

March, 2013



Dear Students and Parents:

As the excitement of college campus visits begin in earnest this spring and summer, those of us at the Western Springs Fire Department would like to wish you well. We have had the opportunity to educate many of you about fire safety during your grammar school years. Many of the protective measures that have been taught and practiced as a family will now be up to the student to maintain. We hope that you are now ready to be living “on your own” in campus housing. Some of the decisions regarding your safety will be your own and some will be in place at the college or university you decide to attend.

As you visit various colleges or universities we would like you to inquire about the fire detection systems and protocols in place for the fire safety of students. We believe those questions are as valuable as those you are asking to ascertain the academic standards of the institution being considered.

Unfortunately, these questions are not routinely addressed in all college orientations. Asking these questions during your college visits will do more than provide an answer to the fire safety related concerns you have - they will alert college and university administrations to the fact that parents and students are not willing to leave safety to chance.

Since January of 2000, over 114 victims have died in student housing fires across the country. Every year there are deaths as a direct result of fires in residential complexes (dormitory, apartment and fraternity/sorority). Many of these deaths might have been prevented had the concerns listed on the attached checklist been adequately addressed.

The Western Springs Fire Department has developed the attached Power Point presentation, which addresses campus housing fire safety. We hope that you will view it with your student prior to making your college campus visits. We encourage your family to take your “checklist” along to see how the various colleges score on the life safety scale. Please feel free to contact Lt. Chuck Lichtenauer - Director of Public Education with any questions you may have to lichtenauer@wsprings.com.

For additional information on campus fire safety visit **Campus Firewatch** at www.campus-firewatch.com and **the U.S. Fire Administration** at www.usfa.fema.gov.

Sincerely

Chief Patrick Kenny
Western Springs Department of Fire & EMS



“Learning to Live”

A Fire Safety Program for Campus Living

Fire Safety on the college campus



DELTA TAU DELTA
1-9-80
Photo - Jim DeLong
Presented By - Rod Schaeffer

Presented by the Western Springs Fire Dept.

2:39



You must have an internet connection to watch the video. Click video to play

A fire extinguisher is visible in the upper left corner, and a white smoke detector is in the lower left corner. The background is a red and black checkered floor. The text is centered in the middle of the image.

**There are 1,700 fires a year
across the country on
college campuses.**

Don't be a statistic Do your part Be fire safe

News Headlines





March 4, 2012

California Polytechnic



Fire started in a couch on the front porch, which is becoming a significant problem on campuses across the nation. The sole smoke alarm was not working. Nine people were forced to flee from the fire, one having to jump from a second story window and another was forced to crawl through a smoke-filled stairway to escape.



January 22, 2012

Boston University Fire



Fire in an off-Campus house injured all seven occupants who were students at Boston University. Two suffered significant injuries when they were forced to jump from the second story to escape the fire. Cause of the fire is unknown.



May 1, 2001

University of Texas Dormitory

One student killed and another critically injured

Fire broke out at a high-rise apartment complex used by University of Texas students. The fire was confined to a second-floor unit of the two-tower complex, which houses 600 students.



April, 2012

Southern Illinois University 2 Fatalities



A fire in an off-campus house has killed two students. The preliminary investigation points towards a power strip and laptop as the possible cause of the fire. Initial reports are that the smoke alarm did not have a working battery in it.

A photograph of a fire scene. In the foreground, a white smoke detector is visible. In the background, a fire extinguisher is lying on its side, and a fire is burning. The scene is dimly lit, with a red and black checkered pattern on the floor.

October 1996

University of Illinois 1 student injured

A fire broke out in a fraternity house due to a halogen lamp being left on. There was minor smoke and moderate heat damage to the building.

U of I fire cont.

Fraternity house



Hallway outside room of origin



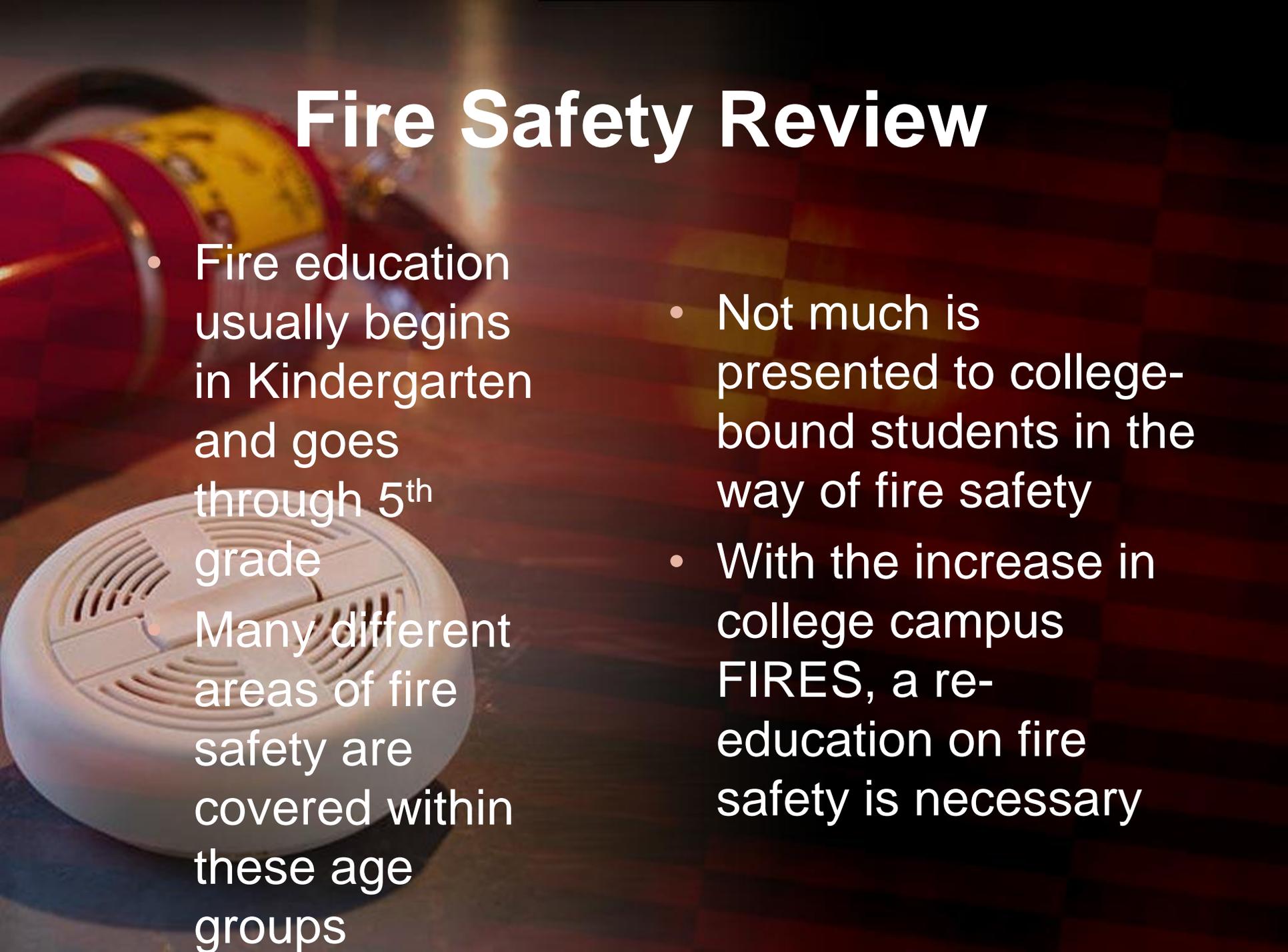
Room of origin



**Attic bedroom with
heavy smoke damage**



Fire Safety Review

The background of the slide features a blurred image of a red fire extinguisher on the left and a white smoke detector in the foreground. The overall color scheme is dark with warm, reddish-brown tones.

- Fire education usually begins in Kindergarten and goes through 5th grade
- Many different areas of fire safety are covered within these age groups
- Not much is presented to college-bound students in the way of fire safety
- With the increase in college campus FIRES, a re-education on fire safety is necessary

**There should be a great
IMPORTANCE placed on
practicing fire safety while
you live on your own for the
first time in any campus
housing!**

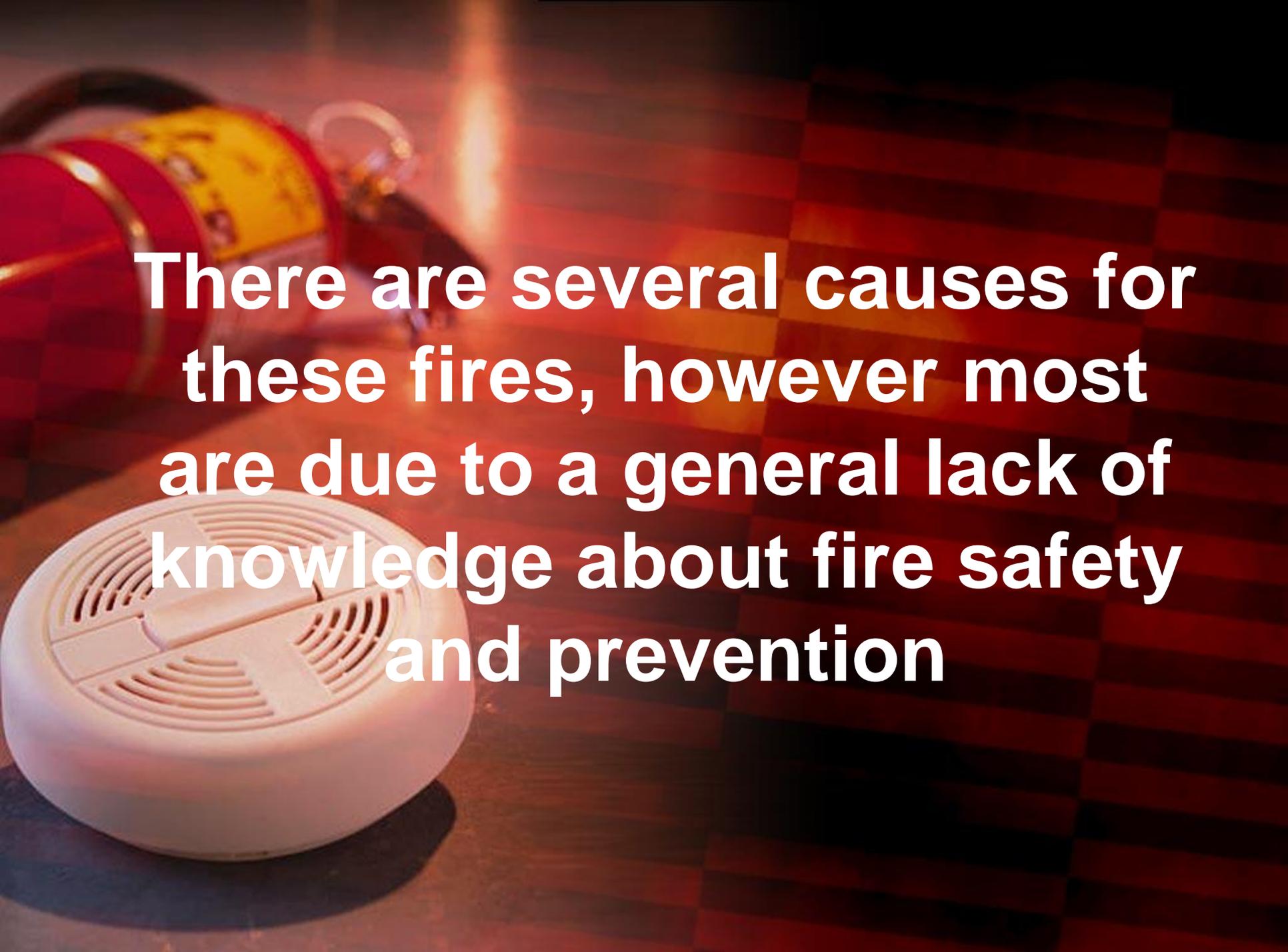


COLLEGE FIRES DO HAPPEN!!!



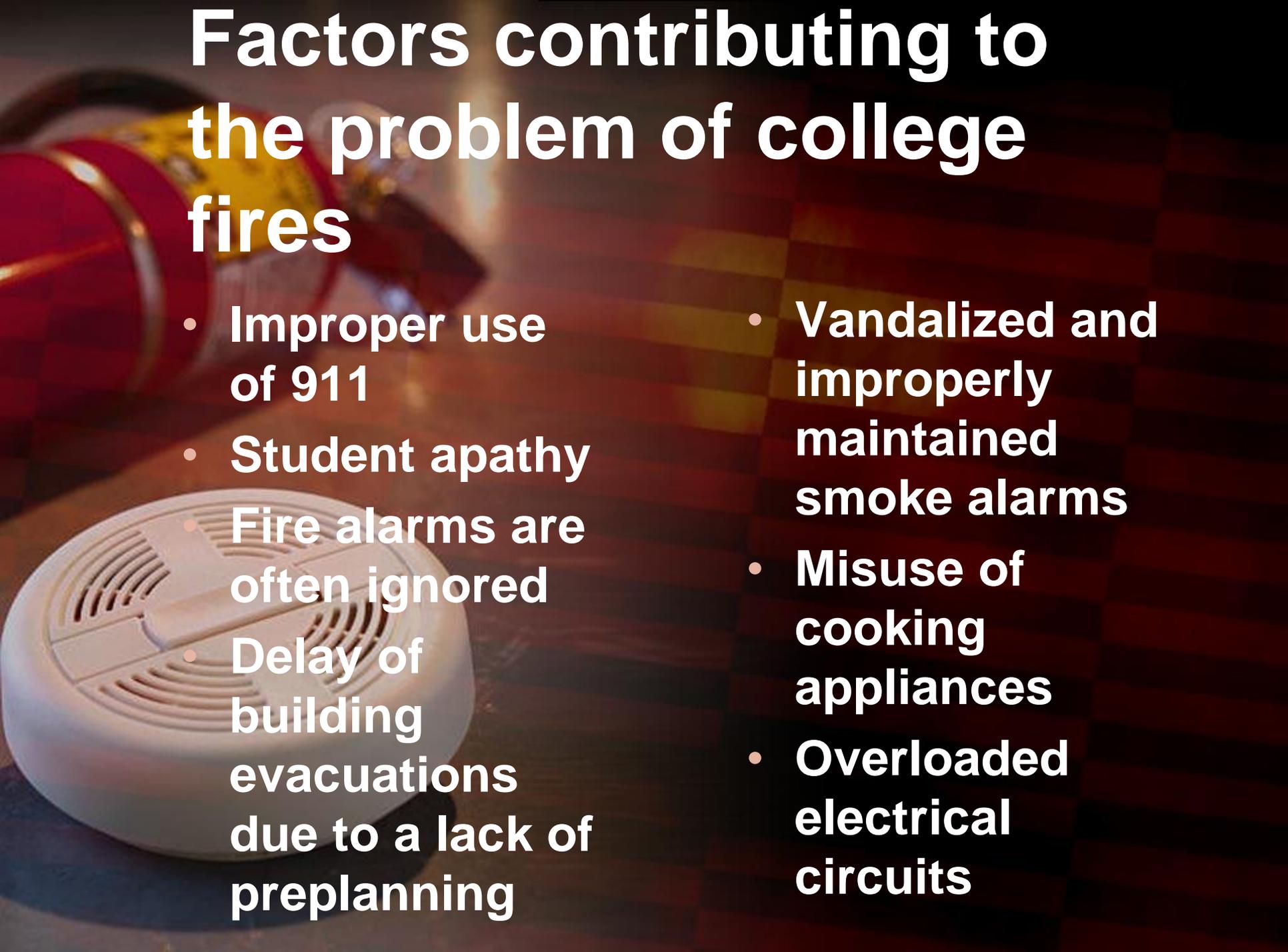
A white, circular smoke detector is positioned in the lower-left foreground on a dark, checkered floor. In the background, a red fire extinguisher lies on its side. The scene is lit with a warm, reddish-orange glow, creating a dramatic and somewhat ominous atmosphere. The word "WHY?" is superimposed in the center of the image in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

WHY?

A fire alarm pull station is in the foreground, and a fire extinguisher is in the background. The background is a red and black checkered pattern.

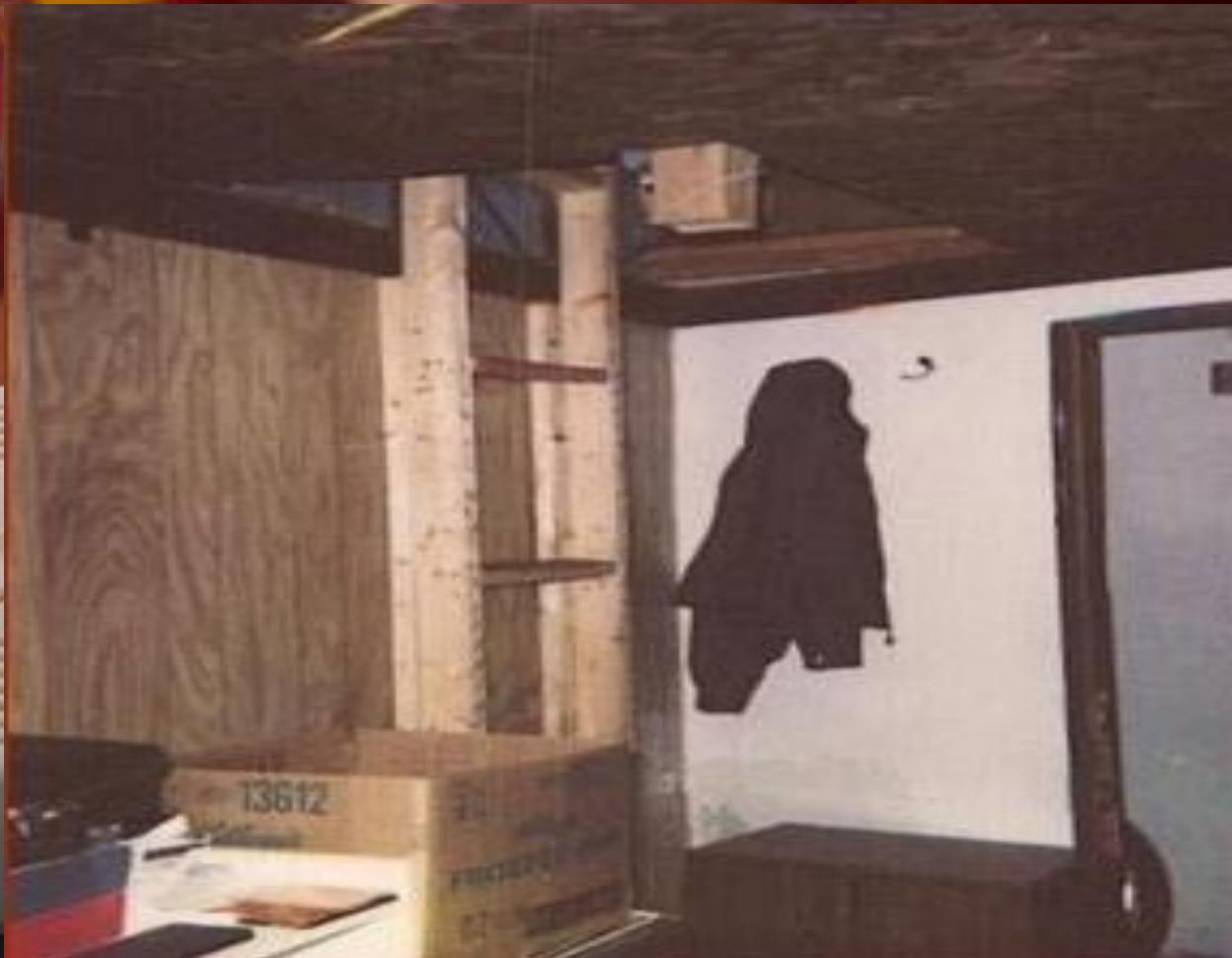
There are several causes for these fires, however most are due to a general lack of knowledge about fire safety and prevention

Factors contributing to the problem of college fires



- Improper use of 911
- Student apathy
- Fire alarms are often ignored
- Delay of building evacuations due to a lack of preplanning
- Vandalized and improperly maintained smoke alarms
- Misuse of cooking appliances
- Overloaded electrical circuits

- Occupancies being altered without permits or inspections



- Décor is often altered or excessive



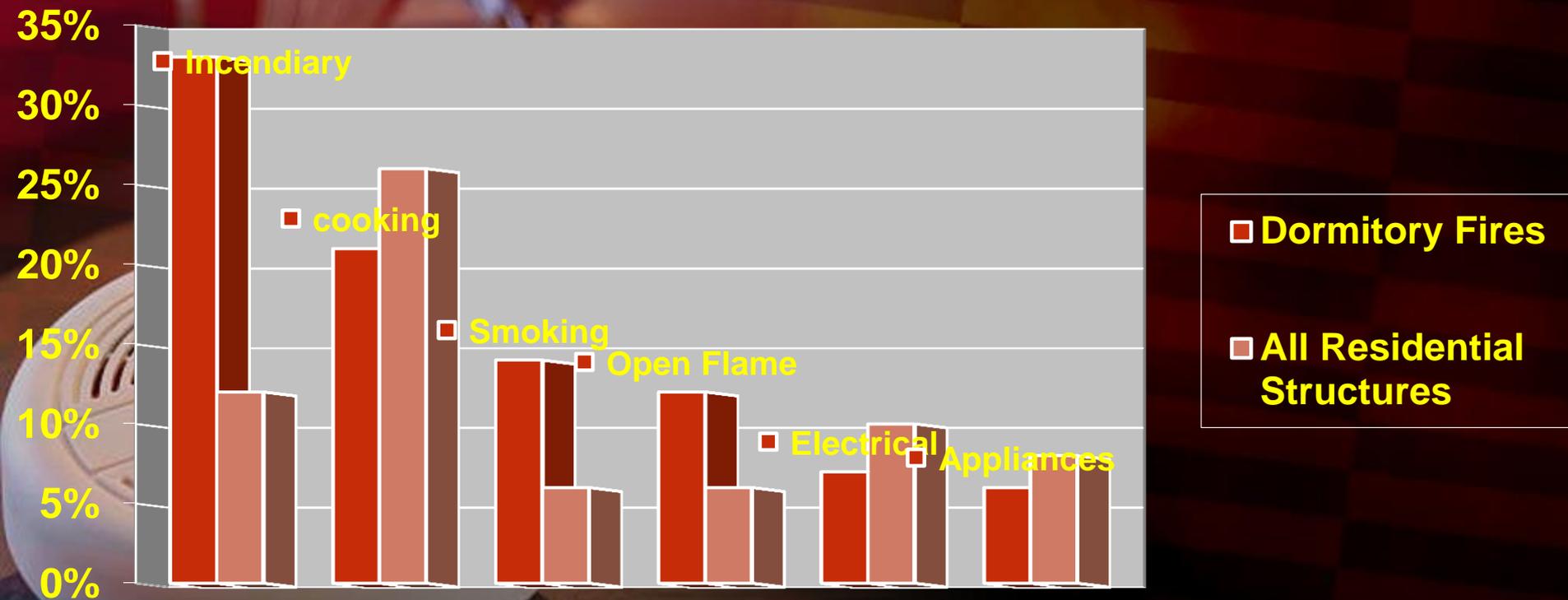
- House keeping is an issue



- Alcohol often impairs judgment and hampers evacuation efforts



Causes of dormitory fires



A fire alarm pull station is visible in the upper left background, and a white smoke detector is in the lower left foreground. The floor has a red and black checkered pattern. The background is dimly lit with a warm, orange glow.

What are some things you can do to prevent fires and fire related tragedies from happening?

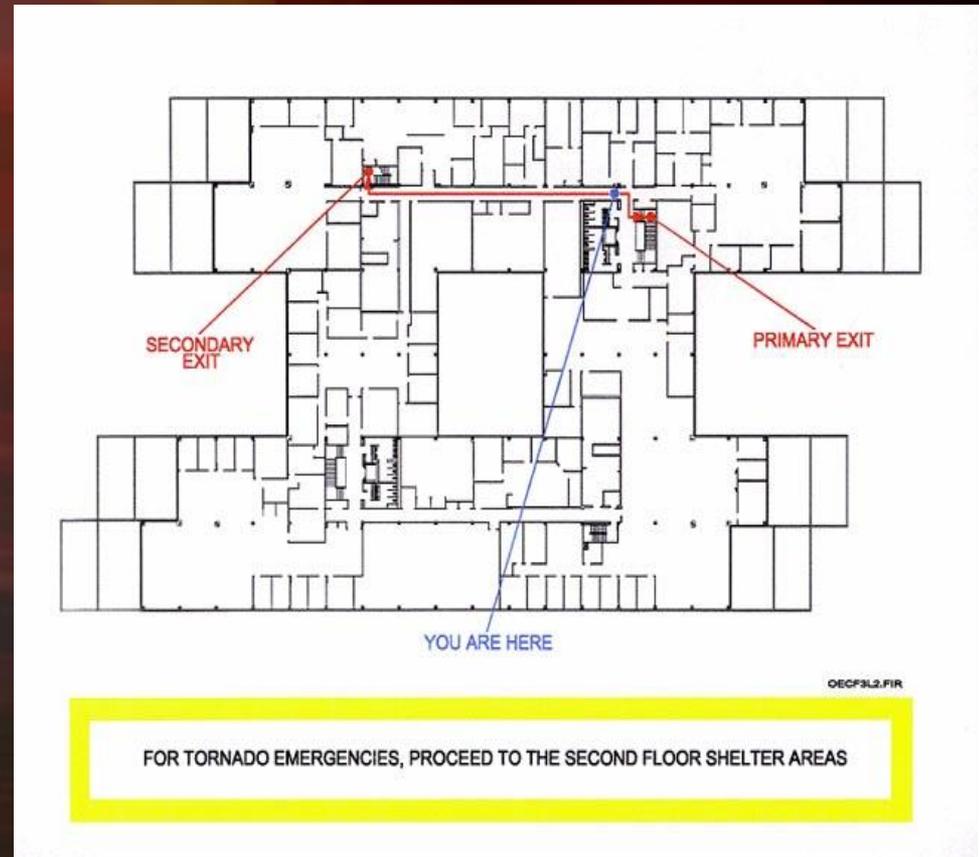
Check Smoke Alarms

- Ensure that smoke alarms are maintained and in working order
- Change the batteries twice a year if your detectors are not maintained by the University or you landlord



Plan Escape Routes

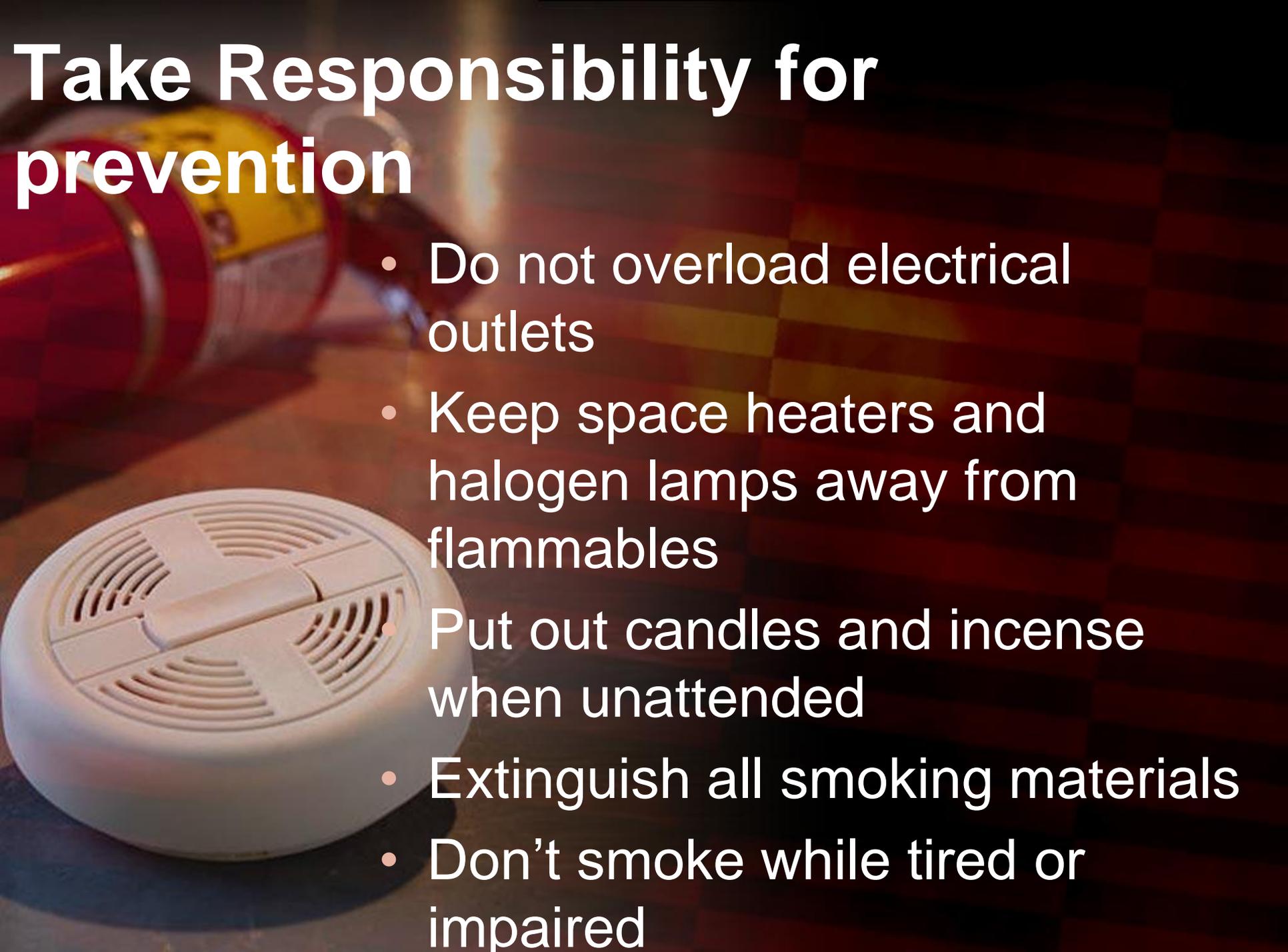
- Know where all exits are located in the building
- Practice your escape plan
- **ONCE OUT STAY OUT!**



Take Fire Alarms Seriously

- Do not ignore fire alarms
- Do not wait to see fire or smoke
- Do not worry about grabbing your stuff
- Besides endangering others, tampering with fire alarm devices may be a criminal offense

Take Responsibility for prevention



- Do not overload electrical outlets
- Keep space heaters and halogen lamps away from flammables
- Put out candles and incense when unattended
- Extinguish all smoking materials
- Don't smoke while tired or impaired

Items not to bring to school

This is a list of some items that most universities do not allow in the dormitories

- Space heaters
- Grills
- Electric blankets
- Toaster ovens
- Halogen lamps

***PLEASE check with your university or dormitory to find out what items are not allowed within the dormitories.**

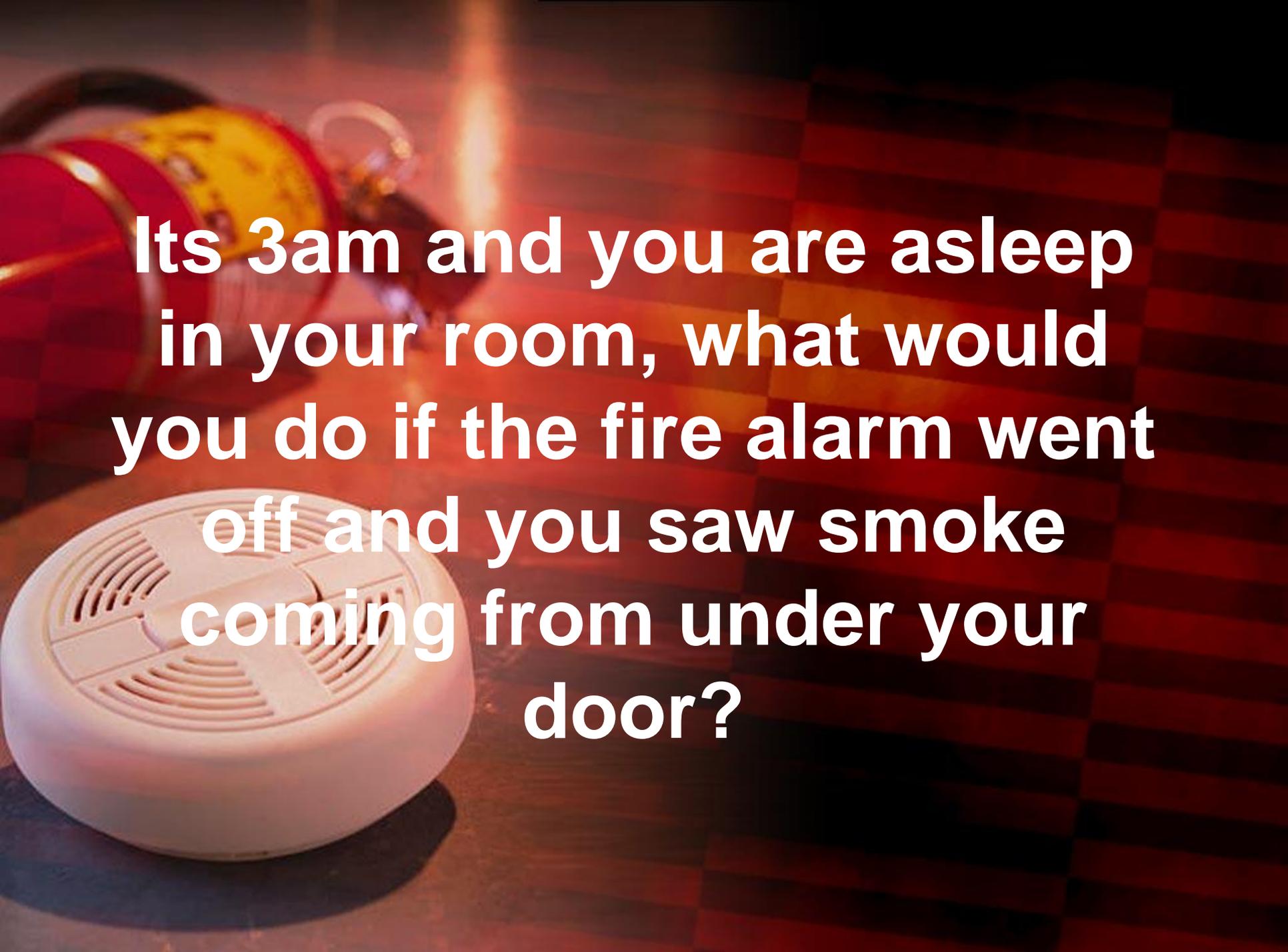
A red fire extinguisher is lying on its side in the upper left corner. In the lower left corner, a white, circular smoke detector is shown from a top-down perspective. The background is a dark red and black checkered pattern.

Fire Safety Kit to bring to school

- ✓ Smoke detector
- ✓ Batteries
- ✓ Flash light
- ✓ CO Detector (Mainly for off-campus and fraternity/sorority housing)

A photograph of a fire extinguisher and a smoke detector on a checkered floor. The fire extinguisher is red and yellow, lying on its side in the upper left. The smoke detector is white and circular, lying on its side in the lower left. The floor is a black and red checkered pattern. The scene is lit with a warm, reddish light, suggesting a fire scenario. The text "Fire Scenario" is overlaid in the center in white.

Fire Scenario

The image features a fire alarm bell in the upper left and a white smoke detector in the lower left. The background is a dark red and black checkered pattern. The text is centered in white, bold font.

**Its 3am and you are asleep
in your room, what would
you do if the fire alarm went
off and you saw smoke
coming from under your
door?**

Feel the door handle

– If the door handle is **HOT**, don't open it
Go to a window and call for help

– If the door handle is not hot, open
cautiously

Check for smoke or fire before going
further



Get out of the building before phoning for help

- Don't take time to phone before leaving
- Get out and find a phone a safe distance away



**Pull the fire alarm, but only
if it is on your way out**





Don't look for other people or gather up your stuff

- **Knock on doors as you leave**
- **Yell “**FIRE!**” as you leave**
- **Don't hesitate or stray from your path as you leave**

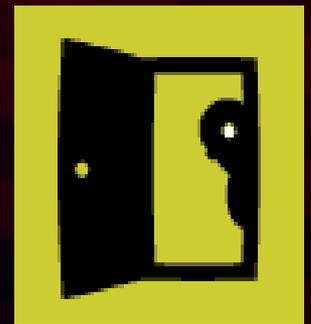
Crawl low to the floor

- Thick smoke can make it impossible to see
- Smoke rises
- The best air is near the floor
- Toxic chemicals from smoke can be deadly in minutes



Close the door behind you

- If the fire is in your room, you may help keep the fire from spreading
- If the fire is down the hall, you may help protect your valuables



Know how many doors are between your door and the exit

- Be familiar with ALL available exits. Often dormitory floors have multiple exits
- Smoke conditions may make it difficult to find the exit door
- Knowing the amount of doors between your door and the exit will help you to escape under heavy smoke conditions



If you can't get out, get someone's attention

- Yell and scream
- Hang something from the windows





Types of fire protection

Smoke detectors

- Change your batteries when you change your clocks if your detectors are not maintained by the University or your landlord
- Don't cover, disconnect or manipulate



Heat Detectors



Carbon Monoxide Detectors

- CO is a Odorless, colorless, poisonous gas
- Sources: room heater, auto in closed garage, fireplace, water heater, range, grill, furnace, etc.
- Signs and symptoms of CO poisoning are FLU-LIKE symptoms
- Change batteries yearly



Sprinkler System

- Don't use as a coat rack
- Clearance is the key for fire suppression
- Don't decorate or paint



Fire Extinguisher

- Extinguishers are NOT toys
- If they are used make sure the proper authority is notified so they can be serviced and refilled



How to use a fire extinguisher

- **P**ull the pin
- **A**im the nozzle
- **S**queeze the handle
- **S**weep the base of the fire with the extinguishing agent

Only use the extinguisher for small fires.

Do Not try and put out a big fire with an extinguisher.



Hose Cabinets

- **Not a trash receptacle**
- **Not to be tampered with**
- **Hose cabinets are for fire use only**
 - **The hose needs to be pulled out fully in order for it to be charged**
- **Leave for trained personnel only**



A photograph of a red fire extinguisher lying on its side in the upper left corner and a white, circular smoke detector in the lower left corner. The background is a floor with a black and red checkered pattern. The scene is lit with a warm, reddish glow. The text "University response to alarms" is centered in the middle of the image in a white, bold, sans-serif font.

University response to alarms

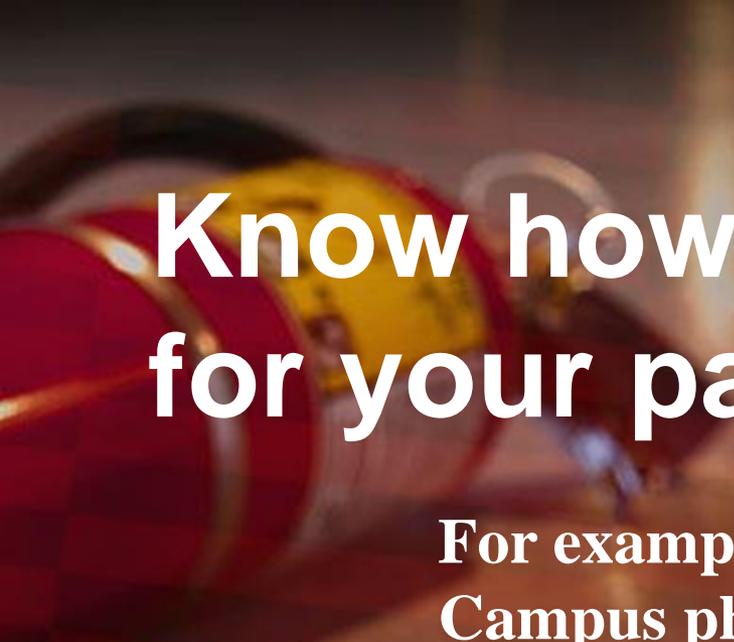
- Some Universities call the FD after security has verified the situation



- Fire Alarm may be tied in directly to the Fire Department

You should still notify campus security or the local Fire Department





Know how to call for help for your particular location

**For example: Off-campus housing,
Campus phones, Cell phones, etc.**



**Know your fire
departments emergency
phone number!**



**Fraternity/Sorority and off-
campus housing**

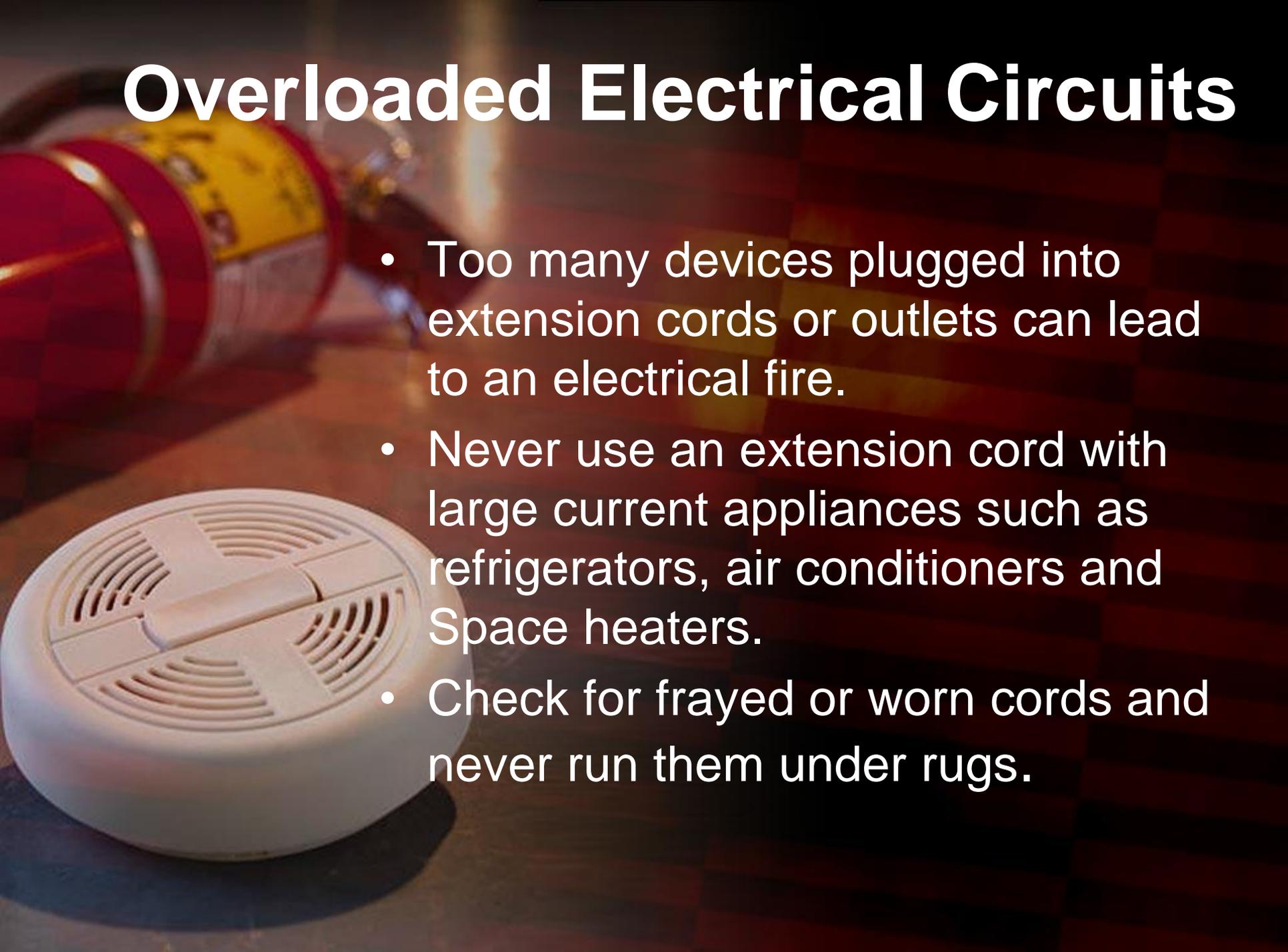
Off-campus housing (including fraternity/sorority housing)

- This housing is not always under university control
- Fraternity/sorority houses may not have two ways out of every area but there should be. (many times there are multiple bedrooms built within the attics)
- There should be at least one smoke detector on every floor and in every sleeping room
- Be aware of any obstacles that may hinder your exit
- CO detectors may be needed in this type of housing due to the age of the building and the type of the heating plant
- Invite the local F.D. in for a safety check

Safety Tips



Overloaded Electrical Circuits

A red extension cord is visible in the upper left background, and a white smoke detector is in the lower left foreground. The background is dark and out of focus.

- Too many devices plugged into extension cords or outlets can lead to an electrical fire.
- Never use an extension cord with large current appliances such as refrigerators, air conditioners and Space heaters.
- Check for frayed or worn cords and never run them under rugs.

COOKING

- Cook only where the rules allow
- Keep the cooking area clean and uncluttered
- Unplug electric appliances when not in use
- Never leave cooking unattended
- If a fire breaks out in a microwave oven, keep the door closed and unplug the unit. Don't try to remove the burning containers from a microwave

SMOKING

- Smoke only where it is permitted
- Use large, deep, non-tip ashtrays
- Don't smoke in bed
- It's risky to smoke when you've been drinking
- Soak cigarette butts in water before discarding, and after a party, check around cushions for smoking cigarettes



The use of candles is not recommended in on/off campus housing due to their potential for starting fires and due to the concentration of people and combustibles in a relatively limited area

CANDLES

If you should elect to use candles, use them in a safe manner

- Blow out candles when you leave your room or go to sleep
- Candles that burn quickly are more dangerous than ones that burn slowly and efficiently
- Use sturdy candle holders that protect the flame and don't let candles burn down all the way
- Keep papers, curtains, and anything that burns away from lit candles
- Do not use gel candles of any type, due to their ability to explode



We have enclosed a College Fire safety Checklist that has key points to ask about on all your visits.

The Fire Department would like to hear your thoughts on this safety program and how we can make it more effective for future College bound students.

We would appreciate your feedback by filling out and returning the enclosed evaluation form.

College Fire Safety Checklist

Sprinkler Systems: Some college dormitories have fire sprinkler systems in place. These systems automatically extinguish a fire in the early stages rather than merely alerting residents with a fire alarm. Ask which of the dormitories presently have a fire sprinkler system in place. Illinois state law requires sprinkler installation for dormitories by September 2014.

Monitored Fire Alarm Systems: We have found some college campuses that have their own campus security force check the origin of fire alarm activations prior to notifying the local fire department! This creates a tremendous delay in fire response and adds dramatically to the potential that your son or daughter may not escape a fire, should a fire actually be in progress.

Smoke Detectors: Many off campus housing sites are not regulated for having smoke detectors installed and operating. In many off campus housing fires smoke detectors have been found disabled or not working. Smoke detectors should be installed on every level of the residence and located no more than 10 feet from all sleeping areas. Batteries should be checked at least once a year.

Smoking Policy: Does the campus outlaw smoking in dormitory facilities? Is this enforced and how? Many campus housing fires are caused by careless use of smoking materials on the floors of the dormitories themselves.

Prohibited Dormitory Items: Does the college or university prohibit use of halogen lamps, candles or electric grills which produce cooking grease? What other items are prohibited due to concern for fire safety? In the case of off campus housing if a front porch is part of the structure do they allow couches on the porch? (Many colleges and universities now ban them as they are a significant fire hazard.)

False Fire Alarms: Does the college or university have a policy to prohibit the malicious activation of fire alarm systems? If so, what is their enforcement? The false activation of an alarm system places responders and residents at risk for injuries. Multiple false alarms also instill a sense of complacency that residents tend to ignore because it's "just another false alarm".

Orientation: Does the college or university cover fire safety in their orientation including but not limited to on campus and off campus housing (apartment, fraternities/sororities)?

Emergency Training: How often does the residence hall staff receive fire prevention training? How often are Fire drills held and is there a posted escape plan?

**If you have any questions
regarding fire safety issues
please contact the
Western Springs Fire Dept.**



Phone #: (708) 246-1800 ext .306

Email address:

clichtenauer@wsprings.com

**Remember to think
FIRE SAFETY**





Go to the link below to find more up to the minute information on Campus and off Campus fires.

<http://www.campus-firewatch.com/incidents/>

References

- FEMA – U.S. Fire Administration web site
 - Topical Fire Research Series Vol. 1 Issues 14
 - Campus-Firewatch.com
 - NFPA web site (NFPA.ORG)
 - ABC News.com
 - Hoyle and Associates, Inc.