



# House Fire Risks

## Code Enforcement & Neighborhood Conservation

### Fire Department Reminds Students of House Fire Risks

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Recently an off-campus house fire in Ithaca, NY claimed the life of Cornell University student Ian Alberta, 22, in addition to injuring another occupant in the house and three fire fighters. The cause of the fire was careless disposal of smoking materials on the front porch following a party.

Nationwide, this is the tenth campus-related fire fatality in the 2005-2006 academic year as identified by the non-profit Center for Campus Fire Safety. A total of 88 people have been killed in campus-related fires since January 2000. Eighty percent of those fire fatalities have occurred off-campus in rental houses and apartments.

April and May are the most dangerous months with over one-fourth of these fire fatalities occurring during this period.

With a large percentage of students living off-campus, East Lansing fire officials are well aware of the risks. "It is vital that students learn the steps they can take to protect themselves, their friends and roommates from fire," said East Lansing Fire Marshal Bob Pratt. It's been almost 20 years since East Lansing has lost a student to fire, but Pratt is still concerned. "Our Fire Prevention Bureau and Housing Inspectors are a big reason we don't have a tragedy every year. We enforce the codes and try to educate the occupants to the dangers but it's really up to them. There are a lot of things the students can do to invest in their own safety. Some of these include:

- Choosing fire-safe housing that includes automatic fire sprinklers
- Installing smoke alarms on every level and ensuring that they are working at all times
- Knowing two ways out, no matter where you are — a dorm, your house or apartment, a restaurant or a movie theater
- Properly disposing of smoking material by using ashtrays
- Designating a sober 'safety officer' at parties to monitor dangerous behavior
- Learning how to use a fire extinguisher BEFORE a fire breaks out.
- Properly using extension cords and electrical appliances