

Off-Campus Housing Fire Safety

Prepared by Inspector Doug Warsinski, Ann Arbor Fire Department (dwarsinski@a2gov.org)

As you move into your off-campus apartment, unpack and purchase textbooks, there is one more item to consider for your to-do list - **Practice Fire Safety**.

Center for Campus Fire Safety, Underwriters Laboratories, and the International Code Council* offer these safety tips as part of your fire safety strategy:

When you first move in:

- Make sure the smoke alarms in the room, suite, apartment and floor are in place and working. If not, contact your landlord to have them installed.
- Arrange furniture and decorations so that all automatic fire sprinkler heads are clear. Do not hang anything from fire sprinklers.
- Keep furniture clear of windows and doors for quick exiting.
- Never prop stairway doors open. Keep hallways clear.
- Identify all emergency exits on your floor. In case of fire, elevators will not be in service.
- Find the fire extinguisher and check that the pressure level is good. If there is no fire extinguisher, buy one and keep it in the kitchen. Make sure you know how to use it before a fire breaks out.
- Never overload electrical outlets. Do not staple, tape or nail extension cords or run them under carpeting. Use UL-listed electrical power strips and unplug appliances when not in use.

Throughout the school year:

- Never ignore a fire alarm; fires can spread quickly. Evacuate immediately even when there is no smoke present. Have an escape plan with two evacuation routes from every room.
- Candles are extremely dangerous! Use appropriate holders that completely protect the flame from contact with anything. Never place a candle near curtains, posters or anything flammable. Keep candles away from fans, open windows or anywhere they can be knocked over. Never leave burning candles unattended.
- Do not leave cooking unattended. Turn off all burners and your stove whenever you leave your apartment.
- Do not use grills on combustible (wood) porches or balconies or within 10 feet of combustible construction.
- When smoking, use a sturdy "non-tipping" ashtray. After parties, check furniture cushions for smoldering cigarette butts. Be careful not to empty smoldering ashtrays in the trash. Take all trash outside after a party.
- Be careful when using alcohol – alcohol consumption is a major factor in fire deaths.

*<http://www.iccsafe.org/safety/campusfire/index.html>