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Parents Guide to Fire Safety: what you need to know when your child leaves home for college ASSE Fact Sheet 6

When a child heads for college, the parents and the child should be armed with information on fire prevention and become familiar with the fire safety program and protection features of the buildings they will occupy. This information could save lives and prevent injuries. The following is a guide to the questions you should ask when moving into on-campus housing or to an off-campus rental property. For more information on on/off-campus fire prevention go to www.asse.org/newsroom.

When considering moving to on-campus housing, ask and get answers to these questions:

1. What type of fire safety program does the college or university have?
2. What type of fire and life safety training is conducted for students? When and how often?
3. How often are fire drills conducted?
4. What type of training has the resident hall staff received in fire safety?
5. Are the rooms inspected on a regular basis for fire hazards?
6. Are halogen lamps, candles and other hazardous equipment and materials prohibited?
7. Does the building have fire protection and life safety systems and features required by applicable codes, such as a fire alarm system, fire doors and exit signs? Are they maintained on a regular basis?
8. Are there smoke alarms in individual rooms?
9. Does the fire alarm system notify the fire department or campus security? If not, how are fires discovered?
10. How do students make notification of a fire?
11. Do your residence halls have sprinklers? If not, what are the provisions to extinguish fires?
12. How many fires occurred on campus last year?

Walk and talk your child through the following:

1. Learn the procedures to follow in case of a fire including location of exits, fire alarm pull stations, proper evacuation techniques, the importance of not re-entering a building until instructed to do so, and how to report an emergency.
2. Learn how the building fire protection systems and features work, and, the impact of tampering with them.
3. Understand the impact of alcohol and drugs in causing fires and preventing one's ability to detect and safely escape.
4. Understand that setting fires under any circumstances can be considered arson, can result in death and will carry severe penalties.
5. Recognize the hazards of smoking, using candles and incense, cooking in unapproved locations or without proper precautions and overburdening electrical outlets and extension cords. Talk with your children about how they can reduce these hazards by practicing safe behaviors.

Off-campus housing: some questions to ask before you sign a rental agreement

1. Are smoke alarms installed and working?
2. How often are the smoke alarms checked and batteries changed?
3. Are there carbon monoxide detectors present?
4. Are there at least two ways to exit the living space and the building?
5. Are exits clearly marked where necessary and free from obstruction?
6. Do the upper floors have a fire escape or ladder available for each bedroom?
7. Are fire extinguishers available and working?
8. Is there a sprinkler system installed?
9. Is the electrical wiring adequate? What is the electrical panel rated (200 amps or above)?
10. Are there ground fault interrupters (GFIs) in the bathroom and kitchen?
11. Do the windows easily open?
12. If the windows are secured with security bars, is there a quick release from the inside?
13. If there are dead bolt locks on doors, can they be opened without a key?
14. Is the building regularly inspected by the local fire department, code enforcement or college fire safety office?
15. What is the owner's policy and method for correcting safety problems in the building?
16. Has there ever been a fire in this building? If so, identify the cause.
17. Request a walk through of the appliances so the student knows how to properly use them.
18. Where is the nearest fire hydrant on the street? Who is responsible for keeping it cleared in the winter?
19. Did the school recommend the housing for students?
20. Is the owner a member in good standing in a landlord/tenant association or other housing association?
21. Has the city and/or college or university received any safety complaints regarding this building?

For more information, please go to www.asse.org/newsroom or contact ASSE customer service at customerservice@asse.org or 847-699-2929 or the American Burn Association at www.ameriburn.org.

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