense paraphernalia are strictly prohibited.

Other Regulations

- The University discourages the building and use of lofts, however, if you should decide to use a loft, a minimum clearance of 33 inches from the top of the mattress to the ceiling. This is required to allow adequate breathing space in case of fire or smoke that may enter the room.
- Flammable items such as: stain, flammable cleaning solvents, butane, propane torches, gasoline, camping or cooking fuels, oil lamps, oil candles and kerosene lamps are all strictly prohibited.
- Empty trash frequently and in to outside bins to avoid it accumulating and becoming a fire hazard. Do not place room trash in bathrooms, hallways or other common areas since this creates a fire hazard also.

Room Inspections

- Safety inspections of student rooms for fire hazards and violations will be conducted several times per semester. (This inspection is held in conjunction with smoke detector testing, which is required by state law.) Room inspections are designed to point out hazards and violations that have been overlooked. If any of these conditions exist in your room, an inspection report form will be issued and you will be expected to comply with its findings. Our records show a marked decrease in the number of room fire hazards since the inception of the safety inspection program.
- Housing Facilities and Operations operate the room safety inspection program in cooperation with the Durham Fire Department. Any questions about the fire safety program or policies may be directed to your Residence Hall Director or the Fire Safety Supervisor at 862-4469.
- These guidelines and regulations are in place for your safety and the safety of your neighbors. Fire Safety is everyone’s responsibility; please do your part to help make your residence hall community a safe place to live.

Fire Safety Equipment in the Residence Halls

Sprinkler, Fire Detection and Alarm Systems

Each residence hall is protected by an automatic fire detection system that is connected directly to the Durham Fire Department. Upon receipt of an alarm activation, the Fire Department immediately responds to your residence hall. The fire protection system is comprised of smoke and heat detectors, sprinklers and hallway manual pull stations. All rooms have a sprinkler and a local-sounding smoke detector. A charge of $100 is assessed to the occupant(s) of a room for tampering with a smoke detector. If you suspect a smoke detector is malfunctioning contact your RA immediately.

Fire Extinguishers

Fire extinguishers are found in every residence hall hallway. These are your first line of defense in case of a fire and could save your life or the lives of your friends. DO NOT TAMPER WITH FIRE EXTINGUISHERS. Eviction from the residence hall is a possible consequence for tampering with a fire extinguisher. There is a $100 charge for resetting a fire extinguisher that has been misused.

Malicious False Alarm

Anyone activating a fire alarm without cause by pulling a pull station or tampering with any of the automatic fire detection devices is responsible for a malicious false alarm. This is a serious offense. By initiating such a false alarm, one exposes both residents and fire fighters to unnecessary risk. Those caught causing a malicious false alarm will be arrested and prosecuted to the full extent of the law and may be held accountable for any injuries or damage which occurs during a fire evacuation. Do not put up with anyone who “fools around” with fire or false alarms!