# Northern Illinois University
# Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA)
# 2009 Campus Fire Safety Annual Compliance Report

## Introduction

The Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) became public law 110-315 in August 2008 requiring all institutions of higher education that provide residential housing facilities for students to develop an annual fire safety report. Contents of this report reflect the requirements outlined in HEOA, which are included in Northern Illinois University's (NIU) campus fire safety program. Elements of the campus fire safety program consist of: fire prevention policies and practices, fire safety educational and training initiatives, description of fire protection equipment in the residence halls, emergency evacuation procedures, fire safety statistics, and proposed plans for future improvements to the residence hall campus fire safety program. The annual fire safety report summarizes the elements of the campus fire safety program, which is administered and maintained by the Department of Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S).

This public disclosure is intended to inform current and prospective students and employees of the fire safety programs and policies in place at NIU, and the institution's state of readiness to detect and respond appropriately to fire related emergencies. This report can be viewed online at http://www.niu.edu/ehs/fire/index.shtml. Hard copies of the report are available for public review by calling 815-753-3905 or by visiting the EH&S Department located in room 203 of the Dorland Building. The EH&S Department is open from Monday through Friday, 8 AM to 4:30 PM excluding holidays.

## Program Objectives

It is the policy of NIU to endeavor through astute observation and established industry practices to promote safe environmental conditions for faculty, staff, students, and visitors that are free from foreseeable fire hazards. The primary objective of the campus fire safety program is to recognize hazardous conditions and take appropriate action before such conditions result in a fire emergency. This goal is accomplished by:

- Conducting periodic review and update of fire prevention policies,
- Conducting regularly scheduled fire drills in the residence halls,
- Promoting fire safety awareness for employees and students by conducting regularly scheduled training programs on fire prevention and emergency evacuation procedures,

- Inspecting, testing, and maintaining fire protection systems in accordance with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards,
- Performing plans review and code consultation related to current capital improvement and remodeling projects,
- Mitigating fire hazards utilizing the information provided from regularly scheduled fire safety inspections performed by the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM), the University's property insurance loss control consultant, and fire protection consultants.

## Fire Prevention Policies and Procedures

Several fire prevention policies and procedures have been developed and implemented in an effort to complement the program objectives. Applicable NFPA, OSHA, residence hall student regulations (Guidepost) and the NIU Emergency Guide were referenced during the development of these policies. A summary of these policies is highlighted below:

*Holiday Decorations*

- All decorations and ornaments must be of fire-resistant or non-combustible material, listed by Underwriters Laboratory (UL) and approved for use.
- The use of live or cut Christmas trees is prohibited in university buildings.
- Artificial trees made of fire retardant materials or non-combustible materials labeled with UL or Factory Mutual (FM) approval ratings are allowed. No natural trees, wreathes, boughs or other decorations constructed from the branches of natural trees may be used. Metallic trees may create electrical hazards when placed in close proximity to the electrical supply, therefore, the use of electric lights on metallic trees is prohibited.
- Trees and other decorations must be located so as not to obstruct exit corridors or the operation of fire protection equipment (*e.g.* fire extinguishers, sprinkler heads, exit signs, fire alarm pull stations, smoke alarms or heat detectors). Trees should also not be placed in any manner that could present a fall or trip hazard, impede egress, or block emergency egress from any room. Do not affix or tie decorations to such equipment.
- Electric light strings should carry a UL or FM approval label. These lights should be checked for fraying, bare wires, loose connections, and cracked plastic parts. If any of these conditions are present, the string or cord should not be used. Use of miniature electric lights are encouraged since they are both cooler and more energy efficient than regular size lighting. Unplug holiday lighting when the area is unoccupied. Electric lights or electrically operated ornaments shall not be used on metal, aluminum or any other similar metal, which could induce an electric shock. Light strings should not be placed in any manner that could present a fall or trip hazard, impede egress, block emergency egress from any room, or restrict access to fire protection equipment.
- Use of extension cords is discouraged. If they are used, they must be UL-approved and be of an adequate wire gauge for the intended use. Frayed or broken cords should not be used.
- Electrical cords (light strings or extension cords) should not be routed through doorways with doors, under rugs or loose carpeting or across work surfaces. Routing of cords through these areas may cause damage to the cord and create a tripping hazard.

- Do not plug cords and lights into an overloaded circuit. Multi-plug adapters are prohibited in university buildings. Use power strips with a fuse or integral circuit breaker when extra outlets are needed.
- Decorative displays should be compact. Garlands, streamers or displays that extend down a corridor should not be used because of their potential to spread fire, increase the fuel load, and impede egress. These displays should be confined to office areas (laboratories should not have any displays.) Displays are prohibited in stairwells and should be limited in corridors, lobbies, and common areas in the residence halls.
- All holiday decorations should be removed before leaving campus for the holidays and at the end of each semester.
- No candles, incense burners, potpourri pots, or scented oil warmers may be used at any time in University buildings. Candles can be displayed in Menorahs and other religious articles but may not be used and should remain unlit. Battery operated candles are also allowed.
- Decorations should not conceal the residence hall room number located on the exterior of the room door. This number needs to be visible and readily identifiable for first responders.
- Decorative materials including artificial snow, decorative sprays, ceiling/wall tapestries, and highly flammable materials are strictly prohibited.
- Halogen and torch lamps are not recommended for use.

*Electrical Equipment and Appliances*

- Use surge protectors/power strips for all electronics, particularly computers, televisions, DVD players, gaming systems, stereo equipment, and clock radios. Lightweight extension cords and multiple outlet plugs without surge protectors create a safety hazard and are discouraged.
- Open-ended heating elements and electrical appliances that may pose a fire hazard, such as hot plates, hot pots, electric or contact grills, and space heaters are prohibited. Electrical appliances with an enclosed heating element are permitted in the halls (e.g. popcorn makers and coffeepots) when used under continual supervision.
- Every residence hall room is furnished with a microwave/refrigerator unit. These units shall only be used when constantly attended. Other microwave ovens and refrigerators are not allowed.

*Prohibited Items*

Items that pose a danger to persons, damage to University property, a fire/safety hazard, and/or a public nuisance must not be used, possessed, or stored in residence halls (including student rooms). These include:

- Internal combustion engines, acids, automobile batteries, gasoline, torches, flammable liquids, and halogen lamps.
- Charcoal and fire starter materials. Residents may store grills (but not combustible fuels) in their rooms, but may not use them indoors. Barbecue grills must be located at least 100 feet from any campus building when in use.

*Tampering of Fire Protection Equipment*
Students who are found tampering with fire protection equipment (e.g. fire extinguishers including cabinets and signage, fire alarms, smoke and heat detectors, pull stations, and sprinkler heads) resulting in violation of the Student Code of Conduct may be subject to fines and additional sanctions or charges for the cost of equipment or damage repair, depending on the circumstances, as a result of the disciplinary process. Additional anti-tampering policies include:

- Smoke detectors and sprinkler heads are fire safety equipment, and residents are strictly prohibited from:
    - Disconnecting a detector,
    - Tampering with the detector or its operation,
    - Purposely causing an alarm to occur,
    - Hanging objects from or otherwise obstructing the sprinkler head cover plates and pipes.
- Residents should test their smoke detectors each month by pushing the button.
- Disconnecting a smoke detector, failure to report its malfunctioning (including failure to observe that the light is on or not flashing), or other negligence subjects residents of that room not only to disciplinary charges but also to civil charges and, in the event of fire, payment for related damages to the building and the persons and property of others.
- Blocking open fire-rated door assemblies is strictly prohibited. Fire-rated door assemblies are UL listed and are designed to self-close and latch shut to prevent the passage of fire and smoke. Examples of fire-rated doors include: student room doors, stairwell doors, separation doors between sleeping and commons areas, utility room doors (*e.g.* janitor closets, mechanical rooms, laundry rooms, pressing rooms, sprinkler closets, elevator machine rooms, storage rooms, and many corridor doors).

*Regularly Scheduled Fire Safety Inspections*
As a part of scheduled semester safety inspections, residence hall staff inspect student rooms for the presence of fire safety hazards including, but not limited to:

- Non-polarized extension cords,
- Non-UL approved equipment,
- Multiple outlets without circuit breakers,
- Improper installation of microwave/refrigerator units,
- Use of non-metal trash cans,
- Decorations inconsistent with fire safety guidelines,
- Clearly observable room damage,
- Unauthorized furnishings,
- Other violations inconsistent with the university fire prevention policy,
- Candles with burned wicks.

Once identified, residence hall staff assist students in removing the fire hazard in accordance with the Guidepost and the Student Judicial Code of Conduct.

An inspector with the OSFM also performs inspections in the residence halls on an annual basis every summer. This gives the University the ability to address and mitigate any life safety violations identified by the inspector before the start of the fall semester.

*Residence Hall Smoking Policy*

- No smoke is allowed, including that created by cigarettes, cigars, pipes, candles, or incense.
- Smoking is not permitted inside any residence hall building, including student rooms, hallways, bathrooms, elevators, lounges, dining areas, and other public spaces.
- No smoking is permitted within 15 feet of, or next to, any door entrances, operable windows or air intake vents.

## Fire Safety Education and Training Initiatives

Residence halls staff including community advisors, hall directors, front desk staff, and student dining managers receive intensive and comprehensive fire safety training prior to the start of every fall semester. Topics include a review of the fire prevention policies, weather safety, followed by a hands-on fire extinguisher demonstration, and an emergency evacuation exercise. All residents located in Northern View Apartments are required to attend fire safety training upon moving in to their respective apartments.

In addition, every student room has an emergency evacuation map installed on the inside of the front door to direct occupants to primary and secondary exits. Two fire drills per residence hall are conducted each fall and spring semester in coordination with the EH&S Department, Housing and Dining, Physical Plant, and the City of DeKalb Fire Department. As outlined in the Guidepost, participation in fire drills is mandatory and failure to evacuate the building during a fire alarm will result in disciplinary action. The EH&S Department and the Fire Department critique the drills to identify problem areas, which are then discussed and resolved with Housing staff.

Fire safety training programs are also provided to other student, staff, and faculty groups on campus by request. This program typically consists of a brief review of fire prevention policies followed by a hands-on fire extinguisher demonstration.

## Overview of Fire Protective Features in the Residence Halls

The University houses students in five residence halls (Stevenson Towers, Grant Towers, Douglas Hall, Lincoln Hall, and Neptune Complex. In addition, the University manages a multi-family apartment complex (Northern View Apartments) for any student two-year post high school. This section provides a brief summary of the fire protection features provided in each housing facility.

*Stevenson Towers*

Stevenson Towers is monitored by a supervised fire alarm system equipped with a public address panel. The concourse and basement in the core of the complex are protected by an automatic, supervised wet pipe sprinkler system that is integrated with the fire alarm system. The fire alarm system is continuously monitored and supervised by the Keltron system at Public Safety dispatch. Cooking operations under the kitchen hoods are protected by special hazard wet chemical suppression systems. The hood exhaust is protected by a special hazard water mist

suppression system. Both of these systems are also monitored by the building fire alarm system. Dry standpipes are located in each of the two stairwells in each of the four towers. Multi-purpose ABC dry chemical fire extinguishers are installed on each floor as well as throughout the common areas and mechanical spaces in the complex. Other features include an area of rescue assistance and an emergency generator to power emergency lights and exit signs to illuminate the means of egress. Elevators, magnetically propped open fire-rated door assemblies, air handling units, and stairwell doors are also integrated with the fire alarm system.

*Grant Towers*
Grant Towers is monitored by a supervised fire alarm system equipped with a public address panel. The fire alarm system is continuously monitored and supervised by the Keltron system at Public Safety dispatch. Cooking operations under the kitchen hoods are protected by special hazard wet chemical suppression systems, which is also monitored by the building fire alarm system. Dry standpipes are located in each of the two stairwells in each of the four towers. Multi-purpose ABC dry chemical fire extinguishers are installed on each floor as well as throughout the common areas and mechanical spaces in the complex. Other features include an emergency generator to power emergency lights and exit signs to illuminate the means of egress. Elevators, magnetically propped open fire-rated door assemblies, air handling units, and stairwell doors are also integrated with the fire alarm system.

*Douglas Hall*
Douglas Hall is protected by an automatic, supervised wet pipe sprinkler system that is integrated with the building fire alarm system. The fire alarm system is continuously monitored and supervised by the Keltron system at Public Safety dispatch. Cooking operations under the kitchen hoods are protected by special hazard wet chemical suppression systems, which are also integrated with the building fire alarm system. Multi-purpose ABC dry chemical fire extinguishers are installed on each floor as well as throughout the common areas and mechanical spaces in the complex. Other features include battery-backup emergency lights and exit signs to illuminate the means of egress. Magnetically propped open fire-rated door assemblies and air handling units are also integrated with the fire alarm system.

*Lincoln Hall*
Lincoln Hall is protected by an automatic, supervised wet pipe sprinkler system that is integrated with the building fire alarm system. The fire alarm system is continuously monitored and supervised by the Keltron system at Public Safety dispatch. Cooking operations under the kitchen hoods are protected by special hazard wet chemical suppression systems, which are also integrated with the building fire alarm system. Multi-purpose ABC dry chemical fire extinguishers are installed on each floor as well as throughout the common areas and mechanical spaces in the complex. Other features include battery-backup emergency lights and exit signs to illuminate the means of egress. Magnetically propped open fire-rated door assemblies and air handling units are also integrated with the fire alarm system.

*Neptune Complex*
Neptune Complex is monitored by a supervised fire alarm system, which is continuously monitored by the Keltron system at Public Safety dispatch. Cooking operations under the kitchen hoods are protected by special hazard wet chemical suppression systems, which are also

integrated with the building fire alarm system. Multi-purpose ABC dry chemical fire extinguishers are installed on each floor as well as throughout the common areas and mechanical spaces in the complex. Other features include battery-backup emergency lights and exit signs to illuminate the means of egress. Elevators, magnetically propped open fire-rated door assemblies, and air handling units are also integrated with the fire alarm system.

*Northern View Apartments*
Northern View Apartments consists of five, three story buildings and a one-story community center. The complex is monitored by a supervised fire alarm system located in the community center with remote annunciator panels located in each apartment building. Each apartment building is equipped with an automatic, supervised wet pipe sprinkler system. The community center is equipped with an automatic, supervised dry pipe sprinkler system. All sprinkler systems are integrated with the fire alarm system. The fire alarm system is continuously monitored and supervised by the Keltron system at Public Safety dispatch. Multi-purpose ABC dry chemical fire extinguishers are located in the kitchen of each apartment as well as in the corridors and community center. Other features include battery-backup emergency lights and exit signs to illuminate the means of egress.

*Inspection, Testing, and Maintenance of Fire Protection Equipment*
The EH&S Department administers this element of the campus fire safety program with support from the Physical Plant, Housing and Dining, and fire protection contractors. All fire protection equipment in the residence halls is tested, inspected, and maintained in accordance with applicable NFPA standards.

## Emergency Evacuation Procedures

If a fire occurs in a residence hall, the fire alarm response procedure is initiated by residence hall staff with support from first responders (*e.g.* Public Safety and the DeKalb Fire Department). Other departments including EH&S, Physical Plant, and Building Services may also provide support in the investigation, restoration, and cleanup efforts. Fire alarm systems notify building occupants of a potential fire, thus initiating a building evacuation sequence. As conveyed during fire drills, building occupants are directed to the nearest building exit upon activation of the fire alarm system. Use of the elevators is strictly prohibited and is controlled by the fire department to assist in fire fighting and rescue efforts. Building occupants cannot re-enter the building until either Public Safety or the fire department indicates that it is safe to do so. After every fire alarm activation or reported fire condition, the hall director on duty is responsible for submitting a fire alarm report to the Housing and Dining and EH&S Departments.

It is policy to maintain an active list of those occupants who may be permanently or temporarily disabled, and this is kept on file in Housing and Dining and also at the fire department. The fire department has access to this list when responding to a fire alarm activation so they can better prepare and strategize the potential rescue of physically disabled occupants.

Emergency evacuation procedures for students and employees inhabiting other campus buildings can be found in the NIU emergency guide. The emergency guides are posted in classrooms, offices, and other places of public assembly across campus.

## Fire Safety Statistics

The data presented in the following table summarizes the reported fires that occurred in housing facilities from August through December 2008. Please note that the housing facilities presented in the following table are located on campus property. Off campus housing including rooming houses, private residence halls, multi-family apartment dwellings, and fraternities and sororities are not owned and operated by NIU and, therefore, fire statistics from off campus housing is not included in this report. All fires that occur in campus housing facilities are reported to the Campus Fire Safety Manager.

*Summary of 2008 Fire Safety Statistics*

| Residence Hall | Number of Fires | Causes | Injuries | Fatalities | Value of Property Damages |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Stevenson Towers | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Grant Towers | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Douglas Hall | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Lincoln Hall | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Neptune Complex | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Northern View Apartments | 3 | Accidental Cooking | 0 | 0 | $6,323.93* |

*This figure reflects the costs of damages incurred in one of the three fires at Northern View Apartments. All three fires that occurred at Northern View Apartments were a result of accidental cooking activities.

## Future Improvements in the Residence Hall Fire Safety Program

In accordance with state statute, the University will complete the residence hall sprinkler retrofit program by the year 2013. The University is developing plans in accordance with the following schedule to comply with this statute:

- Retrofit Neptune complex starting over the 2009/2010 winter break with a completion date of August 2010.
- Retrofit Grant Towers in 2011
- Retrofit Stevenson Towers in 2012

These schedules are tentative and are subject to change without notice to the public. The university has also embarked on a project to install intelligible emergency alert systems in each resident hall as part of the campus emergency operations plan.

## Contact Information

**EMERGENCY AT ANY CAMPUS LOCATION . . . . 911**
General Numbers
Environmental Health and Safety . . . . . 815-753-0404
Campus Fire Safety Manager. . . . . 815-753-3905
Public Safety Nonemergency . . . . . 815-753-1212
University Switchboard . . . . . 815-753-1000
TTD/TTY . . . . . 815-753-2000