

# Fire Safety in the Residence Halls

## The Fire- & Life-Safety Group (FLS)

The residence halls at the University of Colorado at Boulder are designed for a reasonable level of fire safety. The fire alarm system, sprinkler system, smoke detectors, and extinguishers are all checked on a regular basis. There are fire safety instructions and procedures in effect in all halls which are designed to enhance safety and minimize the hazards of fire and smoke. In addition, housing administration works closely with the University's Department of Environmental Health and Safety, the Fire- and Life-Safety Group, and the Boulder Fire Department to explore possible new ways to deal with fire prevention, detection, and suppression.

Despite this, it must be recognized that fires can still occur, that fire prevention is everyone's concern, and that the manner in which residents react in the event of a fire can mean the difference between life and death. For these reasons, the following information is provided to you.

### In Case of Fire

Refer to the following link for emergency and evacuation response procedures.

[Emergency Evacuation Procedures](#)

### Hazards in Residence Halls and Residents' Rooms

**Decorations:** Flammable items such as tapestries, fishnets, parachutes, sheets and paper may not be hung from walls or ceilings. All decorations (holiday, etc.) must be treated with flame retardant. Christmas trees must be artificial, bearing UL labels. Real trees, natural wreaths, etc. present an extreme fire hazard once they dry and, thus, are prohibited. Decorations that extend down hallway walls are not allowed. Decorations must clear all sprinkler heads by at least 18 inches.

**Electrical Overloads:** To reduce the risk of fire resulting from overloaded circuits, we strongly recommend the use of a multi-plug circuit breaker outlet if more outlets are needed. Extension cords are a major cause of residential fires – avoid using them. If your circuit breaker trips, it is possible someone on the circuit is overloading it or using a defective appliance. If this happens, report it to the hall office. Also, too many of certain types of appliances such as coffee makers, popcorn poppers, hair dryers, and curling irons may overload the circuits.

**Appliances:** Electrical appliances that can generate heat or malfunction should never be left unattended. They should be unplugged after use and not stored until they are cool enough to touch.

**Portable Electric Heaters:** Personal portable electric heaters should not be used except under extraordinary circumstances and after conditional written approval by the Department of Housing and the Campus Fire Marshal. UL listed baseboard heaters distributed by the Department of Housing are acceptable provided the circuits are not overloaded and other safety precautions are observed.

**Open flames:** Many fires occurring in residence hall are a result of burning candles. Camp stoves, open coil heating or cooking elements, kerosene lamps, etc., can be extremely hazardous. These open flame devices are not permitted in student rooms. Similarly, burning incense is not allowed. Cooking on barbecue grills and hibachis is not allowed in or around the halls. Activities such as making candles or waxing skis are not permitted in your room or areas in the halls other than those designated by the Department of Housing and approved by the Campus Fire Marshal.

**Trash:** All combustibles, such as paper, should be disposed of in outdoor trash bins as soon as possible. Full wastebaskets and recycling bins are an invitation for fire. Never place newspapers or other combustible or flammable materials in corridors, stairwells, or other common areas.

**Flammable Liquids (and other hazardous chemicals):** Gasoline, ether, paint, glue, etc. are not permitted in student rooms or storage areas. Motorized vehicles are not allowed in the buildings under any circumstances.

**Smoking:** All residence halls are designated as completely smoke free. Smoking is not permitted in residential or common areas of the residence halls. Smoking is permitted outside the residence halls 25 feet away from entrances, windows, vents or any other area where the smoke may impact other community members. Careless disposal of matches and cigarette butts is a common cause of fire. Use caution when disposing of such items.

If living in off-campus rentals, avoid smoking on all type of combustible furniture. Smoking in bed is extremely dangerous and is one of the primary causes of fires in living areas. Also please ensure that a sufficient number of ashtrays are provided and that ashtrays are emptied on a regular basis and when necessary.

**Halogen Lamps:** Due to the high temperatures emitted from halogen lamps, they are prohibited in residence halls. It has been reported that many fires are caused by materials coming in contact with the halogen bulb or other parts of the lamp.

**Foam rubber:** Foam rubber emits deadly toxic gases when it burns and should not be used in student rooms. Most “bean-bag” chairs are stuffed with foam rubber. Foam rubber-filled items are prohibited in student rooms.

**Cooking:** Cook safely and only in permitted and designated areas or kitchens using proper appliances. Microwaves can cause burns, or even start a fire.

## Tampering with Fire Alarm System

The fire alarm system and fire fighting equipment in the residence halls are for your protection. Tampering with smoke detectors, sprinkler heads, sprinkler piping, alarm boxes, and fire extinguishers is prohibited. Remember, this is your life safety equipment. You will be held accountable and liable for any damage that may endanger the lives of other residents. Hanging items from the sprinkler head or pipes is prohibited. It is a misdemeanor punishable by a \$1,000 fine and/or jail term.

## False Alarms

Fire alarms may be set off in residence halls accidentally or due to tampering. How do you know if it is a false alarm? You don't! So get out!

## Resident Room Fire Prevention Checklist

Check your room for fire safety hazards. The correct answer to all the following questions is “no.” If the answer is “yes”, corrective action should be taken. Note that the following are only examples of fire-safety hazards. Please use good judgment and identify and mitigate other fire-safety hazards not listed.

### Are the Following Combustibles Present in Your Room?

| Yes | No |   |
|-----|----|---|
|     |    | Piles of clothing   |
|     |    | Excessively filled recycling bins   |
|     |    | Trash-filled wastebaskets   |
|     |    | Flammable liquids such as gasoline, acetone, and paint thinner present  |
|     |    | Excessive combustible materials on walls and ceiling including: paper, plastics, wood, fishnets, parachutes, or tapestries. |

### Are the Following Electrical, Heating, and Cooking Issues Present?

| Yes | No |   |
|-----|----|---|
|     |    | Signs of scorching around light fixtures or electrical outlets                    |
|     |    | Multiple outlet plugs that do not contain circuit breakers                        |
|     |    | Extension cords that run under carpets, hang over nails, or run through a doorway |
|     |    | Exposed electrical wires  |
|     |    | Light bulbs in lamps <i>exceed maximum wattage</i>                                |

| Yes | No |   |
|-----|----|---|
|     |    | Heaters, sunlamps, or light bulbs too close to combustible materials                                  |
|     |    | Appliances such as curling irons, clothing irons, hair dryers, fans, etc. remain plugged in after use |
|     |    | Cooking surfaces and utensils are not cleaned to prevent grease build up.                             |
|     |    | Refrigerator, radio, TV, and stereo amplifiers too close to wall for adequate cooling                 |
|     |    | Light fixtures not properly attached  |
|     |    | Torchiere Halogen Lamps   |
|     |    | Circuit breaker for the room trips from time to time  |

**Are the Following Hazards Present in Your Room?**

| Yes | No |  |
|-----|----|--|
|     |    | Curtains and flammables near heat source or open flame                       |
|     |    | Items hanging from sprinkler head or pipes                                   |
|     |    | Doorways blocked or partially blocked with furniture                         |
|     |    | Open flame devices, oil lamps, and candles present                           |
|     |    | Aerosol cans near a heat source  |
|     |    | Matches near an open flame or heat source                                    |
|     |    | Fire doors (stairwell doors or room/corridor doors) blocked in open position |