



To: Residents of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Residence Halls
From: Mark Collins – Associate Director of Facilities & Life Safety
Subject: Residential Fire Safety

Dear Residents:

Fire safety and fire prevention are everyone's responsibility! Exercising good common sense and observing the University's fire safety guidelines helps keep you and your GSAS residence safe. Every year college and university students experience a growing number of fire-related emergencies. There are several causes for these fires; however, most are due to a general lack of knowledge about fire safety and fire prevention.

Your GSAS residence is equipped with a water based fire suppression system that is integrated with the fire alarm. If an uncontrolled fire, typically one to five sprinkler heads are activated by the heat of the fire. A single sprinkler head will discharge 18 – 25 gallons of water per minute which will suppress or extinguish the fire. As a reminder, never hang anything on or in the immediate proximity of a sprinkler head or smoke detector.

Evacuation: Know what to do when you hear the fire alarm.

- Familiarize yourself with your primary and secondary emergency exits from your room. **Fire escapes should only be used as a secondary emergency exit.** No storage of any kind is permitted on a fire escape or balcony.
- Know the locations of fire alarm pull stations – they are typically located near fire exit staircases and main exit doors.
- Know your central meeting location outside the building.
- In order to account for all building occupants during an evacuation, always check-in with your Resident Advisor or emergency personnel.

If the fire alarm is activated, you must immediately evacuate the building; a delayed evacuation could result in your becoming trapped by smoke or fire and or seriously injured. As a reminder, never use an elevator during a fire emergency.

If the Alarm Sounds

- Do not delay evacuation or assume that this is a false alarm. Immediately begin to exit the building.
- **Feel the door.** If it is **HOT**, **DO NOT OPEN it.** Stay in your room. Put a towel or blanket (preferably wet) under the door to keep the smoke out. Call the Cambridge Fire Department at 911 or the Harvard University Police Department at 617-495-1212 to let them know where you are. Attract attention to yourself. Hang a sheet or something out the window.
- If the door is **not hot**, **open it slowly.** If smoke and heat fill the hall, close the door; stay in your room; and call for help.
- If you can safely leave your room, take your key and close your door behind you as you exit. Exit by the nearest clear exit stairway.
- **If you encounter smoke on your way out**, stay low and crawl if necessary. You are more apt to find breathable air close to the floor. Cover your nose and mouth with a wet towel or wet handkerchief, if possible.
- Go to the predetermined emergency evacuation meeting location.
- Do not attempt to reenter the building until the fire department gives permission to do so.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS	
Medical Emergency, Police and Fire	911
Harvard University Police Department (HUPD)	(617) 49 5 – 1212
Harvard University Operations Center (Building Emergency)	(617) 49 5 – 5560



THE FACTS

Cooking is the leading cause of fires and fire-related injuries in college residences here in Massachusetts, followed by careless smoking and arson. Smoking and the use of any open flame such as a candle are strictly prohibited.

Cook with Caution!

- Be on alert! If you are sleepy or have consumed alcohol, don't use the stove or stove top.
- Stay in the kitchen while you are frying, grilling or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.
- If you are baking or roasting, remain close by and use a timer to remind you.
- Keep everything that can catch on fire – oven mitts, wooden utensils, food packaging, and towels away from the stovetop.
- Keep a lid nearby when you're cooking to smother a small grease fire. Never attempt to move the pan; slide the lid over the pan and turn off the stovetop. Leave the pan covered until it is completely cooled.
- For an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the door closed. If the fire does not go out – evacuate.
- If an uncontrolled fire in the kitchen, close the door if possible – and pull the fire alarm. Call 9-1-1 from outside.

Residence fires can be devastating; not only can they result in serious injury or death, but there can be other consequences, as illustrated below:

- A small kitchen fire in Perkins Hall in 2011 resulted in significant damage to the stove and kitchen area.
- A fire at Conant Hall in 2003 caused serious damage to a student room and jeopardized the safety of students in the building. The cause of the fire was believed to be an unattended candle and excessive combustible materials hung on the walls. Candles and halogen lamps are prohibited in student rooms at Harvard.

For more information on the University's fire safety program, please visit the EH&S website at <http://www.ehs.harvard.edu/services/fire-safety> or contact the Department of Environmental Health & Safety at 495-2060.

Best Regards,

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