



For Immediate Release

August 12, 2009

Fire Safety Knowledge Should Top Back-to-School Lists

JACKSON – The coming weeks will see college and university campuses across the state welcoming back over 150,000 students¹ for the fall semester. They'll bring with them new bedding, clothes, laptops, I-Pods, coffee pots and more to furnish their dorm, fraternity/sorority or off-campus housing rooms. The State Fire Marshal's Office believes that the #1 item college students need when they return to campus is an abundance of fire safety knowledge.

According to Campus Firewatch there have been 135 campus related-fire fatalities from January 2000 to present. Eighty-three per cent of those fatalities have occurred in off-campus housing. Four common factors in a number of these fires include: lack of automatic fire sprinklers, missing or disabled smoke alarms, careless disposal of smoking materials and impaired judgment from alcohol consumption².

“Fire safety is not something that either students or parents think about when going back to school. The fire safety knowledge students need to learn and practice now will teach them how to protect themselves from fire while living in the residence halls and they will carry these messages with them when they move into a house or apartment,” Commissioner of Insurance and State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney said.

Chaney also urged students to familiarize themselves with their school's fire safety procedures; to look for sprinklered housing when choosing a dorm or off-campus housing; to check school rules before using electrical appliances in their rooms; and to use a surge protector for computers and plug the protector directly into an outlet. He added that grants for campus fire safety are

now being given as part of the Department of Homeland Security's Fire Prevention and Safety Grant Program.

The State Fire Marshal's Office offers the following campus fire safety tips.

GET OUT

If you get caught in a fire situation, survival is your top priority. You should:

FEEL THE DOOR HANDLE

- If the door handle is hot, don't open it
- Go to a window and call for help
- If the handle is not hot, open cautiously
- Check for smoke or fire before going out

GET OUT OF THE BUILDING BEFORE PHONING FOR HELP

- Don't take time to phone before leaving
- Get out and find a phone

PULL THE FIRE ALARM ON YOUR WAY OUT DON'T LOOK FOR OTHER PEOPLE OR GATHER UP YOUR STUFF

- Knock on doors as you leave
- Yell "**FIRE!**" as you leave
- Don't hesitate or stray from your path as you leave

CRAWL LOW TO THE FLOOR

- Thick smoke can make it impossible to see
- Toxic chemicals from smoke can be deadly in minutes

CLOSE THE DOOR BEHIND YOU

- You may help keep the fire from spreading
- You may protect your possessions from fire and smoke damage

IF YOU CAN'T GET OUT, GET SOMEONE'S ATTENTION

- Yell and scream
- Hang a sheet from the window
- Stay low, there is less smoke and poisonous gasses close to the floor

PREVENTION

Fires can be prevented from starting if you take some simple precautions:

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR PREVENTION

- Assign a non-impaired "event monitor"

- Clean up immediately after parties and take all trash outside
- Do not overload electrical outlets
- Keep space heaters and halogen lamps away from flammables
- Put out candles and incense when unattended
- Extinguish all smoking materials thoroughly
- Don't smoke while tired or impaired

PROTECTION

You can also protect yourself from becoming trapped in a fire situation by following some important suggestions:

CHECK SMOKE ALARMS

- Be sure they are in proper working condition
- Install new batteries at the beginning of each semester

PLAN ESCAPE ROUTES

- Know where all exits are located in the building
- Practice your escape plan

TAKE FIRE ALARMS SERIOUSLY

- Do not ignore fire alarms
- Do not wait to see fire or smoke
- Do not worry about grabbing your stuff

MAKE A PLAN

You can make a plan for your own fire safety and protection as soon as you get home. Use the following check list:

- Check to make sure your smoke alarms are working - Change the batteries
- Find all possible exits from your room or residence
- Make a fire escape route plan that includes two escape routes
- Practice your fire escape route plan
- Perform a "home inspection" for fire and safety hazards
- Tell your roommates about your plan
- Call your local fire department for more information about student housing fire safety

SOURCES: 1. – Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning
2. - CampusFirewatch.org

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