



Township of Maplewood

MAPLEWOOD, NEW JERSEY 07040
FIRE DEPARTMENT

105 DUNNELL ROAD

P: 973-762-6500

F: 973-762-4699



JOSEPH RICHARDELLA

MICHAEL R. DINGELSTEDT

COLLEGE FIRE SAFETY

As the summer begins to wind down and the fall college semester is less than a month away, college students are preparing to relocate to the many and varied forms of student housing. This may represent the first time an individual will reside away from home; or, as is the case with returning students it will not. However, living away from home involves responsibility and Fire Safety is one of these responsibilities.

On college campuses building fires are relatively rare events and it is very easy to become complacent about Fire Safety. But, when fires occur, they can have devastating consequences. While fires in student housing are not an everyday occurrence, they can and do happen, perhaps more frequently than one recognizes. These fires usually do not make the headlines unless a fatality occurs, so it is easy to underestimate the risk of fire. As a result, the Maplewood Fire Department in conjunction with the United States Fire Administration and the National Fire Protection Association provide the following Fire Safety information.

1. COOKING

- Cook only where it is permitted.
- If you use a kitchen, keep it clean and uncluttered.
- If you use electrical appliances, do not overload circuits.
- Never leave cooking unattended.
- If a fire starts in a microwave oven, keep the door closed and unplug the unit. Do not try to remove burning containers from a microwave.

2. SMOKING

- If you smoke, smoke only where it is permitted.
- Use large, deep, non-tip ashtrays.
- Do not smoke in bed.
- Do not smoke when you have been drinking or when drowsy.

- After a party, check furniture and cushions for smoldering cigarettes.
- Soak cigarettes before you empty ashtrays.

3. CANDLES – Fire Officials are very concerned with the recent increase in fires and fire deaths caused by the careless use of candles

- Burn candles only if your school permits their use.
- Do not leave burning candles unattended.
- Keep papers, curtains, and anything that can burn away from lit candles.
- Use sturdy candleholders and do not let candles burn down all the way.
- Do not let candles drip onto anything that can burn.

4. BE PREPARED FOR A FIRE

- Your building has an evacuation plan. Learn it and participate in all fire drills as if they were the real thing. False alarms are no joke and must be reported.
- Learn the location of all building exits. You may have to find your way out in the dark. Count the number of corridor doors to the exits to the left and right of your room to assist you in locating the stairwells.
- Smoke alarms cut your chances of dying in a fire nearly in half. Do not defeat them or remove their batteries.
- Fire sprinkler systems can save lives and property. They protect their immediate area by extinguishing or containing flame. Do not hang anything from sprinkler pipes or nozzles.
- Portable fire extinguishers can put out small, contained fires. Do not play with them.
- If you hear a fire alarm, leave immediately. Close doors behind you as you go. Take your room keys; if you cannot escape, you may have to return to your room.

5. ESCAPE TIPS

- If you have to escape through smoke, crawl, keeping your head 1 to 2 feet above the floor, where the air will be cleanest.
- Test doorknobs and spaces around the door with the back of your hand. If the door is warm, try another escape route. If it is cool, open it slowly. Slam it shut if smoke pours through and use an alternative exit.
- Use the stairs; never use an elevator during a fire.
- If you are trapped, call the fire department and tell them exactly where you are; the correct floor level and specific room number are extremely important. Seal your door with rags and signal from your window.

Open windows slightly from the top and bottom, but close them if smoke rushes in from any direction.

- **No building is completely safe. Even if your building is concrete, you could be overcome by toxic fumes from a small fire.**

Each year more than 15,000 people are seriously burned when their clothes catch on fire. Burns are among the most painful of injuries and the third leading cause of unintentional death in the United States. The hands, groin, face and lungs are at particular risk and are easily injured. The healing process is slow and painful resulting in enormous personal suffering. “STOP, DROP and ROLL” is a highly recommended tactic to use if your clothes catch fire. When a person’s clothes catch fire, they may instinctively attempt to run for help. Running may actually “fan” the clothes that are on fire and cause them to burn at a higher rate. Therefore, the act of running can actually increase the risk of a burn to a person whose clothes are on fire. By stopping, dropping to the ground, and rolling, the clothes that are on fire may actually be smothered or burn at a lesser rate. Although there are no guarantees that burns will not occur, this tactic may help a person survive a clothing fire with less severe burns and have a better chance at survival without major injury.

Remember, the principles of “STOP, DROP and ROLL” are simple:

- **STOP – do not run if your clothes catch on fire.**
- **DROP – to the ground and cover your face.**
- **ROLL – continue to roll to smother the fire.**

Think about and remain cognizant of what you will do in the event of a fire to escape safely and also what you will need to do if your clothes are on fire. By conducting this mental pre-planning, you may be better able to act promptly when a fire or alarm of fire occurs.