

The Fire- & Life-Safety Group (FLS)

Message from the Campus Fire Marshal

EXIT BUILDINGS WHEN A FIRE ALARM SOUNDS

As the CU-Boulder campus fire marshal, I am writing to urge faculty and staff to follow a few life-saving steps with regard to fire evacuation.

Be safe. When in doubt, get out!

You can save a life! How? Exit the building when the fire alarm sounds!

When a fire alarm sounds, all building occupants must evacuate the building. The importance of this life-saving action cannot be overemphasized. Many fire fatalities have been caused because occupants assumed the alarm was false or were busy completing a task in the building.

Your safety is the most important concern; please evacuate the building any time the fire alarm sounds. Although you may have experienced false alarms in your building, or elsewhere, it is imperative that you evacuate the building upon hearing any fire alarm. If you wait to smell the smoke before leaving, you are risking your health and your life may be in danger.

An emergency alarm may sound upon the release of colorless and odorless chemicals. Therefore, there may be life-threatening fire or non-fire conditions that are not immediately noticeable. Your immediate and calm evacuation is necessary during any fire alarm.

Emergency evacuation plans are posted throughout all major campus buildings. Please read and practice the directions and instructions given on the emergency evacuation plans in your building. Using these plans, learn the location of all emergency exits and use them occasionally, preferably at least twice a year. It is important to know and practice when to go, where to go and how to go to escape a fire. In addition, buildings and departments should have a plan for designated locations for employees to meet outside the building and should be prepared to assist first-responders in identifying persons unaccounted for in actual emergency situations.

We have posted this information because in the past some occupants have not evacuated the buildings upon the sounding of a fire alarm. Their action not only risks their own lives, but also risks the lives of emergency responders and rescuers. In addition, not evacuating in a timely manner will deplete the resources of the emergency responders, who must now rescue the occupants instead of neutralizing the cause of the emergency.

Faculty and staff should direct their students and employees to follow the evacuation procedures during any fire alarm in the building.

Let me emphasize that the CU-Boulder campus is committed to a high level of fire- and life-safety, as shown by our investments in fire sprinkler and alarm systems. Many of the campus buildings, including all student residence halls, are provided with automatic fire suppression/sprinkler systems. All major campus buildings are provided with automatic fire and smoke detection systems connected to the Facilities Management Service Center and the Campus Police Department via a fire alarm reporting network.

However, every individual needs to take part to maintain and improve the level of personal and building fire safety. In particular, note that good housekeeping is one of the most important elements of fire prevention. Do not allow anyone to store anything in stairwells or corridors and never allow any fire doors to be blocked open. It is your life; you are in charge of fire safety!

If you have any questions about the building alarms and evacuation routes, or about how to report a problem, please contact me at (303) 492-4042.

Zachary Niehues, campus fire marshal and building code official, CU-Boulder