

RA Guide to Teaching Fire Safety





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Table of Contents

Overview..... 2
 Message from Gail Minger..... 2
 About the Michael H. Minger Foundation..... 2
 Grant information..... 3
 How to use this guide 4
 Topic Guides..... 4
 Posters 5
 Additional Resources 6
Fire Safety Topics 7
 Candles 7
 Cooking 10
 Electrical Fire Safety..... 14
 Escape Planning 19
 Fire Sprinklers 24
 Smoke alarms 29
 Smoking 37
Fire Safety Posters 41
 Basketball and Soccer Posters..... 42
 Pizza 46
 Cause..... 50
 Fraternity Fire 52
 Michael Minger Fire 57
 Peter Talen Fire..... 63
 Your Room 70



RA Guide to Teaching Fire Safety

Overview

Message from Gail Minger

Welcome! We're glad you're here and we hope this Guide and the resources on the Minger Foundation web site will help you in teaching fire safety to students in your residence halls and in your campus community. We developed this material with the help of a great group of Resident Assistants and Residence Hall Coordinators. Their ideas were invaluable and helped to make this project possible. We appreciate their contributions to campus fire safety!

Gail Minger, President of the Michael H. Minger Foundation

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Gail S. Minger'.

About the Michael H. Minger Foundation

The Michael H. Minger Foundation (www.mingerfoundation.org) was formed after the death of Michael Minger in an arson fire in his residence hall at Murray State University in Kentucky. The foundation works to improve awareness of fire safety on campuses everywhere with a focus on fire safety for students with disabilities.



RA Guide to Teaching Fire Safety

Grant information

This project was funded by federal grant EMW-2009-FP-011110 from the Department of Homeland Security Fire Prevention and Safety Grant program to the Michael H. Minger Foundation. Assisting in this project:

- Ed Comeau, Campus Firewatch www.campus-firewatch.com
- Matthew Hashiguchi, Hand Held Studios, www.handheldstudios.com
- Elaine McMillion, www.elainemcmillion.com
- Rachel Rynderman, LaunchPad Graphics, www.launchpadgraphics.com

We appreciate the support provided by Eastern Kentucky University where the videos were shot. The following resident assistants and resident hall coordinators served as both on-camera talent and provided guidance for the project

- Tricia Bode
- Anthony Jones
- Dan Kirstein
- Matt Merker
- Julia Nash
- Clay Sanders
- Andrea Shaffer
- Teddy Tamulevich

The following students from Boston were featured in the videos

- Sarah Honigfeld
- Ian Miller
- Shari Zakim

We appreciate Patty and Tim Talen sharing their story about their son, Peter, and providing photographs.



RA Guide to Teaching Fire Safety

How to use this guide

This Guide was written for Resident Assistants to provide you with some additional information about fire safety that you can use when you are talking to the students or putting together educational programs such as bulletin boards. There is a lot more to know about fire safety than what we have included in this guide, so there are links to a lot more resources that you can use.

This Guide will be changing and growing over time and we appreciate any thoughts you might have on how we can make it easier for you, the RA, to communicate fire safety to your students. Please contact us at gminger@mingerfoundation.org and be sure to become a fan at www.facebook.com/rafiresafety.

There are two main sections to the guide.

Topic Guides

The first section is more detailed information about a variety of fire safety topics. Each fire safety topic has a “take-away”. In other words, if there is only one thing that you want the students to remember, if there is one thing that you want them to take away from your talk, this is it.

There is some basic information and then a list of fire safety messages that have been developed by fire safety professionals. The Minger Foundation has provided some additional information on each message, in essence, the “why” behind the message.

Posters

The second is a series of posters we have developed that you can print out and use on bulletin boards. In talking with RAs, they told us that this is one of the key communications mechanisms and that they could really use material to put up relating to fire safety.

Each of these posters has a QR code on them that can be scanned with a smart phone. This will take the students to a special web page that has more information about the topics on the poster. This includes tips, action items and links to short videos that they can watch on their phones.

What is a QR code?

If you have a smart phone, you can download an App that will allow you to scan a QR code such as this one with the phone's camera. QR codes can do a number of different functions, but in this case, it takes you to a web page.



Additional Resources

If you are looking for some additional posters or information to use for your floor meetings or bulletin boards, you might visit the resources listed below.

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Fire Safety Topics

Candles

THE TAKE-AWAY –

MANY CANDLE FIRES HAPPEN BECAUSE THEY ARE EITHER UNATTENDED OR SOMEBODY FALLS ASLEEP.

Whether your residence hall allows candles or not, let's be realistic...students are going to bring them and some are going to use them. This is a great time

to teach them about how to use candles safely so that when they do move out of the residence hall they know what to do and not do.

Educational Messages

The following are some tips and information that you can use for floor meetings or in making up bulletin boards. There is a lot more to know that you can learn by visiting the links below after the tips.

Unless indicated otherwise, the numbered tips were taken from the National Fire Protection Association's document "[NFPA Educational Messages 2011 Edition](#)." The Minger Foundation has added some information explaining the rationale behind the fire safety messages.

Candles	
Message	Why (Minger Foundation)
13.1.1 Consider using battery-operated flameless candles, which can look, smell, and feel like real candles.	Flameless candles are much safer than real candles for an obvious reason - there is no flame! And the candles really do look like real ones and some are scented as well.
13.1.2 When using candles, place them in sturdy, safe candleholders that won't burn.	Don't improvise a candle holder. You don't want it to catch fire or melt, which could cause the candle to tip over and catch something on fire.

Candles	
Message	Why (Minger Foundation)
13.1.3 Protect candle flames with glass chimneys or containers.	This helps to reduce the possibility that something will come in contact with the flame, such as something getting blown into the candle.
13.1.4 Keep candles at least 12 inches from anything that can burn	You want to have a “safe zone” around the candle to make sure it doesn’t catch something on fire. This also applies to ABOVE the candle as well! Make sure that there aren’t items above it that can become heated and catch fire. Remember, the heat from a candle goes UP!
13.1.5 Never leave a burning candle unattended. Burning candles can start a fire.	Think about it...if you leave the room and something goes wrong, you aren’t there to fix it. A fire can grow out of control within seconds, literally.
13.1.6 Avoid using candles in bedrooms and sleeping areas. Extinguish candles when you leave a room or the home, or go to bed.	Where do most candle fires start? In the bedroom. If you are using a candle in the bedroom, the chances of you falling asleep with it burning are higher. If you are using one in another room, be sure to put it out before you go to bed. Unattended candles are a leading cause of candle fires.
13.1.9 Always use a flashlight - not a candle - for emergency lighting.	It is so dangerous to use candles during emergencies because they are often left unattended or not used safely. If things are bad enough during an emergency that you need light, don’t make it worse by using a candle and starting a fire.

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Cooking

THE TAKE-AWAY –

DO NOT LEAVE YOUR COOKING UNATTENDED. UNATTENDED COOKING CAN BECOME A FIRE THAT DESTROYS YOUR BOOKS, CLOTHES AND A SEMESTERS WORK. IT CAN INJURE AND KILL. UNATTENDED COOKING IS ONE OF THE LEADING CAUSES OF FIRE ALARMS IN RESIDENCE HALLS AND IS THE LEADING CAUSE OF FIRES IN HOMES ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

Cooking is one of the leading causes of fire alarms in residence halls. In homes, cooking is the leading cause of house fires. What is the biggest contributing factor? Unattended cooking.

Educational Messages

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Cooking	
Message	Why (Minger Foundation)
7.1.1 To prevent cooking fires, you must be alert. You won’t be alert if you are sleepy, have consumed alcohol, or have taken medicine or drugs that make you drowsy.	You might fall asleep while cooking or not be able to react quickly or properly if a fire breaks out.

Cooking	
Message	Why (Minger Foundation)
7.2.2 Stay in the kitchen when 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 leave your food cooking and walk away, and something happens, you might not be able to react quickly enough!
7.3.3 Wear short, close-fitting or tightly rolled sleeves when cooking.	Loose clothing can dangle onto stove burners and can catch fire if it comes in contact with a gas flame or an electric burner.
7.4.1 Always keep a lid nearby when you're cooking. If a small grease fire starts in a pan, smother the flames by carefully sliding the lid over the pan. Turn off the burner. Do not move the pan. To keep the fire from restarting, leave the lid on until the pan is completely cool.	Smothering the fire is one of the safest and quickest ways to put out a fire. Be careful, though!
7.4.1.1 Never pour water on a grease fire. Never discharge a fire extinguisher onto a pan fire; it can spray or shoot burning grease around the kitchen, actually spreading the fire.	When water is put on a grease fire it causes the flaming grease to expand and explode, spreading the fire. If you discharge a fire extinguisher too close or directly into the pan, it can also spread the flaming grease.
7.4.3 When in doubt, just get out! When you leave, close the door behind you to help contain the fire. After you leave, call 9-1-1 or the fire department from a cell phone or a neighbor's telephone.	If there is a fire just get out and stay out. So many people are killed when they go back in to get their books, their purse or wallet. These things can be replaced. You can't.

Cooking	
Message	Why (Minger Foundation)
If you don't already know how to use a fire extinguisher properly, when your stove is on fire is not the time to learn. Get out, call 911. (MHM)	This is not the time for on-the-job training. There are right ways and wrong ways to use a fire extinguisher. The right way could put out the fire. The wrong way could make it worse or hurt you. If you don't know how to use it or if the fire is just too big, get out, stay out, call 911.
7.6.3 Plug microwave ovens or other cooking appliances directly in a receptacle outlet. Never use an extension cord for a cooking appliance as it can overload the cord and cause the flexible covering to catch fire.	Microwaves draw a lot of power. If your extension cord isn't the right size to handle all of the current flowing through it it can overheat and possibly catch fire.
7.7.4 Use only microwave-safe cookware (containers or dishes). Never use aluminum foil or metal objects in a microwave oven.	Putting metal items in a microwave will create sparks and can possibly set the microwave on fire. Do Not Do It.

Additional Resources

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Electrical Fire Safety

THE TAKE-AWAY –

**DON'T OVERLOAD POWER STRIPS,
EXTENSION CORDS AND OUTLETS.**

Students bring a lot of electrical items to school and there never seems to be enough outlets or they aren't where they

need to be so it is easy to overload an outlet or use an extension cord and overload it. Remember, what you are teaching the students about electrical fire safety is not just for when they are living in the residence hall but also for when they move out!

Educational Messages

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Electrical Fire Safety	
Message	Why (Minger Foundation)
11.1.1 Electrical work should be done only by a qualified electrician. Some communities require that a person doing electrical work have a license. Find out about the laws in your area.	This probably doesn't apply in the residence halls because the work is done by Facilities, but definitely will when they are moving into an off-campus house. Often, the houses are older and their electrical system may not be enough to handle the load of today's students.

Electrical Fire Safety	
Message	Why (Minger Foundation)
11.1.3 Keep lamps, light fixtures, and light bulbs away from anything that can burn, including furniture, bedding, curtains, clothing, and flammable or combustible gases and liquids.	Lights generate heat and can start fires. Make sure there is enough room around them and that there is enough airflow to keep them cool.
11.1.4 Use light bulbs that match the recommended wattage on the lamp or fixture.	Light bulbs generate heat. If you use a light bulb that has a greater wattage than the light is designed for it may cause things to melt or start a fire.
11.1.5 If a fuse blows or a circuit breaker trips often, find out why and correct the problem. Have a qualified electrician inspect and fix it.	This means there is a problem, somewhere, in the electrical system that needs to be fixed before it causes a fire.
11.1.6 Always replace blown fuses with ones of the proper rating. If the problem continues, call an electrician.	You might be tempted to replace a fuse with a higher rating to avoid it blowing out again, but this is very dangerous. That means that there is LESS protection, not more and that whatever caused it to blow in the first place can possibly start a fire.
11.1.7 Major appliances (refrigerators, stoves, washers, dryers, etc.) should be plugged directly into a receptacle outlet. Never use an extension cord with a major appliance as it can overload the cord and cause the flexible covering to catch fire.	Major appliances draw a lot of power. An extension cord, especially if it is the wrong size, can overheat because of the overload of electricity going through it, causing a fire.

Electrical Fire Safety	
Message	Why (Minger Foundation)
11.1.8 Window air conditioners should be plugged directly into a wall outlet. Many manufacturers of room air conditioners prohibit the use of extension cords. If the manufacturer's instructions allow extension cords, follow the instructions for the proper type.	Air conditioners also draw a lot of power. For the same reason given above, they should not be plugged into extension cords.
11.1.10 Check electrical cords often. Replace cracked, damaged, and loose electrical or extension cords. Do not try to repair them.	The insulation on an extension cord can decay over time, especially if it is overloaded which causes it to heat up. Don't fix it...replace it.
11.1.11 Avoid putting cords where they can be damaged or pinched by furniture, under rugs and carpets, or across doorways.	All of this can cause an extension cord to become damaged which may allow the wires inside to come into contact with each other, causing a short, causing a fire. Also, wires across doorways are tripping hazards.
11.1.12 Use only surge protectors or power strips that have internal overload protection. Use surge protectors or power strips that have the label of a recognized testing laboratory.	This is just like having a small circuit breaker that will protect your equipment in case of an overload.
11.1.13 Extension cords are for temporary use only. Have a qualified electrician determine if additional circuits or outlets are needed.	You should not rely on extension cords for long periods of time. If you need more outlets or circuits added, have an electrician take a look at it.

Electrical Fire Safety	
Message	Why (Minger Foundation)
11.1.14 Replace outlets if plugs do not fit snugly or the outlet does not accept plugs with one blade larger than the other.	A loose plug in an outlet can cause sparking which can lead to a fire. Also, today's plugs are often polarized which means one blade is larger than the other to make sure they go into the socket with the right alignment.
11.1.15 Cover outlets and wall switches with wall plates to prevent shocks.	This way there are no exposed wires that can accidentally be touched.
11.1.17 Call a qualified electrician if you have any of the following: (A) recurring problems with blowing fuses or tripping circuit breakers (B) a tingling feeling when you touch an electrical appliance (C) discolored or warm wall outlets or switches (D) a burning smell or rubbery odor coming from an appliance (E) flickering lights (F) sparks from an outlet (G) cracked or broken outlets	These are definitely signs of significant problems that need to be fixed!
11.1.9 Ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) reduce the risk of shock. GFCIs shut off electricity when it becomes a shock hazard. Make sure GFCIs are installed in bathrooms, basements, garages, outdoors, at kitchen counters and in other locations in the home where electricity is near water.	These are often required by code in homes. If your home does not have them in areas where there is water (bathrooms, kitchen, basements) it doesn't take much to get them installed. It is relatively easy but should be done by an electrician to make sure it is done right.

Additional Resources

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Escape Planning

THE TAKE-AWAY –

KNOW TWO WAYS OUT, NO MATTER WHERE YOU ARE. YOUR DORM, HOUSE, APARTMENT, CLASSROOM, RESTAURANT, MOVIE THEATER. YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN AN EMERGENCY WILL HAPPEN.

It is so important to know how to get out, whenever an emergency occurs. If the students don't remember anything else you tell them, they should

remember this – know two ways out.

Educational Messages

The following are some tips and information that you can use for floor meetings or in making up bulletin boards. There is a lot more to know that you can learn by visiting the links below after the tips.

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Escape Planning	
Message	Why (Minger Foundation)
4.1.5 Know at least two ways out of every room, if possible. Make sure all doors and windows that lead outside open easily.	In some rooms, your bedroom for example, the second way out might be through a window. Make sure you can open it, make sure it hasn't been painted shut, make sure it is big enough for you to climb through. If you are on an upper floor, you can buy an escape ladder so that you can climb down. If your room is in a basement, make sure your second way out is not blocked by stuff on the inside of your house or by snow on the outside. Also, are the basement windows big enough that you can climb out of them if you need to?
4.1.6 Windows with security bars, grills, and window guards should have emergency release devices.	What good is a second way out if you can't use it? Make sure the release works by testing it periodically and so you know how it works when you have to use it during an emergency.
4.1.9 Have an outside meeting place (something permanent, like a tree, light pole, or mailbox) a safe distance in front of the home.	This is so that you can make sure everyone has gotten out safely. If someone is missing, do not go back into the house, let the fire department know IMMEDIATELY that someone is missing and where they might be.

Escape Planning	
Message	Why (Minger Foundation)
4.1.10 Make sure your house number can be seen day or night from the street.	You would be amazed at how many houses do NOT have their numbers on them. This just makes it that much harder for emergency responders to quickly find your address when there is an emergency.
4.1.12 Have a plan for everyone in your home who has a disability.	It is important that everyone knows what to do during an emergency, and if someone has a disability, you might need to make additional plans to accommodate their needs.
4.2.1 When the smoke alarm sounds, get out fast. You may have only seconds to escape safely.	Fire spreads incredibly fast, most people just don't understand how fast and they think they have more time to get out than they really do. When you hear the alarm, get up, get out, stay out.
4.2.2 If there is smoke blocking your door or first way out, use your second way out.	This is why it is so important to have identified a second way out BEFORE the emergency happens. That is also why it is important to do this when you go into a nightclub, restaurant, movie theater, classroom. Wherever you go, always know what your second way out is. In some cases, it might not be a door but a window.
4.2.3 Smoke is toxic. If you must escape through smoke, get low and go under the smoke to your way out.	By staying low to the floor, the air is cleaner and clearer. If you go low and it is too smokey, don't try to go through it. Go back or use your second way out.

Escape Planning	
Message	Why (Minger Foundation)
4.2.4 Before opening a door, feel the doorknob and door. If either is hot, leave the door closed and use your second way out.	This means that there might be a fire on the other side or that it is too hot for you to survive. Do not take the chance.
4.2.5 If there is smoke coming around the door, leave the door closed and use your second way out.	This means that there is fire and smoke on the other side of the door and you might not be able to make your way through it.
4.2.6 If you open a door, open it slowly. Be ready to shut it quickly if heavy smoke or fire is present.	Even though a door may feel cool, there could still be a lot of smoke on the other side. Smoke travels far from a fire.
4.2.7 If you can't get to someone needing assistance, leave the home and call 9-1-1 or the fire department. Tell the emergency operator where the person is located.	Don't become trapped yourself. You might be able to help that person the most by getting out and calling for help. By trying to go to their aid, you could be overcome and now there are two people trapped.
4.2.9 If you can't get out, close the door and cover vents and cracks around doors with cloth or tape to keep smoke out. Call 9-1-1 or your fire department. Say where you are and signal for help at the window with a light-colored cloth or a flashlight.	Sometimes it might be safer to not try to move through the smoke. Get in a room, close the door, seal it up if you can, call 911, and go to a window and signal for help.

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Fire Sprinklers

**THE TAKE-AWAY FIRE
SPRINKLERS SAVE LIVES BY
PUTTING OUT THE FIRE
QUICKLY.**

Fire sprinklers can react automatically within seconds of a fire, putting it out or controlling it and stopping the fire and smoke, saving lives.

Fire sprinklers can be installed in just about any building, a residence hall, an apartment building or a home. Living in a building with a sprinkler system and smoke alarms dramatically increases your chances of surviving a fire. Dramatically.

When fire fighters show up on the scene, they are going to be using hoselines that discharge at least 250 gallons per minute. Two sprinkler heads will discharge about 26 gallons per minute and will be working faster to control the fire, often within minutes.

You don't often hear about fires that were put out by sprinklers because they aren't newsworthy, nothing dramatic happened. Or, if you do, the story is about all of the water damage that happened. What is often overlooked is how much damage, injuries or even deaths might have happened if the fire had not been controlled by sprinklers.

Remember, you can dry things out. You can't unburn them.

NOTES

Not all residence halls are outfitted with automatic fire sprinklers.
Look up, do you see what looks like one of these?



This is a type of sprinkler that you might see on your ceiling.



This is another type of sprinkler head that is recessed and covered by a plate to help conceal it.



This is the type of sprinkler that you might see on a wall.

Educational Messages

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Fire Sprinklers	
Message	Why (Minger Foundation)
2.1.1 Sprinklers protect lives and property by keeping fires small. Because the sprinkler system reacts so quickly, it can dramatically reduce the heat, flames, and smoke produced in a fire, allowing people more time to escape safely.	A fire sprinkler can activate within seconds of a fire breaking out and either put it out or stop it from growing. This stops the smoke from being produced which is what kills four out of five people in fires - smoke inhalation.

Fire Sprinklers	
Message	Why (Minger Foundation)
2.1.2 Sprinklers activate individually. Only the sprinkler closest to the fire will activate, spraying water directly on the fire and not the rest of the home.	Despite what you see in the movies, not all of the sprinklers go off at once. Most of the time it only takes one or two sprinklers to put out or control a fire.
2.1.3 A sprinkler will control or put out a fire with a tiny fraction of the water that would be used by fire department hoses.	A fire hose puts out about 250 gallons per minute. Two fire sprinklers puts out about 26 gallons per minutes, or ten times less than a fire hose. And, it reacts faster, saving lives and protecting property. You can always dry things out...you can't unburn them.
2.1.4 Accidental sprinkler discharges are extremely rare.	It really just doesn't happen in a system that is properly designed and installed.
2.1.5 Home fire sprinklers can be installed in new or existing homes. If you are remodeling or building your home, install a home fire sprinkler system.	Any home can be retrofitted with a fire sprinkler system.
2.1.6 It is especially important to install a home fire sprinkler system in homes with person who may not be able to get out without help, such as people with disabilities, young children, or older adults.	People with disabilities, young children and older adults may need more time to get out...or just may not be able to get out unassisted. A fire sprinkler provides them with an unparalleled level of fire safety.

Additional Resources

If you are looking for some additional posters or information to use for your floor meetings or bulletin boards, you might visit the resources listed below.

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 - [Smoke alarms](#)
 - [10 Easy Tips on Smoke Alarms](#) (PDF Poster English)
 - [10 Easy Tips on Smoke Alarms](#) (PDF Poster Spanish)
 - [Campus Fire Safety](#)
 - [Candles](#)
 - [Cooking](#)
 - [Escape planning](#)
 - [Fire Sprinklers](#)
- National Fire Protection Association
 - [Smoke alarms](#) PDF poster
 - [Fast Facts About Smoke Alarms](#)
 - Campus and Dorm Fire Safety Tips [web site](#) or [poster](#) (PDF)
 - [Candles](#) web site or [PDF](#) poster
 - [Cooking](#) web site or [PDF](#) poster
 - [Escape planning](#) [PDF](#) poster
 - Smoking fire safety [web site](#) or [poster](#) (PDF)
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- [Minger Foundation](#) A site focusing on fire safety for college students and students with disabilities. There are a number of videos and other resources on this web site to help you.
- [Campus Firewatch](#) A site devoted to campus fire safety. There are a number of resources on this site including an information sheet on fatal fires, maps of fatal fires and much more.

Smoke alarms

THE TAKE-AWAY –

**SMOKE ALARMS CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE,
BUT ONLY IF THEY ARE WORKING. DO
NOT MESS WITH THEM.**

There is no question about it, smoke alarms are an incredibly effective tool in helping save lives. They are inexpensive, easy to

install and, quite simply, they work.

The following is some information you can use in talking with your students about smoke detectors, smoke alarms and fire sprinklers. Your residence hall probably has smoke detectors in a number of places...in the lobbies, in the hallways and probably in the individual rooms.

- They are designed to detect smoke early in a fire and sound a warning for people living in the building.
- There are two type of fire alarm systems, and you should check with your administration as to what type you have in your building.
 - One type will sound an alarm in the building and also send a signal to what is called a monitoring station, such as physical plant, security or the police department. This alerts the residents to start evacuating and also alerts the emergency services to begin responding. This is the more common type found on many campuses.
 - The second is what we call a local system where only an alarm sounds in the building to alert everyone to start evacuating. Someone then has to call the campus emergency number to let them know that there is an alarm sounding in the building.
- There are smoke detectors and smoke alarms...they are kind of the same, but different.
 - A smoke detector senses smoke and then sends an electronic signal to the fire alarm system which, in turn, sounds the alarm in the building.

This is typically what you will find in the hallways of your residence hall, for example. It has to be connected to a fire alarm system to work.

- A smoke alarm is a stand-alone device, typically what is found in your home. When it senses smoke it makes a loud sound, alerting you. It may be connected to other smoke alarms in the house so that they sound an alarm as well.
- Smoke detectors and smoke alarms depend upon sensing smoke in the air...essentially they “smell” the air. If a smoke alarm is covered or blocked, it can’t detect the smoke and can’t sound an alarm.

DON'T COVER THEM! Why? By doing this you are putting yourself and those around you in danger because the smoke alarm might not go off if there is a fire in your room! You might not get out and the smoke might trap others.

Educational Messages

The following are some tips and information that you can use for floor meetings or in making up bulletin boards. There is a lot more to know that you can learn by visiting the links below after the tips.

Unless indicated otherwise, the numbered tips were taken from the National Fire Protection Association’s document “[NFPA Educational Messages 2011 Edition](#).” The Minger Foundation has added some information explaining the rationale behind the fire safety messages.

Smoke Alarms	
Message	Why (Minger Foundation)
Do not tamper with the smoke alarms in your room. (MHM)	If you do, it may not work, it may not save your life and you may be putting those around you in danger

Smoke Alarms	
Message	Why (Minger Foundation)
1.1.1 Working smoke alarms save lives, cutting the risk of dying in a home fire in half. Smoke alarms should be installed and maintained in every home, apartment and residence hall.	A working smoke alarm will give you the early warning you need to get up and get out. Did you know that most fatal fires happen at night? Many of these fatal fires did not have working smoke alarms. The smoke probably won't wake you up - in fact, the carbon monoxide in the smoke may very well push you into a deeper sleep.
1.2.1 Smoke alarms should be installed in every sleeping room, outside each separate sleeping area, and on every level of the residence including the basement. Larger homes may require additional smoke alarms to provide a minimum level of protection.	You never know where the fire will break out. Having just one smoke alarm on a floor just doesn't give you enough protection or warning.
1.2.2 For the best protection, interconnect all smoke alarms throughout the residence. When one sounds, they all sound.	If a smoke alarm in your basement goes off and you are sleeping on the second floor, will you hear it? Chances are, no. That is why you should have interconnected smoke alarms. They now make wireless smoke alarms that connect together.

Smoke Alarms	
Message	Why (Minger Foundation)
1.2.4 An ionization smoke alarm is generally more responsive to flaming fires, and a photoelectric smoke alarm is generally more responsive to smoldering fires. For the best protection or where extra time is needed to awaken or assist others, both types of alarms or combination ionization and photoelectric alarms, also known as dual sensor smoke alarms, are recommended.	When you are looking at smoke alarms to install, there are two types, ionization which is better at detecting flaming fires and photoelectric which is better at detecting smoldering fires. The leading cause of fatal fires in the United States is smoking fires which often start as smoldering fires.
1.2.6 Smoke alarms should be installed away from the kitchen to prevent false alarms. Generally, they should be at least 10 feet (3 meters) from a cooking appliance.	If you have a smoke alarm too close to where you are cooking, it might go off needlessly. Make sure it is far enough away that normal cooking smoke doesn't set it off. Any smoke alarm within 20 feet of a kitchen should be a photoelectric smoke alarm. They are not as likely to be set off by cooking smoke.
1.2.7 A smoke alarm installed between 10 and 20 feet (3 and 6 meters) of a cooking appliance must be a photoelectric type or have a hush feature, which temporarily reduces the sensitivity of the alarm.	You don't want a smoke alarm too close to the cooking because you might set it off needlessly. Photoelectric smoke alarms are less prone to be set off by cooking smoke.
1.3.1 Test smoke alarms at least once a month using the test button.	You need to know that the battery in your smoke alarm is still working. By pushing the test button once a month you can make sure.

Smoke Alarms	
Message	Why (Minger Foundation)
1.3.2 Make sure everyone in the home understands the warning of the smoke alarm and knows how to respond.	This all comes down to practicing so you know what to do in the middle of the night when the alarm sounds.
1.3.3 To keep smoke alarms working well, follow the manufacturer's instructions for cleaning. The instructions are included in the package, or can be found on the Internet.	Believe it or not, smoke alarms do get dirty and when they do they can go off needlessly. You can clean them by vacuuming them or blowing out the dust and dirt in them. Read the manufacturer's instructions to know more.
1.4.1 Smoke alarms and alert devices, called accessories, are available for people who are deaf. Strobe lights throughout the home are activated by smoke alarms and alert people who are deaf to fire conditions. When people who are deaf are asleep, a high intensity strobe light is required along with a pillow or bed shaker to wake them up and alert them to fire conditions so they can escape. Currently this equipment is activated by the sound of a standard smoke alarm.	This equipment exists and can be easily installed in a home. Some of it may need an electrician but there are also stand-alone devices that can be purchased and will be activated by a standard smoke alarm.
1.5.1 Smoke alarms with non-replaceable (long-life) batteries are designed to remain effective for up to 10 years. If the alarm chirps, warning that the battery is low, replace the entire smoke alarm right away.	This is a good way to go. You never have to replace the battery and your smoke alarms should be replaced every 10 years anyways.

Smoke Alarms	
Message	Why (Minger Foundation)
1.5.2 For smoke alarms with any other type of battery, replace batteries at least once a year. If that alarm chirps, replace only the battery.	If your smoke alarm does not have a long-life battery, the battery is only expected to last one year. Make sure you replace it once a year. A good reminder is to do it in the fall..."Change your clock, change your battery."
1.6.1 Replace all smoke alarms when they are 10 years old.	Smoke alarms don't last forever. They get dirty and don't operate as well. And, technology changes. After 10 years, you need a new smoke alarm.
1.6.2 Immediately replace any smoke alarm that does not respond properly when tested.	If you test it and it doesn't work and you have replaced the battery and it STILL doesn't go off, that means the alarm is not working...replace the smoke alarm.
1.7.1 All rental units need working smoke alarms.	In many communities and states, the landlord is REQUIRED to provide smoke alarms in rental units. Even if he or she isn't required to, having working smoke alarms just makes sense. Install them yourself.
1.7.3 If you rent and do not have working smoke alarms, contact your landlord or property manager immediately to have them installed.	No matter where you live, a house or an apartment, having a smoke alarm can help save your life. Most places require smoke alarms in rental property and not having one puts you at risk.

Smoke Alarms	
Message	Why (Minger Foundation)
1.7.3.1 If, after you have contacted your landlord or property manager, smoke alarms remain uninstalled, contact your local fire or building department. Some fire departments may install smoke alarms for you.	For a very small price you can install smoke alarms yourself in your house or apartment. Just because the landlord won't do it, don't put yourself at risk.
1.7.4 Advise your landlord or property manager if the smoke alarms are not working. The battery or the entire unit must be replaced.	As soon as you know your smoke alarm isn't working it should be replaced immediately. The sooner you contact your landlord, the sooner this can happen.
1.7.5 Test smoke alarms at least once a month using the test button.	Pushing the test button lets you know that the battery still works.
1.7.6 Make sure everyone in the home knows the sound and understands the warning of the smoke alarm and knows how to respond.	When the emergency happens, knowing what to do, having practiced what to do, can make all of the difference.
1.7.7 Dust or vacuum smoke alarms annually and/or whenever the battery is changed. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for cleaning.	Believe it or not, smoke alarms do need to be cleaned, they pick up dust. The dust can make the smoke alarm less sensitive.

Additional Resources

If you are looking for some additional posters or information to use for your floor meetings or bulletin boards, you might visit the resources listed below.

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Smoking

THE TAKE-AWAY –

FIRES STARTED BY SMOKING MATERIALS IS THE LEADING CAUSE OF FATAL FIRES ACROSS THE NATION.

Even though smoking might be banned in your residence hall, the students who do smoke need to know how to do it

safely, especially for when they move off-campus. Even if they don't smoke, they might have roommates or guests that do.

Educational Messages

The following are some tips and information that you can use for floor meetings or in making up bulletin boards. There is a lot more to know that you can learn by visiting the links below after the tips.

Unless indicated otherwise, the numbered tips were taken from the National Fire Protection Association's document "[NFPA Educational Messages 2011 Edition](#)." The Minger Foundation has added some information explaining the rationale behind the fire safety messages.

Smoking	
Message	Why (Minger Foundation)
10.1.1 If you smoke, use only fire-safe cigarettes.	These are new cigarettes that will self-extinguish if they are not being used. They help to REDUCE the chance of starting a fire, but they do NOT eliminate it. All 50 states allow only this type of cigarettes to be sold.

Smoking	
Message	Why (Minger Foundation)
10.1.2 To prevent a deadly cigarette fire, you must be alert. you won't be alert if you are sleepy, have taken medicine or drugs that make you drowsy, or have consumed alcohol.	The leading cause of fatal fires is cigarettes. If you can't safely smoke a cigarette because you are sleepy or are under the influence of drugs or alcohol, don't smoke. You might start a fire or, if one does break out, you may not be able to react to it properly.
10.1.3 If you smoke, smoke outside.	This reduces the chances of you accidentally starting a fire inside a building. However, you have to be careful to properly dispose of your cigarette - do not throw it into something that can catch fire like dried grass, bark mulch, trash, etc.
10.1.4 Never smoke in bed.	Why? Because you can easily set the bed on fire or fall asleep while smoking!
10.1.6 Wherever you smoke, use deep, sturdy ashtrays. If ashtrays are not available, use a metal can or pail. Never empty smoking material directly into a trash can. Place away from anything that can burn.	So many fires start when people improvise ashtrays or use a combustible ashtray such as a plastic bottle, or a paper cup. Think about it.
10.1.7 Do not discard cigarettes in vegetation, potted plants or landscaping, peat moss, dried grasses, mulch, leaves, and other similar items which can easily catch fire.	It is so easy to start a fire outside with a carelessly discarded cigarette and it happens every single day. Think about where you are throwing out your cigarette (besides the fact that you are littering as well!).

Smoking	
Message	Why (Minger Foundation)
10.1.8 Before you throw out butts and ashes, make sure they are out. Put them out in water or sand.	A smoldering cigarette in a trashcan has been the start of many a fire. Make sure they are dead out.
10.1.9 Before going to bed, check under furniture cushions and around places where people smoke for cigarette butts that may have fallen out of sight.	One of the leading causes of fatal fires in off-campus housing has been couch fires on front porches. Do you know how many of these started? Careless disposal of smoking materials.

Additional Resources

If you are looking for some additional posters or information to use for your floor meetings or bulletin boards, you might visit the resources listed below.

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- [Campus Firewatch](#) A site devoted to campus fire safety. There are a number of resources on this site including an information sheet on fatal fires, maps of fatal fires and much more.

Fire Safety Posters

The Minger Foundation has developed a series of posters that you can download for free from www.mingerfoundation.org/projects/ra and use on your bulletin boards. The QR code on the poster will take you to web pages that have more information about fire safety, stories on the fires pictured and links to short videos with students and RAs talking about fire safety.

Basketball and Soccer Posters

These posters can be downloaded at www.mingerfoundation.org/projects/ra

 <p>THE BEST DEFENSE IS A GOOD OFFENSE.</p> <p>Smoke alarms are part of your line of defense against fires. But they can't save your life if they can't do their job. Don't tamper with them!</p>  <p>Learn More</p> <p>MHM Michael H. Minger FOUNDATION</p> <p>www.mingerfoundation.org www.facebook.com/mingerfoundation</p> 	 <p>THE BEST DEFENSE IS A GOOD OFFENSE.</p> <p>Smoke alarms are part of your line of defense against fires if you are living off-campus. But they can't save your life if they can't do their job. Install them, test them, maintain them.</p>  <p>Learn More</p> <p>MHM Michael H. Minger FOUNDATION</p> <p>www.mingerfoundation.org www.facebook.com/mingerfoundation</p> 
 <p>THE BEST DEFENSE IS A GOOD OFFENSE.</p> <p>Smoke alarms are part of your line of defense against fires if you are living off-campus. But they can't save your life if they can't do their job. Install them, test them, maintain them.</p>  <p>Learn More</p> <p>MHM Michael H. Minger FOUNDATION</p> <p>www.mingerfoundation.org www.facebook.com/mingerfoundation</p> 	 <p>THE BEST DEFENSE IS A GOOD OFFENSE.</p> <p>Smoke alarms are part of your line of defense against fires. But they can't save your life if they can't do their job. Don't tamper with them!</p>  <p>Learn More</p> <p>MHM Michael H. Minger FOUNDATION</p> <p>www.mingerfoundation.org www.facebook.com/mingerfoundation</p> 

MHM
Michael H. Minger
FOUNDATION
RA Guide to Teaching Fire Safety

NOTES

The QR codes on the posters lead the viewer to a web page with this material on it.

URL: www.mingerfoundation.org/defense

Watch these videos to learn more about [smoke alarms](#) and [escape planning](#).



A student died in this fire. The smoke alarms had been taken down before the fire and the only working smoke alarm was in the basement.

To know...

- You need to know this information for when you are visiting friends who live off-campus and for when you move out of the residence halls.
- This is only some of what you need to know. There is more information online at the links below.
- Over four out of five of the campus-related fire fatalities and injuries happen off-campus. Think about this when you are visiting someone's house.
- What you learn here can save lives...yours, your friends, your roommates
- Escape Planning
 - Always know two ways out, wherever you are.
 - The way you came in might be blocked when you try to get out.
 - Your second way out might be something like a window.
- Automatic Fire Sprinklers
 - Fire sprinklers save lives –they are a powerful line of defense in fighting fire.
 - They can put out the fire within seconds, long before any fire department can get there.
 - Despite what you see in the movies, only one or two sprinklers will go off and they will put out the fire.
- Smoke alarms
 - Smoke alarms in the residence halls, you don't need to worry about testing them. Facilities will do that.
 - Do NOT cover them with anything. It puts you and everyone around you in danger if they can't do their job.
 - When you move off-campus, make sure you have working smoke alarms in your home. They can help save your life.

Action steps

- Smoke alarms - install them, test them, maintain them. They can't save your life if they can't do their job. If you don't have them, for the price of a pizza you can buy a smoke alarm.
- Escape Planning - Know two ways out, no matter where you are. Your second way out may be a window. Be ready, know what to do before the emergency.

There is a lot more that you can know to be fire safe. For more information, visit these links.

- United States Fire Administration
 - [Smoke alarms](#)
 - [10 Easy Tips on Smoke Alarms](#) (PDF Poster English)
 - [10 Easy Tips on Smoke Alarms](#) (PDF Poster Spanish)
- National Fire Protection Association
 - [Smoke alarms](#) PDF poster
 - [Fast Facts About Smoke Alarms](#)
- [Minger Foundation](#)
 - Campus Fire Safety Information Sheet (to be uploaded)

Pizza

You can download this poster at
www.mingerfoundation.org/projects/ra



**SAFETY ISN'T
EXPENSIVE...
IT'S PRICELESS.**

For the price of a pizza, a smoke alarm can protect you, your friends and your roommates.
Install them, test them, maintain them.



The QR code on the poster will take the viewer to a web page with this material on it.

URL: www.mingerfoundation.org/pizza

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NOTES

For the price of a pizza you can have the protection of a smoke alarm.

Watch these videos to learn more about [smoke alarms](#) and [escape planning](#).



Three students died in this fire. It was reported that there insufficient smoke alarms throughout the apartment complex.

To know...

- You need to know this information for when you are visiting friends who live off-campus and for when you move out of the residence halls.
- This is only some of what you need to know. There is more information online at the links below.
- Over four out of five of the campus-related fire fatalities and injuries happen off-campus. Think about this when you are visiting someone's house, apartment, fraternity or sorority.
- What you learn here can save lives...yours, your friends, your roommates
- Escape Planning
 - Always know two ways out, wherever you are.
 - The way you came in might be blocked when you try to get out.
 - Your second way out might be something like a window.
- Automatic Fire Sprinklers
 - Fire sprinklers save lives
 - They can put out the fire within seconds, long before any fire department can get there.
 - Despite what you see in the movies, only one or two sprinklers will go off and they will put out the fire.
- Smoke alarms
 - Smoke alarms in the residence halls, you don't need to worry about testing them. Facilities will do that.
 - Do NOT cover them with anything. It puts you and everyone around you in danger if they can't do their job.
 - When you move off-campus, make sure you have working smoke alarms in your home. They can help save your life.

Action steps

- Smoke alarms - install them, test them, maintain them. They can't save your life if they can't do their job. If you don't have them, for the price of a pizza you can have a smoke alarm.
- Escape Planning - Know two ways out, no matter where you are. Your second way out may be a window. Be ready, know what to do before the emergency.

There is a lot more that you can know to be fire safe. For more information, visit these links.

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 - Campus Fire Safety Information Sheet (to be uploaded)

Cause

You can download this poster at
www.mingerfoundation.org/projects/ra



The QR code on this poster will take the viewer to a web page with this content on it. In turn, they can then go to pages with the back story on each of the three incidents.

URL: www.mingerfoundation.org/cause

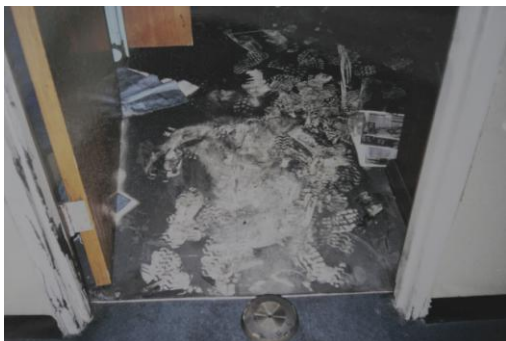
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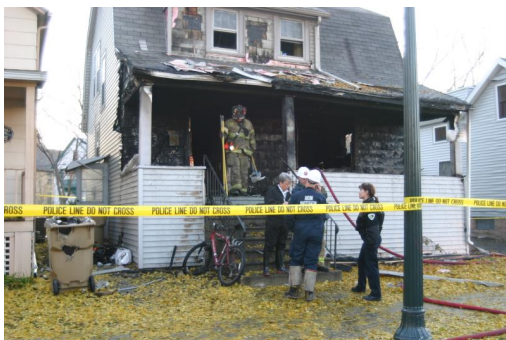
The three fires in this poster all have compelling stories to them.
To learn more, click on the links below.



Fraternity destroyed by candle fire
www.mingerfoundation.org/cause/du



Fatal arson fire in a residence hall
www.mingerfoundation.org/cause/michael



Fatal off-campus fire started by smoking
www.mingerfoundation.org/cause/peter

Fraternity Fire



Every action has a reaction.

Hear their stories.
Learn how to **take action to prevent fire.**

Learn More



www.mingerfoundation.org
www.facebook.com/mingerfoundation



URL: www.mingerfoundation.org/cause

SubURL: www.mingerfoundation.org/cause/du

- Unattended candles can lead to a fire that destroys your books, your schoolwork - or kills someone.
- Covered smoke alarms put everyone in danger. What may seem like a simple act can kill.

The Story

At about 2:00 in the afternoon, one of the fraternity brothers woke up and, realizing he was late for class, jumped out of bed and in the process threw his blankets over a burning candle. He ran out of the house to catch the bus and by the time he looked back he could see the fire coming out of his bedroom window. Someone in the house saw the fire and called 911 to report the fire but gave an incorrect address. The building's fire alarm system did not activate because the smoke detectors had been covered with plastic so they would not go off during a party they had the night before. The building was destroyed by the fire. When it was rebuilt it was equipped with automatic fire sprinklers.

Watch these videos to learn more about [smoke alarms](#) and [escape planning](#).

Photographs



This fraternity was completely destroyed by a fire that was started by a candle.



All of the smoke detectors had been covered with plastic so they would not go off. This delayed the alarm from activating and sounding a warning.



Schoolwork, computer, books - everything was destroyed.

To know...

- You need to know this information for when you are visiting friends who live off-campus and for when you move out of the residence halls.
- This is only some of what you need to know. There is more information online at the links below.
- Over four out of five of the campus-related fire deaths happen off-campus. Think about this when you are visiting someone's house, apartment, fraternity, sorority.
- What you learn here can save lives...yours, your friends, your roommates
- Candles
 - Do not leave candles burning unattended. Something might get caught on fire and you wouldn't be there to do anything about it.
 - Do not go to sleep with candles burning. They might burn down and set something on fire while you are asleep.
 - One out of three candle fire start in the bedroom.
- Escape Planning
 - Always know two ways out, wherever you are.
 - The way you came in might be blocked when you try to get out.
 - Your second way out might be something like a window.
- Automatic Fire Sprinklers
 - Fire sprinklers save lives –they are a powerful line of defense in fighting fire.
 - They can put out the fire within seconds, long before any fire department can get there.
 - Despite what you see in the movies, only one or two sprinklers will go off and they will put out the fire.
- Smoke alarms
 - Smoke alarms in the residence halls, you don't need to worry about testing them. Facilities will do that.
 - Do NOT cover them with anything. It puts you and everyone around you in danger if they can't do their job.
 - When you move off-campus, make sure you have working smoke alarms in your home. They can help save your life.

Action steps

- Candles - Don't ever leave a candle unattended. It can catch something close by on fire, a curtain or paper may get blown into the candle - you never know what may happen when your back is turned.
- Fire sprinklers - Sprinklers save lives by putting out the fire within seconds. Live in housing with sprinklers
- Smoke alarms - install them, test them, maintain them. They can't save your life if they can't do their job. If you don't have them, for the price of a pizza you can have a smoke alarm.
- Escape planning - Know two ways out, no matter where you are. Your second way out may be a window. Be ready, know what to do before the emergency.

There is a lot more that you can know to be fire safe. For more information, visit these links.

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 - [Fast Facts About Smoke Alarms](#)
 - [Candles](#) web site or [PDF](#) poster
 - [Escape planning](#) [PDF](#) poster
 - [Sprinklers](#) [PDF](#) poster
- [Minger Foundation](#)
 - Campus Fire Safety Information Sheet (to be uploaded)

Michael Minger Fire



www.mingerfoundation.org
www.facebook.com/mingerfoundation



URL: www.mingerfoundation.org/cause

SubURL: www.mingerfoundation.org/cause/michael

One of the leading causes of fires in residence halls is arson. No matter how small a fire, whether it is a bulletin board or a trash can, it can become a fatal fire.



RA Guide to Teaching Fire Safety

NOTES

The Story

My son, Michael Minger, 19, a sophomore, was killed and 14 others were injured in an arson fire that was started when someone poured gasoline in his residence hall hallway and lit it. There were no automatic fire sprinklers in the building and the fire alarm system was not adequate to warn everyone about the fire. Even though this was an arson fire, which is one of the leading causes of fires on campuses, both sprinklers and a proper fire alarm system would have made a difference in the outcome of this fire.

Michael was majoring in Broadcast Journalism and vocal performance. Despite having a learning difference, he was driven to always do his best. He was very serious about his education and had a 3.936 GPA at the time of his death. Michael had a big heart and his hero was his twin sister.

Fire safety is Life Safety. It is so important that you know how to pick fire safe housing, either on- or off-campus, and that you know what to do if an emergency happens, no matter where you are, your residence hall, fraternity, sorority, a restaurant, a movie theater - anywhere. A fire can break out at any time and simply knowing two ways out may make all of the difference.

Remember, fire safety, it's part of living.

Gail Minger

Videos

Watch these videos to learn more about [smoke alarms](#) and [escape planning](#).

Photographs



Michael Minger, 19, in his residence hall



The hallway outside of Michael's room

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RA Guide to Teaching Fire Safety

NOTES



The door of Michael's room where he was found.

To know...

- You need to know this information for when you are visiting friends who live off-campus and for when you move out of the residence halls.
- This is only some of what you need to know. There is more information online at the links below.
- Over four out of five of the campus-related fire deaths happen off-campus. Think about this when you are visiting someone's house, apartment, fraternity, sorority.
- What you learn here can save lives...yours, your friends, your roommates
- Escape Planning
 - Always know two ways out, wherever you are.
 - The way you came in might be blocked when you try to get out.
 - Your second way out might be something like a window.
- Automatic Fire Sprinklers
 - Fire sprinklers save lives –they are a powerful line of defense in fighting fire.
 - They can put out the fire within seconds, long before any fire department can get there.
 - Despite what you see in the movies, only one or two sprinklers will go off and they will put out the fire.
- Smoke alarms
 - Smoke alarms in the residence halls, you don't need to worry about testing them. Facilities will do that.
 - Do NOT cover them with anything. It puts you and everyone around you in danger if they can't do their job.
 - When you move off-campus, make sure you have working smoke alarms in your home. They can help save your life.

Action Steps

- Arson is one of the leading causes of fires in residence halls. If you see something, say something, no matter how small the fire might have been. A bulletin board, a trash can, these might be the start of bigger fires.
- If you hear an alarm, get up, get out. You may have only seconds to react and get out.
- Escape Planning- Always know two ways out, no matter where you are, your residence hall, movie theater, restaurant, friend's house. The way you came in might be blocked and your second way out may be a window. Be ready, know what to do before the emergency.
- Smoke alarms - install them, test them, maintain them. They can't save your life if they can't do their job. For the price of a pizza you can have a smoke alarm.

There is a lot more that you can know to be fire safe. For more information, visit these links.

- United States Fire Administration
 - [Smoke alarms](#)
 - [10 Easy Tips on Smoke Alarms](#) (PDF Poster English)
 - [10 Easy Tips on Smoke Alarms](#) (PDF Poster Spanish)
 - [Escape planning](#)
 - [Fire Sprinklers](#)
- National Fire Protection Association
 - [Smoke alarms](#) PDF poster
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- [Minger Foundation](#)
 - Campus Fire Safety Information Sheet (to be uploaded)

Peter Talen Fire



www.mingerfoundation.org
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www.mingerfoundation.org/cause/peter

Couches on porches are a significant fire risk. A number of fatal fires have been caused when a smoldering cigarette catches the couch on fire in the middle of the night. Do you really need a couch? If you do, before you go to bed, make sure there are no smoldering cigarettes in the cushions or nearby.

The Story

On November 18, 2007, Peter Talen died in an off-campus fire in Madison, Wisconsin, while visiting his brother, Andy, who was attending the University of Wisconsin at Madison. This is his story, as told by his mother, Patty Talen.

Peter had been going to the University of Wisconsin LaCrosse, studying theater. He loved theater since he was very young and had a natural ability. He took a year off and went out to Colorado to do some acting, but came back in October 2007 and was going to return to school in the spring. He hadn't seen Andy since he had left for Colorado so he made a special trip to Madison to visit him. When Peter went to Madison he usually stayed with another friend but this time he stayed over at Andy's house so he could spend more time with him and was sleeping on the couch in the living room.

The fire started on the front porch, in a couch from a discarded cigarette. The fire was spotted when one of Andy's roommates woke up (he doesn't know why) and saw the fire in the front living room. He tried to put it out, but couldn't, and ran to the back of the house and woke up two other people that were asleep. They all became disoriented and went in different directions, trying to get out. Andy wound up having to run through the fire in the front living room and out the front door. He ran around to the back of the house and pulled one of his roommates out of a window.

There had been smoke alarms in the house, but they did not fit the brackets on the ceiling and were, instead, sitting on top of the refrigerator.

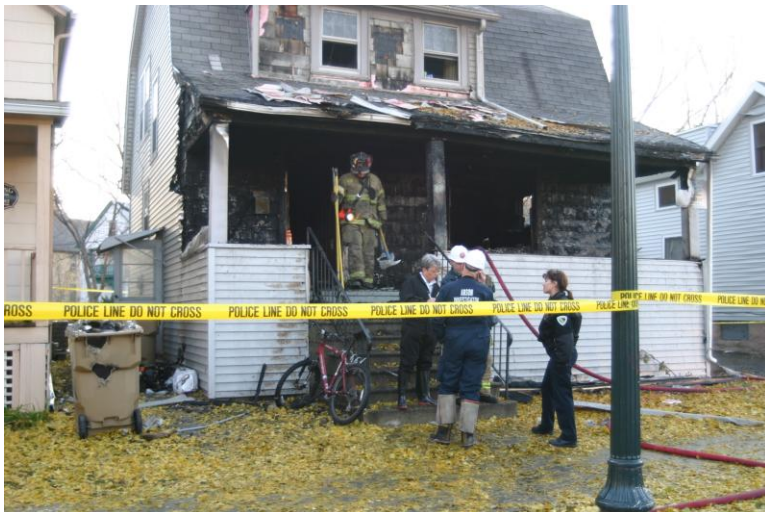
This was a terrible tragedy for everyone, the family, the school and the community. However, out of it came some good. As a result of this fire, Madison passed a progressive ordinance requiring that all rental properties have working smoke alarms. This will make a difference in someone's life, there is no doubt.

Videos

Watch these videos to learn more about [smoke alarms](#) and [escape planning](#).



Peter Talen, 23



The fire started in a couch on the porch and spread into the house. Peter Talen was sleeping on a couch in the living room and was killed by the heat and smoke.



This is all that remains of the couch on the front porch where the fire started.

To know...

- You need to know this information for when you are visiting friends who live off-campus and for when you move out of the residence halls.
- This is only some of what you need to know. There is more information online at the links below.
- Over four out of five of the campus-related fire deaths happen off-campus. Think about this when you are visiting someone's house, apartment, fraternity, sorority.
- What you learn here can save lives...yours, your friends, your roommates
- Smoking
 - This fire was caused by careless disposal of smoking material.
 - Smoldering cigarettes are the leading cause of fatal fires across the United States.
- Couches
 - A number of campus-related fires have started in couches on front porches.
 - These fires were started by a carelessly discarded cigarette and some of these have killed students.
 - The fire breaks out in the middle of the night, the couch gets fully involved and it spreads into the house before anyone knows it.
- Escape Planning
 - Always know two ways out, wherever you are.
 - The way you came in might be blocked when you try to get out.
 - Your second way out might be something like a window.
- Automatic Fire Sprinklers
 - Fire sprinklers save lives –they are a powerful line of defense in fighting fire.
 - They can put out the fire within seconds, long before any fire department can get there.
 - Despite what you see in the movies, only one or two sprinklers will go off and they will put out the fire.
- Smoke alarms
 - Smoke alarms in the residence halls, you don't need to worry about testing them. Facilities will do that.
 - Do NOT cover them with anything. It puts you and everyone around you in danger if they can't do their job.



RA Guide to Teaching Fire Safety

NOTES

- When you move off-campus, make sure you have working smoke alarms in your home. They can help save your life.

Action steps

- Think about whether you really need that couch on your front porch. Not only is it a fire danger, it may be the home to bugs and critters. Do you really want to sit on it?
- Make sure you have proper ashtrays for cigarettes. Do not improvise because an improvised ashtray may fall over, spill cigarettes or may actually catch fire itself. Yes, people have used plastic buckets and plastic cups for ashtrays, believe it or not.
- Make sure all cigarettes are completely out and wet down the ashes in an ashtray before disposing them.
- Check the cushions on couches and chairs, both inside and out on the porch to make sure there isn't a cigarette butt waiting to start a fire during the middle of the night.
- Empty your trash after a party and take it outside, away from the house. If something in it should catch fire, at least it won't spread to the house.
- Smoke alarms - install them, test them, maintain them. They can't save your life if they can't do their job. For the price of a pizza you can have a smoke alarm.
- Escape Planning - Know two ways out, no matter where you are. Your second way out may be a window. Be ready, know what to do before the emergency.

There is a lot more that you can know to be fire safe. For more information, visit these links.

- United States Fire Administration
 - [Smoke alarms](#)
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 - [Escape planning](#)
 - [Fire Sprinklers](#)
- National Fire Protection Association
 - [Smoke alarms](#) PDF poster
 - [Fast Facts About Smoke Alarms](#)
 - [Sprinklers](#) PDF poster
 - Smoking fire safety [web site](#) or [poster](#) (PDF)
- [Minger Foundation](#)
 - Campus Firewatch Information Sheet

Your Room

This poster can be downloaded at
www.mingerfoundation.org/projects/ra



**Don't let this
happen to you.**



www.mingerfoundation.org
www.facebook.com/mingerfoundation



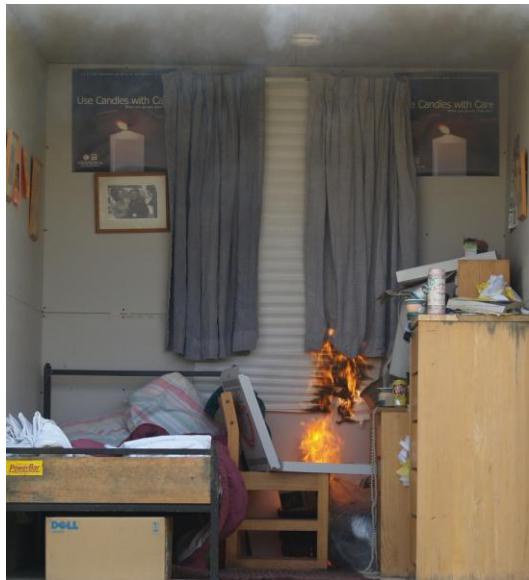
www.mingerfoundation.org/your-room

You can avoid having your room being this room. Learn about fire safety from your RA or from the links below.

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RA Guide to Teaching Fire Safety

NOTES

Watch these videos to learn more about [smoke alarms](#) and [escape planning](#).



A small fire, starting in a trash can...



...can turn into a raging inferno. Gone are your books, clothes, schoolwork, maybe your life.

To know...

- You need to know this information for when you are visiting friends who live off-campus and for when you move out of the residence halls.
- What you learn here can save lives...yours, your friends, your roommates
- This is only some of what you need to know. There is more information online at the links below.
- Candles Never leave candles unattended because they can catch something on fire...and you won't be there to stop it.
- Cooking Most cooking fires start when someone walks away from the stove. Stay with it and if you have to walk away, turn off the stove.
- Electrical Don't overload the outlets. Too many appliances can cause the wiring to heat up, melt and then start a fire.
- Escape planning
 - Always know two ways out, wherever you are.
 - The way you came in might be blocked when you try to get out.
 - Your second way out might be something like a window.
- Automatic Fire Sprinklers
 - Fire sprinklers save lives –they are a powerful line of defense in fighting fire.
 - They can put out the fire within seconds, long before any fire department can get there.
 - Despite what you see in the movies, only one or two sprinklers will go off and they will put out the fire.
- Smoke alarms
 - Smoke alarms in the residence halls, you don't need to worry about testing them. Facilities will do that.

Action Steps

- Know two ways out, wherever you are. When you walk into a restaurant, movie theater, fraternity, sorority, friend's house, take a second, look around. Knowing a second way out may save your life when you least expect it.
- Look for housing that has fire sprinklers. Fire sprinklers save lives –they are a powerful line of defense in fighting fire.
- Make sure smoke alarms are not covered. They can't save your life if they can't do their job.
- Stay with your cooking. If something goes wrong, and you aren't there, you might not be able to fix it until too late.
- Stay with candles whenever they are lit. If something goes wrong, you will be there to fix it right away!
- Use power strips with internal circuit protection that will open if it overloads. This will help prevent overheating.

Additional Resources

There is a lot more that you can know to be fire safe. For more information, visit these links.

- United States Fire Administration
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 - [10 Easy Tips on Smoke Alarms](#) (PDF Poster Spanish)
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