



# **Fire and Life Safety GUIDE**

## For **Off-Campus** Residence Selection

Tufts University Department of Public and Environmental Safety

FIRE SAFETY OFFICE

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Dear Students and Parents:

This GUIDE was developed to assist with your search for suitable off-campus housing. This GUIDE will assist you to make better informed assessments of the **fire and life safety aspects of housing** that is being considered for off-campus rental. A careful review of potential housing should always be made **BEFORE** signing a rental agreement. If you have already signed an agreement, use this GUIDE to determine if safety concerns exist; and then as a reference if you wish to contact the Landlord to discuss those concerns. In any case, by using this GUIDE, you (as a renter, or parent of a renter) will have *increased awareness of fire and life safety aspects* of the housing environment. With such knowledge, steps can be taken to choose suitable housing, or to seek improvements to existing housing if possible.

How to use this GUIDE:

1. **Print a hard copy of the GUIDE.** We suggest that you print one copy for each property you are considering, and mark your notes directly within the Guide categories.
2. **Inspect the property in person** (we also suggest that you take photos), with consideration to EACH category that is applicable to the property under consideration. Take photos in all areas. Include exterior views of all sides of the building. Include interior views of stairways, rooms, door and window locks, appliances, etc...
3. Within each category, **compare the *current status of the property to the weighted description within the categories in the GUIDE.*** Each category displays a scale of increasing effectiveness of fire and life safety devices, design, or policy.

Example: An apartment being considered for off-campus housing is inspected by a student. The student observes (and confirms with the Landlord) that the house is equipped with *battery operated smoke detection* only. In "Category # 1" (Smoke Detection), this existing condition would be considered "*minimal protection*" and "*needs further inquiry*". In this category, the GUIDE indicates that 'hard-wired' smoke detectors are better protection than battery operated smoke detection. Furthermore, the GUIDE category indicates that 'hard-wired and interconnected smoke detectors' provide a higher level of protection (because if one detector activates, all detectors in your apartment would sound).

4. **Summarize each property** (using the GUIDE as a reference) from the fire and life safety viewpoint.
5. **Compare** all the properties inspected.
6. **Make an *informed housing decision***; such as to choose one property over others, or to seek improvements via the Landlord to address safety concerns prior to signing the housing agreement.

If you have concerns about the safety of a property, or local housing standards in general, please contact the Building Official for the community in which the property is located.





















Respectfully,


*John F. Walsh*

**Fire Marshal**

Tufts University

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	CATEGORY	Existing conditions	of the property				
1	<b>Smoke detection</b>	NONE 	Battery operated 	Hard wired 	Hard wired & interconnected 	Local fire alarm control panel 	Fire Alarm panel monitored 24 / 7 
2	<b>Carbon Monoxide detection*</b> (*if required)	NONE 	Battery operated 	Hard wired 	Hard wired & interconnected 	Local fire alarm control panel 	Fire Alarm panel monitored 24 / 7 
3	<b>Fire Sprinkler</b>	NONE 			Hallways only 		Apartments and hallways sprinkled 
4	<b>Means of Egress</b>	Basement apartment / ONE egress path 	Attic apartment w/ ONE stairway 	One egress path; <u>and</u> one means of escape via accessible window 		Apartment is <u>above</u> ground level; but has <u>2 clear stairways to exit</u> 	Apartment is at <u>ground level</u> w / <u>two or more</u> clear egress paths 

 = **Minimal** protection level.  
Needs further inquiry.

 = **Better** protection levels

 (stars) = **BEST protection levels 1/2/3 stars**


















Noted conditions should be carefully considered. If at all possible, deficient items should be improved prior to occupancy.



**STRONGLY recommended** that **NO** rental agreement should be signed unless conditions are improved.


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	CATEGORY	Existing conditions	of the property				
5	Hallways / egress pathways	Storage, combustible items in hallway 	Storage, bicycles, etc...creates difficult passage 			Minor storage, pathway maintained for easy passage. 	Clean; no storage allowed. Enforced by policy 
6	Interior hallways & stairways wall coverings	No policy / or no enforcement 	Many papers or other combustible wall coverings 	Wood paneling – NOT treated for fire-resistance 		Wood paneling – with fire-resistant treatment 	Walls are plaster or sheetrock; good condition, little or no combustible coverings 
7	Windows Of sufficient size for an adult to climb through	No windows for apartment 	No window for bedroom 	Properly sized window is present...but difficult to open 		The apartment has a properly sized and easily opened window 	Each bedroom has properly sized and easily opened window 

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8	<b>Portable Escape Ladder</b> (chain, etc.)	<b>Needed; but not present</b> 			Needed, device present, good condition 		Not needed due to sufficient egress 
9	<b>Fire Escape</b>	<b>Needed, but not present</b> 		Appears in need of maintenance 		Appears good, but not inspected in past 5 years 	Inspected & proper OR <u>not needed</u> 
10	<b>Window Access for ladder rescue</b>	<b>Exterior access to any window with ladder is NOT possible due to obstructions</b> 			Exterior access to my windows with a ladder is difficult due when ground is <b>snow covered</b> . 	Exterior access to <u>some</u> of my windows with ladder Is maintained <u>always</u> 	Exterior ladder access to <u>each</u> of my rooms is maintained <u>always</u> . 
11	<b>EXIT signs</b> (IF required)	<b>NONE</b> 			Non-illuminated signs 		Lighted properly 

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	CATEGORY	Existing conditions	of the property				
12	Electrical	Not enough outlets & common blown circuits 	Common electrical disruptions 	Not enough outlets 		Fuse box & sufficient outlets. 	100 amp (min)Circuit breakers, sufficient outlets 
13	Heating	Space heaters policy not enforced 	Space heaters with open coil allowed 		Oil filled space heaters allowed by policy – enforced 		Sufficient heat / professionally installed 
14	Emergency Power / Lighting (if required)	NONE 		Battery units 		Automatic backup generator for fire alarm and hallway lighting 	Automatic backup generator for whole building 
15	Fire Extinguishers	NONE 			Laundry room only 	Hallways 	In each apartment 

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16	BBQ grilling	<p>Allowed on porch, etc...</p> 		<p>Allowed; but movable on ground</p> 			<p>Allowed in fixed location 10' or more from building</p> 
17	Cooking	<p>Dirty appliance &amp; no exhaust fan</p> 	<p>Dirty appliance w/ filtered hood</p> 	<p>Clean appliances w/ filtered hood</p> 			<p>Clean appliances <u>and</u> functioning exhaust fan piped outdoors</p> 
18	Smoking	<p>No policy or no enforcement of policy</p> 	<p>Frequent violations of policy</p> 	<p>Smoking takes place outdoors - near entrance door</p> 		<p>No smoking in or within 10' of building and is enforced</p> 	<p>Building is 100% non-smoker &amp; enforced</p> 

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	CATEGORY	Existing conditions	of the property				
19	Porches / decks	<p><b>Upholstered furniture allowed / smoking allowed</b></p> 		NO upholstered furniture allowed / but smoking IS allowed	Upholstered furniture present, but smoking is NOT allowed ✓?		Non upholstered furniture only / and smoking NOT allowed  
20	General upkeep	<p><b>Building is always littered / messy in common areas...and is generally known as a "party house".</b></p> 	<p><b>Building is frequently littered / messy in common areas.</b></p> 	Building is kept orderly. <b>Frequent</b> alcohol events by occupants creates safety concern. ✓?	Building is generally kept orderly. <u>Occasional</u> alcohol events by occupants. ✓	Building is kept orderly usually. Fire safety efforts generally apparent.  	Building is kept orderly <u>always</u> . Fire safety is taken seriously.  

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