Fire Safety at Rensselaer
Greek Life

Presented by the Office of
Environmental Health and Safety

Why is this Discussion Important?

"THE SMOKE WAS SO THICK THAT IT WOULD CHOOSE YOU UP TO A MILE AWAY"

"THE FLAMES WERE ABOUT TWO STORIES ABOVE THE BUILDING"

3 die in fraternity house blaze

By HOLBROOK MONROE
Associated Press

OXFORD, Miss. — A fire swept through a fraternity house at the University of Mississippi early Friday, killing three fraternity members, school officials said.

Twenty other students and a house mother escaped the two-story, brick-and-wood-frame Alpha Tau Omega house as giant flames and thick smoke quickly spread.

Fred Cook, a member of the Ole Miss track team who was running a race, said, "The flames were about two stories above the building."

A fraternity member who was not at the house when the fire occurred said fellow members told him they woke up coughing and found smoke "everywhere."

"They said they just ran out as fast as they could, to get out of the building as fast as possible," said Sean Winston, of Middleburg, Va.

Firefighters needed about two hours to bring the blaze under control, chapter adviser Al Bell said. Hours later, smoke felled out of where the roof had been, and much of the top floor was in ruins.

There were no reports of injuries. University spokesman Jeff Alford said authorities believe the fire started in the fraternity house's living area, but the cause was not immediately known.

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Alford said the house had undergone a routine fire inspection Aug. 17 that found problems including a lack of fire extinguishers in the kitchen area, paint on the basement ceiling, and doors blocked with hangers and cloth. Alford said no citations were issued to the fraternity.

Alford identified two victims as William Townsend, 19, of Clarksdale, and Jordan Williams, 20, of Atlanta, both sophomores majoring in accounting.

Alford said the body of the third victim had not been identified.
Fraternity and Sorority Fire Facts

- Every year in the US, there are an estimated 150 fires in fraternity and sorority houses.
- Fires in fraternity and sorority houses peak when the college or university is in season and on weekends.

Information courtesy of the NYS Office of Fire Prevention and Control

Fraternity and Sorority Fire Facts

- Fires in fraternity and sorority houses are five times more costly on average than those that occur in dormitories.
- Arson is the leading cause of fraternity and sorority house fires; open flame is the next leading cause, with candles playing a major role.

Information courtesy of the NYS Office of Fire Prevention and Control
The “Big 7”
Leading Factors Contributing to Death, Injury and Property Loss

- Student Apathy
- Improper Use of 911
- Insufficient Electrical Supply
- Lack of Survival Training
- Intoxication
- Compromised Fire Protection System
- Combustible Fire Load

Information courtesy of the NYS Office of Fire Prevention and Control

Recent Greek Fires

- San Jose State, CA
- Binghamton University, NY
- Hobart & William Smith College, NY
Recent Residence Hall Fires Saved by Sprinklers

- Drew University, NJ
- Rutgers University, NJ
- Babson College, MA

R-2 Fire and Life Safety Standards Compliance
Fire Code of New York State
(19 NYCRR Part 1225.1)

Relationship Statement
Designation of Chapter Risk Manager

- Each Chapter must designate a Risk Manager who will:
  - Reside in the Chapter House
  - Attend all Mandatory “training sessions”
  - Conduct/Document a Mandatory Education Session for all Chapter Members on Fire Safety and Sanitation issues
  - Ensure the compliance with required evacuation drills

Designation of Chapter Risk Manager

- Each Chapter must designate a risk Manager who will:
  - Ensures that any/all issues generated during the house inspection process are rectified within 20 days
  - Ensures that evacuation diagrams are properly created/posted
  - Maintain adequate records
  - Reports all incidents to the Dean of Students within 24 hours of occurrence
General Housekeeping

- All areas should be kept neat and organized at all times.
- Combustible materials should not be stored in hallways, stairwells or against exterior building walls.
- Exits and Fire Doors must never be blocked.

Emergency Planning and Preparedness

- Accidents and Reporting
- Exit Signs
- Emergency Lights
- Evacuation Alarms
- Evacuation Route Diagram Signs
- EMP Manual Template
Fire Drills

- Evacuation Drills must be conducted at least twice/semester
- One of these four drills must be conducted after dark.
- Drills must be documented utilizing the “Emergency Evacuation Audit” form
- Alarms must be activated during the drills

Central Fire Alarm System

- System must centrally report to an approved 24 hour/day monitoring station or RPI Public Safety (Hard Wired Detectors)
- Must be inspected/tested each semester (2x/year) by an approved contractor
- Must not be disabled or tampered with in any way
- Records of testing/inspection must be available for EHS review
Fire Extinguisher Inspections/Maintenance

- Appropriate number/type/size of extinguishers must be present (See AIGC Guidelines)
- **Annually**, a professional service organization must service the extinguishers
- **Monthly**, a representative of the Fraternity/Sorority must visually inspect the extinguishers gauges and ensure that they are in place and initial the tags

Fire Extinguisher Tags

[Image of fire extinguisher tags]

- N.Y.C.
  - LIC. 152
- ALERT FIRE CONTROL
- N.Y.C.
- LIC. 152
- Alert Fire Control
- 401 New Rochelle Rd.
- Bronxville, N.Y. 10708
- (914) 961-7184

OSHA Monthly Inspection Record

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IF DAMAGED OR USED, IMMEDIATELY CALL
(914)-961-7184
Kitchens/Cooking Areas

- Hood Fire Suppression system must be inspected by a qualified individual twice per year.
- Must have back-up manual activation switch at least 10 feet from the hood
- Hood ventilation system must be cleaned as needed and at least once per year.
- Must have a Portable Fire Extinguisher within 30 feet of the hood- Class “K” for deep fryers

Sanitation

- General Housekeeping
- Trash Handling/Disposal
- Minimum Sanitation standards in food preparation areas
Food Safety

**FIGHT BAC!**

- **CLEAN** Wash hands and surfaces often.
- **SEPARATE** Don't cross-contaminate.
- **CHILL** Refrigerate promptly.
- **COOK** Cook to proper temperatures.

Keep Food Safe From Bacteria

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**Boilers**

- Annual Inspection Required by Subpart 4-4 of NYS Labor Law for high pressure units.
- Specific Inspection/Testing Regiment dependent upon design and construction specifics.
Boilers

- **Low pressure** (<=15psi steam, <= 160psi hot water not exceeding 250deg. F)

- **Inspection Requirements:**
  - External biennially for units >100,000BTU
  - Internal
    - Steam every 3 years
    - Hot Water every 5 years

Electrical Safety

- All electrical systems must be maintained in accordance with current electrical codes

- Cover plates must be in place on outlets and Junction Boxes

- Knock-outs must be in place in Junction Boxes

- Proper Extension Cord Use
Extension/Flexible Cord Use

- Use extension cords and flexible cords properly.

Electrical Rooms/ Panels

- Electrical Room Doors and all disconnects must be identified.
- Breakers must be labeled.
- Must maintain 30” wide, 36” deep and 78” high clearance around all electrical panels.
### Flammable Liquids Storage

- Flammable Cabinets Are Required To Store Flammable Liquids In Excess Of the Following Quantities:

<table>
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<th>Class</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Max. Quantity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class 1A</td>
<td>FP&lt;73F;BP&lt;100F</td>
<td>30 Gallons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 1B</td>
<td>FP&lt;73F;BP&gt;=100F</td>
<td>60 Gallons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class 1C</td>
<td>FP&gt;=73F;BP&gt;=100F</td>
<td>90 Gallons</td>
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### Fire Related Construction

- Demonstrates the need for:
  - Fire walls
  - Fire doors
  - Fire rated corridors
  - Minimum sizes for exit corridors and doors
  - Number of exits
  - Distance to exits
  - Occupancy levels
  - Fire rating of interior finishes/materials
Fire Rated Construction 2

- Assessing current status and future requirements:
  - Code professionals should analyze requirements at time of construction.
  - Any renovations should be evaluated prior to work. Renovations already under way or completed should be evaluated to ensure code compliance.
  - Rensselaer is not responsible for this analysis and will only comment on features that obviously have been altered or misused.
  - Owners must deal directly with the City of Troy for code issues.

Automatic Sprinklers

- Automatic sprinklers are not yet required for non-RPI owned buildings, but are for new R-2 housing.
- It is expected that they will be required by NY State soon because adjacent states have instituted this required in the wake of several deadly fires.
- Nothing is more effective at saving lives than sprinklers. Installation should be a near term objective of all houses.
Lofts

- Greek Life Policy Mirrors Residence Life Policy for Construction Requirements:
  1. Lofts Must Not Be Permanently Affixed to the Building
  2. Lofts Must Not Impede Egress From the Room
  3. Lofts Must Be At Least 3 Feet Below Ceiling Level
  4. Lofts Cannot Be More Than 4 Feet Wide
  5. Maximum of Two Lofts Per Room

Drinking and Fires

- ½ of all adults who die in residential fires have high blood-alcohol levels
- Burn victims who have consumed alcohol have a mortality rate 3 times that of victims who have not
- Alcohol consumption reduces ability to detect fire, respond to a fire or fire alarm, and safely escape a fire

Information courtesy of the NYS Office of Fire Prevention and Control
Summary

- These Issues Can Be a Matter of Life and Death
- All Chapter Members Must Be Aware of the Risks/Requirements and Act Accordingly
- Use The Tools Provided By This Program To Improve The Safety in Your Chapter House!
- Nothing Is Any More Important!

Questions?