



Commonwealth of Kentucky Public Protection Cabinet

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Gov. Bevin proclaims September Campus Fire Safety Month State fire marshal: Focus shifts to off-campus housing

Frankfort, Ky. (Sept. 2, 2016) – In college towns across the nation, fire officials are challenged each year to find ways to start and end the school year without a significant fire tragedy. In Kentucky, the state fire marshal is shifting the focus to off-campus housing during Campus Fire Safety Month, which Gov. Matt Bevin has proclaimed for the month of September.

Reaching out to parents who co-sign leases is one way to ensure a safe living environment for students. “We encourage parents to ‘see it before you sign it.’ There is a checklist parents can use before moving their students into off-campus housing to help ensure a safe environment to live,” said state Fire Marshal Mike Haney. “Parents should check for working smoke alarms in every bedroom and on every floor; look for two ways out, including windows, and inquire about the condition of the electrical service and cooking appliances in the residence. If a gas range is installed, parents should check to ensure the presence of a carbon monoxide detector according to manufacturer’s directions.

“In addition, educating students on what they can do to stay safe during the school year is important and often overlooked,” said Haney. “This education is part of a layered approach to fire safety -- working smoke detectors, sprinklers, fire safety education and personal responsibility all contribute to safer environments.”

Bob Austin, fire marshal at Western Kentucky University, said the partnership between the university and the Bowling Green Fire Department has been beneficial to the university and the community.

“We work closely with the local fire departments to educate both students and community members about preventing fires and fire safety in general,” said Austin. “For example, I drive around neighborhoods that are close to campus and if I see evidence that homes have been converted into apartments I call the local fire departments and alert them.

“The fire department can then offer those residents with free home safety inspections. So it is very much a team approach to educating our constituents and preventing fires,” he said. “And that team should include landlords and students who live in off campus residences.”

WKU will hold a fire safety demonstration on campus Sept. 14 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Kentucky's Division of Fire Prevention offers the following safety tips for college students living on campus and off campus:

- Get familiar with university policy on proper use of appliances, decorations, candles, and smoking.
- Figure out what your response should be in the event of a fire and practice it.
- Do not obstruct or disable smoke alarms or any other fire protection devices.
- Do not play jokes with fire alarms. False alarms get people hurt.
- Never neglect a fire alarm signal as a false alarm. Respond to every alarm as an actual fire event.
- Alcohol use has been strongly associated with fire fatalities.
- Take personal responsibility for your safety.
- In off-campus residences with smokers, make sure ashtrays are used and all ashes are completely extinguished prior to leaving or going to sleep.
- If space heaters are used, ensure the area around the heater is kept clear of combustible materials such as curtains, bedding, clothing and trash.
- Are all utility issues such as tripped breakers, non-functioning appliances, etc. reported to the landlord or maintenance company, and repairs completed in a timely manner?
- If candles, incense, or other potential ignition sources are used, ensure they are kept clear of combustible materials and placed where they are not likely to be accidentally bumped or knocked off of their resting place. Make sure all candles and other ignition sources are extinguished prior to leaving the residence or going to sleep.

The National Campus Fire Safety Month campaign is in its 12th year. To view the governor's proclamation and WKU's fire safety checklist, visit the state fire marshal's website at <http://dhbc.ky.gov/sfm/Pages/default.aspx>.

For information on campus fire safety, visit <http://www.campus-firewatch.com/>.

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