Academic and Administrative Buildings

Fire Prevention Inspections

The Tufts Fire Marshal’s staff conducts fire prevention inspections in the academic and administrative buildings on a regular schedule throughout the calendar year. The inspectors check the common areas, stairways, utility rooms, storage rooms and the exterior of the building for issues that could threaten the life safety of the occupants.

Some of the life safety issues that the inspectors repeatedly encounter are:

- **Improper storage** in electrical and sprinkler rooms. Ordinary combustibles piled under/around the electrical panels and sprinkler system.
- Equipment, cabinets, desks, tables, chairs, and discarded **items permanently placed in corridors and hallways**. The corridors, hallways and stairs are your egress pathway out of the building during emergency evacuation. The State Building Code requires a corridor width of 44” of clear and unobstructed space.
- **Storage placed too close to fire sprinkler heads**. The State Fire Prevention Regulations require an 18” distance from the head to the closest item. When items are stored within this 18” space, the item creates an obstruction to the water discharge pattern flowing from the sprinkler head. This inhibits the effectiveness of the fire suppression system and allows the fire to grow and spread. Statistics indicate that 97% of fires in sprinklered buildings are controlled by one or two sprinkler heads.
- **Fire doors being propped or wedged open**. Fire doors are fundamental to the integrity of fire barriers because any time there is an open doorway to a compartment, a fire barrier is broken temporarily. The doors are your safety barrier to the smoke, heat and toxic gases from a fire. Doors that are designed to be fire exit doors can be held open, but only if they automatically release when the building fire alarms are activated.
- **Improper storage of flammable fluids and liquids**. Flammable fluid storage is limited to quantity, classification and flammability rating. Special permits and flame resistant metal cabinets are required to safely store all flammables.
- **Electrical extension cords being used as permanent wiring**. Electrical extension cords are strictly prohibited from use inside University buildings as permanent wiring. Should there be a need to use an electrical extension cord for permanent use, you must contact Facilities to have the area of use inspected to determine if additional electrical wall receptacles can be installed to accommodate your needs. For temporary use, the extension should be of the heavy duty, three wire type with ground plug. It should not be in excess of 6-8 feet in length. Do not run the cord under rugs or pile clothes on top of the cord. Overloading of an electrical wall receptacle may cause a fire or short circuit.
• **Non-compliant upholstered furniture.** The University is required to comply with the furniture fire code standards of the local city and the MA State Fire Prevention Regulations, 527 CMR 29:00, *Upholstered Furniture, Molded Seating and Re-upholstered Furniture* with regard to the purchase of upholstered furniture used inside any University building. Furniture purchased for use inside any University building must comply with the California Technical Bulletin 133 and the CAL TB 133 tag must be affixed to the item.

**Barbeques**

A permit is required from the Fire Marshal’s office in accordance with local and state Fire Prevention Regulations for any barbeque grilling that uses charcoal, wood or propane/butane fuels. Only organizations sponsoring an event are permitted to apply for and obtain a permit. Individual barbeques are not allowed to be used on any campus. No open fires are allowed per order of the local fire department. There is no fee for the permit. The grills are to be positioned at least 10 feet from any building during use and storage. Grills are not allowed to be used above ground level. Request for a permit may be made by phone 7-3922 or e-mail. Required information for the permit is: name of person representing the organization; name of organization; location of the event; date of the event; rain date (if applicable); and time of the event.

**Cold Weather Concerns**

During the cold weather season, we are asking you to take extra precautions regarding open doors, windows, storm windows and the possible use of space heaters. One of our concerns is the possible freezing and breaking of a building sprinkler system pipes. This is a very disruptive and costly event in a building. Please help us help you! We realize with the steam heat in some of the buildings it can get very warm at times and if you open a window for temporary cooling, please remember to close it.

Portable space heaters are a potential source of fire if not used properly. The requirements listed below, applicable code requirements, and manufacturer’s recommendations must be followed to maintain a safe environment. Please review the below information regarding space heater use.

- If a space cannot be adequately heated via the installed building heating system, do the following:
  - Contact Tufts Facilities Operations Desk to report the condition.
  - If the heating system cannot be repaired in a timely manner, Facilities may recommend a temporary space heater that will comply with the requirements listed below.

- All space heaters must be *Underwriters Listed (UL)* or *Factory Mutual* approved for their intended use.
- Heaters must have a thermostat to automatically shut down the unit when the desired temperature is achieved. Open coil units are not recommended (these are the ones that glow red); only oil filled units are recommended.
- Heaters must have a tip over automatic shut down feature.
Heaters must be kept at least 3 feet from all combustible materials i.e. file cabinets, desks, trash cans, paper boxes, etc. Do not place heaters under desks or other enclosed areas, or attempt to dry clothes on them. Heaters must be monitored when in operation. Do not leave on overnight. Plug heater directly into a wall receptacle. Never plug it into an extension cord. Heaters need to be monitored daily. Those heaters missing guards, control knobs, feet, etc. must be taken out of service immediately and repaired by a competent person. Do not use heaters in rooms that will not be continuously occupied. Keep doors and windows closed, including storm windows. This will help prevent freeze-ups. Keep space heaters away from exit ways, walkways and paths of travel. Do not use space heaters in wet areas like bathrooms or kitchens.

For further info, contact the Fire Marshal's Office (617) 627-3922.

**Fire Alarm Evacuation Policy**

When the Fire Alarm sounds in any University building, TAKE IT SERIOUSLY!!! The Fire Alarm System is designed and engineered to provide you with an early warning to allow you to safely exit the building during an emergency situation. NEVER ignore or assume the alarm is false or the result of a test. Everyone MUST evacuate the building by way of the safest and closest exit and/or stairway. NEVER use an elevator to exit during a fire alarm activation. Once outside the building, move away from the building. Assemble across the street or along the sidewalk of the adjacent building. The front of the building is where the fire fighters and fire trucks will be operating and they will appreciate you not obstructing their access to the building. If there is an incident occurring on the upper floors and glass is being blown out of the windows, the area below is the hazard zone where serious personal injuries will happen. Once outside, never re-enter the building until you are told to do so by the fire department or Tufts Police.

**Fire Alarm System Testing**

Annual system testing is normally conducted during the summer months and during the winter break. Whenever an occupied building’s fire alarm system is being tested, the building will be posted with a notice (usually 24 hour notice is given) informing the occupants of the test. Occupants do not have to evacuate during the test.

**Evacuation Areas of Gathering and Refuge**

During an emergency evacuation of any campus building, it is important for the occupants to assemble at a safe distance away from the building. This places building occupants out of the hazard zone and in a location where information can be given to all occupants at one time, thus avoiding rumors and miscommunication.

Should the reason for the evacuation not be resolved in a short period of time, you will be advised to relocate to a pre-designated *Area of Gathering* where information regarding the reason for the evacuation and the estimated duration of the incident will be provided. The *Area of Gathering* is posted in the common areas of each campus building.
In the unlikely event that the building or portion of the building becomes compromised to the extent that reoccupation is prohibited, you will be directed to an **Area of Refuge** where shelter, toilet facilities and telephones will be available.

The website has a link to the suggested **Areas of Gathering and Refuge** for each building on all three campuses. Depending upon the day of the week, time of day and weather conditions that the incident occurs, a designated building may not be available. In that event, an alternative site will be found and communicated to the occupants.

**Fire Incident Reporting**

*The Higher Education Opportunity Act* was signed into law by President Bush on the 14th of August 2008. This legislation contains several important campus safety components, including the core provisions of the original *Campus Fire Safety Right-To-Know Act*. Blending the vital provisions of it into the larger Higher Education Act allowed this important legislation to finally make it’s way to the White House and ultimately into law. This new law requires colleges to report fire safety information to the U.S. department of Education.

The law requires specific reporting details:

- the number of fires and cause of each;
- the number of injuries and deaths related to a fire;
- the value of property damage caused by the fire;
- description of the fire protection equipment in each on-campus housing unit;
- the number of regular mandatory supervised fire evacuation drills; polices or rules regarding fire safety education and training programs provided to students, faculty and staff.

Whenever there is a fire inside or on the property outside any University building or structure, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, the incident must be reported to Tufts Campus Police at **66911**.

In addition to the compliance component of this reporting, fire can find its way into hidden openings that if left undetected will burn for a considerable time before it is detected or discovered. This delay in discovery will allow the fire, smoke and toxic gases to spread through walls, ceilings and void spaces. What first appeared to be a small fire that was assumed to be extinguished by a portable fire extinguisher has now begun to spread in hidden interior spaces. Never assume that a fire is out, only the professional fire fighters who protect our lives and property can make that determination.

If you discover a fire, you first must set off the building fire alarm system by activating a manual fire alarm pull station to warn the occupants. This will also initiate the response of the Tufts Police and the local fire department.

Only attempt to extinguish the fire if it is **very small (not more than 2 feet high)**. Keep your escape route behind you. Should you decide to try to extinguish the fire, use the following acronym to help you:

**P. A. S. S.**

- **P**ull safety pin from handle.
- **A**im at base of fire.

![Image of fire extinguisher]
Squeeze the trigger handle.
Sweep from side to side.

If you decide not to fight the fire, try to close the door to the fire area, if it is safe to do so, this will help to contain the heat, smoke and toxic gases from entering the egress corridors. Then evacuate the building via the closest exit. Once outside, move away from the building. NEVER go back inside for anything, property can be replaced…you cannot.

**Holiday Fire Safety**

With the holiday season upon us the **Tufts Fire Marshal's Office** would like to pass along a few reminders:

**NO** live Holiday trees or wreaths are allowed inside any of the residential or academic buildings.

Do not allow artificial trees to obstruct corridors, exit ways or other means of egress.

Live wreathes may be hung on the outside of exterior doors.

The only decorative lights allowed are the low voltage lights that are UL listed for inside use only and a maximum of 3 strings of lights per electrical outlet will be allowed. Outside lights are to be weatherproof and rated for outdoor use. No lights may be installed on the all-metal artificial trees.

When installing the decorative lights, use caution not to tack or staple through the wire or run wires under rugs or through door jambs. Check light cords for cracked sockets or frayed wires prior to installing them.

Do not hang decorative lighting from the ceiling, sprinkler piping or in any of the hallways. Excessive decorations on interior doors are prohibited.

Candles are not permitted in any building.

Turn off all decorative lights when you leave the building. DO NOT leave lights on overnight.

All residential decorations must be removed before the student leaves for semester break. All other decorations must be removed by the end of the first week in January.

*The Tufts University Fire Marshals' Office wishes you a Fire Safe and Happy Holiday Season!!*