

# ALPHA GAMMA RHO FRATERNITY

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## **FIRE PREVENTION GUIDE**

The possibility of personal injury or loss of life is an incalculable tragedy. Every effort must be taken by responsible members to prevent such a loss.

The Courts have ruled that if owners or occupants of buildings are negligent of fire hazards and anyone suffers loss or injury because of that negligence, the owner or occupant of the building is liable for damages.

Be aware that your Chapter house is a high-risk unit with special problems in fire safety. The following is a fire prevention checklist prepared after research was conducted with two fire departments. The checklist should be used fall, winter and spring. The wise use of this checklist will result in responsible management of your Fraternity property.

### **General Instructions**

- Be investigative in searching for potential hazards. Consider hair dryers, sound systems, electric space heaters, lamp cords, the use of many extension cords, overloaded circuits, furnace and vent cleanliness, repair of laundry equipment and kitchen equipment.
- Look for signs of wear or operational problems on any small appliance
- Furnaces should be checked yearly by a competent heating company for malfunctions or possible presence of carbon monoxide.
- Never use candles in windows near draperies.
- Smoking cigarettes in Chapter houses is a main fire hazard. Be especially strict on limiting smoking to specific areas. Adequate ashtrays must be provided. Members should never be allowed to smoke in large sleeping rooms.
- When a large social function is over and everyone is leaving the Chapter house, two members should always check for lighted cigarettes and candles in the house.

- Make a personal inspection of your Chapter house from top to bottom to check that all house doors, fire escapes and stairwells are free from any blockage. Remember that in the event of fire, many people will flee through the door and there must be ample room.
- Fire doors must never have key deadbolts or double locks. Fire doors must never be blocked open. They must be free to close.
- Make sure that non-burnable surfaces are on top of chests of drawers and other furniture where curling irons and cigarettes might be left.
- Cooking equipment should not be allowed in areas other than regular cooking/kitchen areas.
- Doors into stairways at each floor level must be kept closed.
- Exit doors of rooms accommodating fifty or more people should open outward. These doors should never block a traffic path to safety.
- Check fire extinguishers once a year; have them serviced once each year. This must be a gauge check and a volume check. Be sure they are properly placed throughout the building.
- Members must know the operation of extinguishers. Have a demonstration at a Chapter meeting.
- Exit signs must be placed where needed and be in operating order.
- Be sure that the kitchen extinguisher is the proper type for fighting kitchen fires. Check for local requirements on type approved for kitchen use.
- If property is equipped with a fire hose, this storage should be checked for hose rot. The hose should be dry, properly racked and should have a nozzle.
- Never store motor vehicles, lawn mowers, motorcycles or snowmobiles in the building. Do not store gas for motors inside building even if stored in metal cans.
- Bikes, boxes, and trashcans should never be stored in exit doorways and halls'.
- Store flammable cleaning fluids only in approved safety cans and in safe storage closets. No oily rags or other combustible cleaning equipment can be improperly stored.
- Store paint, turpentine, etc., in metal cans, in closed metal cabinets away from furnace or heat water tank.

- Dryers and washers must be in good repair and free from an accumulation of lint and dust.
- Electric irons must be unplugged (not merely turned "off") when not in use. Develop the habit of unplugging heat appliances.
- Check that motors and cooling coils in refrigeration units are clean.
- Kitchens must be clean and free of any grease on walls or in range.
- Kitchen range hood should have proper suppression system.
- Members unfamiliar with kitchen stove operation and dishwashing equipment should not be allowed to operate this equipment.
- When using fireplace, be sure damper is open and screen is always in front of fire. If retiring or leaving the area of fireplace, be sure fire is out.
- Basement and furnace rooms should be kept clear of old furniture, boxes, homecoming decorations, theme party decorations, paint and other solvents, junk, etc. Be sure that officers of the Chapter and Advisers understand and are strict in preventing accumulations of burnable materials.
- All fuses or circuit breakers on lighting or small appliance circuits should be of 15-ampere capacity.
- Extension cords should not exceed six feet in length and should always be of heavy-duty quality. Never put extension cords under rugs or in the path of travel.
- Check lamp cords for frayed conditions. Do not have cords spliced. Replace cords in all lamps and small appliances if cords are worn.
- Check switches on lamps -- make sure that the on/off switches operate without delay.
- Remember that artificial trees at Christmas are safer than real trees. Never put lights on a metal tree - use a spotlight to illuminate a metal tree. If a real tree is used, lights must be unplugged when members are away.

## **Vacation Procedures**

- Make sure the house is clean and in order.
- Remove all clutter from hallways.
- Avoid storing flammable substances (cleaning fluids, paint, etc.) inside; if they must be stored inside, make sure they are in proper metal containers.

- Do not store gasoline, kerosene, or motorcycles and lawn mowers inside.
- Avoid storing anything in the utility room; keep the utility room door closed.
- Secure all windows and doors -- especially on the lower floors.
- Break any circuits which won't be used or have the power company cut the power completely.
- Unplug any unnecessary appliances, extension cords, etc.
- Test all fire alarms and sprinkler systems (with proper guidance), heat and smoke alarms, etc. Make sure all extinguishers are charged.
- Check storage areas for junk and remove.
- Assign Noble Ruler, VNR-Management and Operations or trusted Brother with responsibility of making a final check around house before locking up.
- Turn hot water system down as low as possible.
- Close all inside doors as a safety precaution.
- Fire department should have the name of a local person responsible for the property during vacations. When advisers and officers change, be sure this information is kept up to date.
- Arrange for someone locally to "check" the house every few days if it is unoccupied.

## **Fire Alarms and Drills**

- Pull alarms should be checked once a month.
- Check smoke alarms with test button or actual smoke.
- Post fire department telephone number near each telephone and in kitchen.
- Members and employees should be included in a practice fire drill at least once each semester or quarter.
- A part of the drill should be assigning a Brother to call the fire department. Give good instructions to fire operator regarding location; practice the proper telephone message.

- There should be two exit plans for each room. These should be drawn in chart form and posted in rooms, where the fire extinguishers are, along exit routes, and in visible places -- at drinking fountains, in telephone rooms, bathrooms.
- Always notify the fire department in case of a fire, no matter how minor you consider the fire to be. In the event of a fire, it is very necessary to be drilled in specific actions.
- Always take attendance following evacuation of a building.
- If an alarm, real or false, should happen, be sure the entire system of alarms is properly reset.

## **In Case of Fire**

- If awakened by smoke, crawl to your door with room key and flashlight in hand.
- Check to see if door is hot before opening.
- If cool, continue crawling, in case of noxious gases, to the fire exit.
- Close door behind you to minimize smoke damage and crawl to exit.
- Stay ready to retreat back into your room. If clear, continue crawling to the fire exit.
- Stay close to the wall on the fire exit side of the hallway.
- When you reach the stairway grasp hold of the handrail tightly.
- Walk slowly down the steps keeping your balance and cool.
- Don't become panicked no matter who rushes past. It's important to stay on your feet.
- If you encounter heavy smoke as you descend the escape route, turn around.
- Do not attempt to walk through the smoke.
- Ascend to the top floor of the house and onto the roof. At the top, prop the door open to vent the smoke for others still inside.
- Realize it's sometimes safer to remain in your room.
- If your room door feels hot, don't open it.
- If there is smoke in your room, open your window.

- If there's no smoke, keep it closed. If necessary, smash the glass -- carefully protecting yourself from cuts.
- Fold a wet towel into a triangle and cover your nose and mouth to create a smoke filter.
- If there are flames outside your window, pull down the draperies and other flammables.
- Don't get into a bathtub full of water; you may boil.
- Don't panic. Help will be with you in a few minutes.
- Don't run. If you fall you may not be able to get up.
- Hang only your head out of your window to escape the smoke.
- Don't jump except as a last resort from the second or third floors.
- Know the survival chances of a fourth floor jump are slim.
- Smoke, gases and panic are the things you must guard against.

## **Education**

- Ask for advice and assistance from your local fire department. Take advantage of this public service.
- Augment this list with checks on specific situations that apply to your property.
- The attitude of Chapter members is quite important. Every Brother needs to be concerned about the possible loss of life and the danger of smoke inhalation. Conduct a safety discussion on these subjects regularly.
- Every seventeen seconds a fire breaks out in this country. Every forty-five minutes a life is lost in a fire. Give your attention to fire prevention!!