

Fire safety and prevention

The college age demographic is the only age group with a growing number of fire deaths in the recent past. Statistics show that risk factors include smoking, alcohol use, cooking in the home, and lack of working smoke detectors.

- Deaths from fires and burns are the fifth most common cause of unintentional injury deaths in the United States
- and the third leading cause of fatal home injury.
- The United States mortality rate from fires ranks fourth among the 25 developed countries for which statistics are available (USFA 2007).
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- On average in the United States in 2006, someone died in a fire about every 162 minutes, and someone was injured every 32 minutes. Four out of five U.S. fire deaths in 2005 occurred in homes.
- In 2006, fire departments responded to 412,500 home fires in the United States, which claimed the lives of 2,580 people (not including firefighters) and injured another 12,925, not including firefighters.
- Most victims of fires die from smoke or toxic gases and not from burns.
- Smoking is the leading cause of fire-related deaths.
- Cooking is the primary cause of residential fires.

SOURCES: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/fire.htm> and <http://www.firesafety.gov>

Fire Safety at Purdue

There are two excellent tools available for us to use in helping our students to be safety minded and to protect their lives. Students must have some understanding of what causes fire injuries in order to prevent them from occurring (not all are due to house fires, e.g.), but they also need to know what to do in the event of a building fire to enhance their survival chances. These two tools cover that material.

- 1) Igot2Kno.org. This website is targeted directly at college students and identifies the causal factors that they face. It provides a pre-test, training tool and post-test that teaches fire prevention and safety. It also provides more information material. Most importantly, it teaches what to do. The principles apply in the classroom and laboratory as well.

Consider including the pre-test, training and post-test as classroom instruction. (Note: when students take the post-test on line, their participation is reported to Purdue and provides the University a measure of fire safety education.)

- 2) <http://www.firesafety.gov>. This government sponsored website provides additional statistics and materials. Check out “make an escape plan”—which can be used in discussing classroom evacuation and applied to any location the students may find themselves in. “Get a smoke alarm” and “practice fire safety” are also important topics for discussion.