

Fire Safety



in Student Apartments

Where Do Fires Occur?

Residential fires represent approximately 23% of all fires and 76% of structure fires. Each year fire kills more Americans than all natural disasters combined. At least 80% of all fire deaths occur in residential occupancies. In apartments, fires most often start in the following locations:

- Kitchen 25.5%
- Bedroom 13.7%
- Living Room 8.6%
- Laundry Area 3.5%
- Bathroom 2.4%

Be Fire Safe Around Your Apartment:

Follow these simple safety tips and your apartment will remain fire safe.

- Insure a working smoke detector is installed on every level of your dwelling.
- If you use battery operated smoke detectors, change the battery every six months.
- Rehearse evacuations and designate groups for accountability once outside.
- Choose an area well away from the building to meet to account for all in your group.
- Install and know how to use a portable fire extinguisher in your kitchen area for small fires.
- When cooking, never approach an open flame while wearing loose fitting clothing.
- Don't leave cooking items unattended and keep a tight fitting lid next to your pan.
- Use a timer to remind you of food in the oven to avoid "dry cooking" fires.
- Ovens and cooking appliances are not designed to heat your apartment and should not be used for that purpose.
- Avoid the use of space heaters. If you feel you must use one, always use extreme caution. Keep space heaters at least 36" away from any combustible items like drapes, bed clothing, and furniture. Check with your local fire department on their use, they may not be permitted.
- If you have a fireplace, ensure it is fitted with a tight fitting screen and make sure your chimney is clean and inspected prior to the heating season.
- Don't overload electrical outlets and extension cords. Do not place electrical cords or extension cords under rugs, through doorways or in such a way they can become damaged.
- Avoid using candles or other items with open flames, i.e. scented oil lamps, etc.
- If smoking is permitted in your apartment, large ashtrays should be provided and smoking should never be done in the bathroom. Ensure ashtrays are never emptied into a combustible container.
- Keep a phone near your bed ready to call 911 or your local fire department number if a fire occurs. Be sure to post the number on or near the phone.

As a student, fire prevention and safety should be a high priority wherever you live. Recent tragedies at educational institutions demonstrate the need to be vigilant. When fire occurs the effects can be devastating. VFIS urges all students to follow these practical Fire Safety Steps to protect yourself from fire.

Sources for information
NFPA & USFA

For more information, visit:

<http://www.usfa.fema.gov/public/factsheets/101.shtm>

<http://www.nfpa.org/Research/NFPAFactSheets/DormFires/DormCollegeHousingFires.asp>



Courtesy of:
Santa Clara County Fire Dept.
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Los Gatos, CA 95032
408.378.4010 www.sccfd.org



Fire Safety for Apartment Living:

Regardless of cause, the activation of the building's fire alarm system is an indication of an emergency and immediate and orderly evacuation of the building is essential. Upon discovering fire or smoke, remain calm.

The following steps should be carried out in order, if it is safe to do so, and if time permits :

1. Upon discovery of a fire, shout "FIRE" to alert those in your living space.
2. If in doubt, get out! **DONOT FIGHT THE FIRE.** As you exit the area, close all doors in the immediate vicinity to help confine the fire in the original area if possible.
3. Check your door before opening it to make sure it is not hot and the fire is not on the other side. If you encounter smoke when leaving the building, stay as low to the floor as possible.
4. Sound the alarm. If your building is equipped with fire alarm pull stations, pull the handle in the fire alarm box closest to the location of the fire.
5. Dial 911 or report the fire by calling the Emergency Number of your local fire department. This number should be attached to every phone in your building.
6. If the building is not equipped with fire alarm pull stations, try to notify as many persons in the area of the emergency if it is safe for you to do so. At a minimum, shout "FIRE" as you exit.
7. Individuals hearing the warning or seeing the fire should begin an orderly evacuation of the apartment building using safe means of exit.
8. If you become trapped in your room, hang something outside the window such as a sheet, curtain, etc., to warn firefighters you are still in the building. Place wet towels around the top, sides and bottom of your apartment or room door.
9. Close any remaining doors if possible. This will help to reduce the movement of air to minimize the fire's spread.
10. If your building hallway is equipped with fire separation doors, make sure they are never blocked to ensure their closure.
11. If your building is equipped with elevators, **DONOT** attempt to use them during a fire or fire emergency.
12. When all persons have evacuated the building, they must remain outside and at a safe and clear distance away from the building. Have a central meeting place where everyone in your designated group to gather and be accounted for. If all cannot be accounted for, **DO NOT RE-ENTER THE BUILDING.** Immediately notify fire fighting personnel on the scene.
13. Regardless of cause, the activation of the building's fire alarm system is an indication of an emergency and immediate and orderly evacuation of the building is essential.

**"When in doubt ... get out!
Do not fight the fire."**