

CHAPTER HOUSE OFFICER MANUAL



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Chapter House Officer Manual

INTRODUCTION

Being a part of a Fraternity that operates a free-standing house on the Fraternity Quad is an opportunity of a lifetime. Operating a fraternity chapter house is similar to running a small business. You have events to administer, laws and codes to follow, safety procedures to follow, personnel to hire, meals to plan, and finances to manage. As a Chapter House Officer, you have taken on the large task of managing the house, coordinating the day-to-day maintenance of the house, and working with the other chapter house officers, members and alumni to create comprehensive processes to maintain your living environment at the highest of standards. With a clean, safe, and inviting living environment, your time here at the University of Rochester will be that much more positive and memorable. Maintaining a safe living environment involves several components:

- understanding and compliance with state and city statutes and codes concerning building, health and safety concerns,
- understanding and compliance with guidelines established by the University of Rochester,
- addressing identified deficiencies associated with these codes and guidelines,
- communicating about life-safety issues, concerns, and processes, and
- educating the students, alumni, faculty/staff, and other "community" members of the many aspects of facility management

There are different processes in place that recognize and address compliance of life-safety standards, daily maintenance concerns, and larger ongoing projects. Communication is a key component of effectively managing and maintaining a safe and supportive living environment. Your role as a chapter house officer includes implementing these processes and potentially developing internal policies and communicating them to the members of your organization.

The Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs (OFSA) has compiled this Chapter House Officer Manual as a resource for the fraternity-operated chapter houses on the Fraternity Quad chapters to aid the Chapter House officer team which includes, but is not limited to, the chapter President, Treasurer, House Manager, Kitchen Steward and Alumni Advisor in their role in providing a safe, clean, enjoyable environment for all residents. It is not intended to be all-inclusive, as it is important to recognize that there are numerous resources for you to take advantage of. As part of the UR Fraternity and Sorority Community, it is also important to understand that if you have specific questions or concerns you can contact the OFSA staff team in the Dean of Students Office.

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CHAPTER 2: A MUST READ SECTION

This section will highlight some of the areas—Expectations for Excellence, Campus Club Connection, and Important Dates and Meetings—that are most important to the functioning of any fraternity or sorority. For the chapter house fraternities, the issues of budgets, finance, and record keeping are all the more important because of the unique on-campus housing situation.

Expectations for Excellence

While every portion of the Expectations for Excellence is important to the success of all fraternity and sorority groups, there are two sections this manual would like to highlight for the chapter house fraternities: Non-academic student conduct, and organizational management.

Non-academic Student Conduct

We believe in the communal principles of freedom, responsibility, respect, honesty, and fairness. We demonstrate this commitment through educational and systemic approaches to student conduct. We conduct ourselves in accordance with accepted standards of good citizenship, honesty, and propriety, and with high regard for the rights of others.

We are among the most visible groups on campus and realize that each individual member reflects and reflects upon the organization as a whole. Accordingly, we hold to the highest ethical standards in everything we do, and recognize that accountability is transmitted over the course of our history with The College.

1. We have a list of specific conduct expectations, supplementing but not assuming The College's list.
Examples: chapter member agreements, honor codes/pledges, new member orientation handbooks.
2. We have several mechanisms for educating members about conduct expectations, both proactively and reactively.
Examples: new member orientation, general programming, a predetermined list of possible consequences for misconduct, and written material (such as a newsletter).
3. We have a system of internal accountability. This supplements The College, and does not usurp jurisdiction. Both informal and formal means of conflict resolution are addressed, and care is given to ensure that such systems are fair and consistent.
Examples: standards board, standards officer, written standards process.
4. We have an effective means of communication with the administration about conduct-related issues.
Examples: establishing regular meetings with various campus offices, creating key leadership positions within the organization, and the development of systems and protocols.

Organizational Management

We manage our organization responsibly, acknowledging that our current decisions and actions affect the future of our organization over time. To that end, we develop systems and policies that are clear and productive. When making decisions as a group, we do so in a manner that is fair, consistent, value-oriented, and based upon available and verifiable data.

1. We have a list of specific expectations pertaining to each position of authority or responsibility within our organization.
Examples: position descriptions, clear expectations in charters/constitutions/by-laws, officer handbooks.
2. We have clear and fair guidelines for decision-making, and involve our members as much as necessary when making decisions that will have an impact upon the group as a whole.
Examples: rules of order for chapter meetings, election rules, or guidelines for resolving conflicts between and among members.
3. We ensure that all important decisions, events, administrative tasks, and transactions are handled and/or recorded in timely, accurate, and efficient ways.
Examples: rosters and potential new member lists filed with the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs, reports from programming and philanthropic efforts, financial materials, annual reports.
4. We provide and promote training to develop management competencies in our members.
Examples: participation in The College's leadership development series, regular meetings with the Director of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs, various conference opportunities, attendance and participation in College management and budget training meetings, manuals or guidebooks.

Important Dates and Meetings

Important dates and deadlines are announced at the Presidents' Meetings and the Fraternity Quad Advisory Council. Additionally, the information is posted on the OFSA website at <http://www.rochester.edu/college/ofsa>, and sent out by email from either the Director or the Student Services Coordinator. It is very important that you attend these meetings, check the website, and read all emails to ensure that your organization does not miss important information and deadlines. **Before September 15th of each year**, OFSA recommends viewing the online calendar and adding all the important dates to your personal calendar, as well as displaying the calendar in a prominent location within the chapter house.

Campus Club Connection

Campus Club Connection (CCC; located at: <http://www.rochester.edu/living/organizations/>) is your resource in club registration and management. At the beginning of each academic year, the Student Activities Office (SAO) and OFSA send out a registration form which your organization must complete in order to activate your CCC account. This registration is also critical to your organization's recognition with the Students' Association and access to supplemental program funding. Once your form is received and your account is activated, you are expected to update all of your CCC information **before the last Friday in September**. This includes providing our office with a list of all your members, both those residing in the house as well as those not. This information is critical for our office, as well as other offices such as Facilities, Health and Safety, and Alumni Affairs.

CHAPTER 3: FINANCES

The continued success of a chapter relies not only on a strong brotherhood, but also the proper management of the chapter finances. Chapter finances, especially the chapter house operating accounts, play a critical role in the viability of your chapter. OFSA highly recommends that chapter houses identify alumni advisors to assist

chapter house treasurers with the management and review of chapter house operating accounts. In fact, many financial transactions and house improvements cannot occur without the participation and approval of alumni advisors.

Best Practice: Damage Billing

A best practice is to ensure that Damage Billing is implemented in your chapter. The Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs can work with the Presidents, House Manager and/or Chapter Treasurers to charge individuals or groups for damage made to the house and house-owned items. Chapters that have begun to implement this policy have found that they save a significant amount of money in their operating by not covering the damages done by individual members or groups of members. Additionally, members and guests are also more apt to maintain their house because they are aware that they may be charged for damage.

Annual Budget Review Process

Every year you will need to submit a budget for your operating account **by the last week in April**. You should also be creating a budget to cover your annual board expenses and OFSA is happy to help you work that out. A finance committee the consists of the Director of OFSA, the Senior Financial Officer of the College, the Student Services Coordinator and the Dean of Students will review each budget. Budgets should be created by the undergraduates in full consultation with their chapters' Alumni Advisor. OFSA will not finalize a budget without the approval of the Alumni Advisor.

Operating Account Practices

OFSA is available to assist with determining the appropriate uses of the operating account. Some appropriate and inappropriate uses are outlined below. Final determination of operating account use is made by the Director of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs. Please remember that any expense over \$1,000 must be approved by the alumni representative of your chapter.

Appropriate Uses

Appropriate uses of operating account include all items related to the operation of the house.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Board (dining) operations
- Cleaning Services
- Facilities Mechanical Upkeep and Repairs
- Telecommunications
- Utilities (Water, Electric, Steam)
- Custodial Materials
- Grounds
- Outside Contractors (must be pre-approved)
- Environmental Health and Safety

- Trash Removal
- Furnishings (All rooms should be supplied with a Bed, a Desk, and a Chair)
- Insurance
- City/County Taxes
- ResTV and ResNet
- Renewal and Replacement funding
- OFSA Assessment Fee
- Facilities Management Fee
- Security

Inappropriate Uses

Inappropriate uses of operating account are all items not related to the direct operation of the house.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- National Dues paid to National Headquarters
- Regional Dues paid to National Headquarters or Regional leadership
- Chapter Dues paid to chapter to support chapter programming and other chapter related function such as chapter retreats.
- Social Fees paid to chapter for social events (this may include formal, semi-formals, rush events like Paintball)
- Re-chartering fees paid to National office to ensure the recognition of the chapter charter.
- Composites
- Rush events (Some rush events may be covered by Board monies if there are distinct food related costs that are approved by OFSA and invoiced. Approval must be secured each rush/recruitment period from the OFSA Director prior to any purchases. Purchases made without the prior approval of OFSA will not be reimbursed. After approval, receipts must be submitted to OFSA.)

Best Practice: Tax Exempt Status

Organizations within the University of Rochester are tax exempt and should not be paying sales tax on items purchased with University managed funds. Be sure to request tax exempt status on your house purchases, and to use University-approved vendors for large purchases. This will save your organization a significant amount of money over the year.

Reimbursements, Payments, and Check Requests

Generally, it is much easier for businesses to invoice your organization and for the University to pay the business directly rather than reimburse your organization. This saves your organization from having to use social funds to advance a payment, plus the University will ensure that your organization is not charged sales tax. To have a bill paid directly, bring the original copy to the OFSA during normal business hours. Upon approval of the Director, a request for payment will be made to University Finance, a check will be cut, and payment will be made to the business – generally within 14 business days.

If your organization pays a bill directly and needs to be reimbursed, bring your receipt to the OFSA during normal business hours. Generally, reimbursements under \$300 are completed the next business day, while reimbursements above \$300 must be submitted to University Finance for a check to be sent to your organization.

Please remember that any expense or reimbursement over \$1,000 must be approved by your alumni representative through a direct email or phone call to the OFSA Director or Student Services Coordinator. Additionally, all payments and reimbursements must follow University policies, and University-approved vendors must be used for items such as office supplies, appliances, furniture, etc.

If there are questions regarding reimbursements, expenses, or check requests, please speak with the Director or Student Services Coordinator.

CHAPTER 4: ROOM AND BOARD CONTRACTS

Room Contract

OFSA provides all chapter houses with a standardized room contract. Chapter houses must use the room contract as a base, but can choose to add on an addendum with additional guidelines for members. The guidelines within the room contract must be followed and enforced. Room contracts, as well as board contracts, are due to the OFSA **by the last Wednesday in March**. This allows for those not choosing to live in the chapter house the option to complete a Residential Life housing contract and participate in room draw in April.

Room Draw Information

Your organization should conduct a room draw for the fall semester **immediately following Spring Break**. This will allow for students to complete the room contract for the following academic year.

Board (Dining) Contract

Much like the room contract, the board contract is standardized across all the chapter houses. Each chapter house will individually choose the amount of a full meal plan, as well as the rules and regulations regarding partial meal plans. Generally, a full meal plan minimum is \$3,500 a year, but the majority of chapter houses have selected larger amounts in order to satisfy the expenses incurred in the dining operation. But, as the monetary limits and guidelines change from year to year, please be sure to review the contract directions. Board contracts, as well as room contracts, are due to the OFSA **by the last Wednesday in March**.

Releasing Members from Contracts

While the University has standardized contracts among the chapter houses and bills the charges to the student term bill, the contract is signed between the fraternity brother and the organization. If, after signing a contract, a member would like to change or cancel the contract, it must be first approved by the Chapter President and/or Treasurer, in consultation with the Chapter Alumni Advisor. Upon this approval, the Student Services Coordinator or Director will make the appropriate changes to the billing.

Please note the change periods on the board contract. Changes outside of that change period could incur an additional fee for the member.

CHAPTER 5: DINING SERVICES AND KITCHEN OPERATION

Chapter Kitchen: Contracted or House-Managed?

Some houses have selected to contract their kitchen management to University Dining Services, while others maintain an in-house kitchen operation by employing a house cook. OFSA recommends that houses contract with University Dining Services because it greatly reduces the paperwork and risk that comes with managing an

Best Practice: Regular Kitchen Inspections

OFSA recommends that chapter officers conduct regular kitchen inspections, at least bi-weekly, to ensure that the cook and members are conducting the operations in a sanitary manner.

Unsanitary conditions should not be tolerated by your organization as it puts the health of every member in jeopardy. Correct all kitchen problems promptly, and alert the OFSA Director if University assistance is required.

employee, but also allows groups to be involved in the selection of their cook as well as their food and menu choices. No matter which option your organization selects, the kitchen must be sanitary, finances managed properly, and OFSA be informed of any problems or concerns.

Contact OFSA if you are interested in a University Dining Services contract – we'll be happy to arrange the meeting and guide you through the options and process!

Kitchen Self-Inspection Checklist

The following sections outline a self-inspection routine that Chapter House Officers can perform. Regular self-inspections and enforcement of sanitation guidelines can ensure that the house kitchen passes official inspections.

Food Protection

- ✓ Non-perishable food products (ex: bag of potatoes) are being stored off the floor in a designated, well-organized area.
- ✓ Non-perishable food containers in good condition (ex: no dented cans, torn-open bags, or dust on top).
- ✓ Potentially hazardous foods (meat, dairy products, etc.) refrigerated except during preparation time.
- ✓ Food in the refrigerator is kept covered.
- ✓ Raw meats in the refrigerator are stored on trays below cooked foods and away from raw vegetables and fruits.
- ✓ Outdated, contaminated, or soiled food is not being kept on the premises.
- ✓ Canned foods are not being stored in the original can after opening (especially acidic foods).
- ✓ Containers of food that have been removed from the original packages are properly labeled.

Equipment: Operations and Cleaning

- ✓ Refrigerators are operating properly and the air temperature is below 45°F.
- ✓ Thermometers are present and accurate in all refrigerators and freezers.
- ✓ The freezer is operating properly.
- ✓ The inside of the refrigerators and freezers is kept clean and free of food spills, odors, and ice build-up.
- ✓ The top of stoves and inside of ovens are kept free of food spills and grease accumulation.
- ✓ The hood area and filters are kept free of dust and grease build-up.
- ✓ Can opener blade is sharp and kept free of food residues.
- ✓ Food contact equipment (slicers, cutting boards, etc.) are very clean and are sanitized before each period of use.

Personnel

- ✓ Food preparer wears a hair restraint and also gloves, if the food will not be thoroughly cooked.
- ✓ Food preparer is not eating during food preparation.
- ✓ Food preparer is not smoking during food preparation.
- ✓ Food preparer washes hands after using the restroom or any other time they may have been soiled (coughing, sneezing, smoking, etc).
- ✓ Food preparer maintains a good level of personal hygiene and cleanliness.
- ✓ Food preparer refrains from working when ill with a disease that is transmissible by food.
- ✓ Food preparer refrains from handling food if he/she has open or infected cuts, wounds, or burns on the hand(s).
- ✓ Food preparer uses proper utensils or equipment to eliminate unnecessary hand contact with cooked or prepared foods.
- ✓ Food preparer has a container of sanitizing solution near the preparation area to store the wiping cloth(s) during the preparation period.

Handwashing/Restrooms

- ✓ Soap and paper towels are available at the handwashing sink in the kitchen.
- ✓ The handwashing sink in the kitchen is not being blocked or used to store dirty utensils or dishes.
- ✓ Soap and paper towels are available at the handwashing sink in the restroom.
- ✓ Toilet paper is available in the restroom.
- ✓ The restroom (toilets, sink, floor) is kept clean.

Dishwashing

- ✓ Dishes and utensils are being washed within a reasonable amount of time after use and are not allowed to accumulate.
- ✓ If dishes and utensils are being washed manually, they are done using the approved three-basin method of washing-rinsing-sanitizing and then air drying.
- ✓ If a dishmachine is used, it is operating properly and the dishes are being sanitized with either 170°F final water rinse, or a chemical sanitizer.

General Cleaning

- ✓ Floors, especially under equipment, are free of dirt, papers, and food matter.
- ✓ Drawers are clean and organized.
- ✓ Cabinets and cupboards are clean and organized.
- ✓ Counters are clean and organized.
- ✓ Trash is kept in plastic-lined containers and is covered when not being used.
- ✓ Trash bags are removed frequently and are not accumulating.
- ✓ The dining area is clean, including floors and eating tables.

Miscellaneous

- ✓ Toxic items such as cleaning chemicals are properly labeled and stored.
- ✓ No structural defects (ex: ripped screens, holes and voids in walls) exist which would allow rodent or insect entry.
- ✓ The kitchen and dining area are free of rodents and insects.
- ✓ The required signs (choking, handwashing, dishwashing) are present and posted in the required locations.

CHAPTER 6: UNIVERSITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Services are provided to Fraternity Houses on a regular basis by the University Facilities staff. There is a mechanic assigned to the Fraternity Quad whose salary is paid for by the six fraternity chapters with houses on the Fraternity Quad. Fraternities can request services by contact Facilities at 585/273-4567 or by submitting a request online through the Facilities & Services Online Work Request system at:

<http://www.facilities.rochester.edu/>. All facility emergencies should contact the Facilities Customer Service Center at 585/273-4567.

Facilities services include, among other items: monitoring and repairing the life-safety components of the house, ensuring the structural integrity of the house exterior and interior, coordinating off-campus vendor contracted repair and labor, and assisting in facility capital project planning.

Facilities & Services Online Work Request System

The Facilities & Services Online Work Request system is located at <http://www.facilities.rochester.edu/>. Facilities work orders can be placed with the online system, but perhaps more importantly, the online system allows you to see past work orders, the status, and cost. This is an excellent tool for House Managers and Treasurers to monitor house repair and maintenance, and to control costs.

Custodial Services

University-staffed custodian service can be contracted for the chapter houses. In the contract, a Building Service Worker (BSW) will be assigned to the chapter house on a schedule determined by the chapter in coordination with University Facilities. While many chapters attempt to have the brotherhood clean the house, many find that supplementing brotherhood cleaning with University-staffed custodian service maintains a cleaner house. A cleaner house is a healthier atmosphere, helps the house pass health and safety inspections, and lowers the wear-and-tear on the house structure which leads to reduced long-term maintenance and repair costs.

To arrange University-staffed custodian service, contact the Facilities Manager for Residential Life Areas, or the Director of OFSA.

CHAPTER 7: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

The mission of the Environmental Health and Safety Office is to provide safety and advisory services to the University Community through managing risk, assessing and evaluating the environment, advocating safe work practices, providing quality educational programs and ensuring compliance with University and regulatory standards. Some of the offices within Environmental Health and Safety are the Fire Marshal's Office, the Pest Control Unit, and the Sanitarian's Office. You can visit the Environmental Health and Safety website at <http://www.safety.rochester.edu/> to learn more information and access services.

Fire Marshal's Office and Fire Safety

The Fire Marshal's Office is responsible for all aspects of maximizing fire safety throughout the University. This includes inspections of buildings, testing of fire detection and protection equipment, conducting drills, providing educational programs, evaluating materials and establishing guidelines for fire safe materials, and reviewing plans for construction and renovation projects.

A detailed list of the fire safety procedures for the River Campus can be found at:

<http://www.safety.rochester.edu/fire/RCfire.html>. All chapters are required to follow University fire safety rules and regulations. Please be aware that campus policies and regulations may be changed between the publication date of this manual, and the final say on all fire safety policies rests with the Fire Marshal's Office.

FIRE ALARM PROCEDURES / FIRE EVACUATION

R – Rescue and relocate anyone in immediate danger.

A – Alert others by activating the building fire alarm and calling ext. 13 from a safe location.

C – Confine the emergency by closing the doors

E – Evacuate immediately. Do not use elevators. Use stairs.

Best Practice: Fire Safety Training

A best practice is to arrange at the beginning of each academic year for your chapter to attend fire safety training conducted by the University Fire Marshal.

If you have any questions or if you'd like to schedule extinguisher training, call the Fire Marshal's Office at 585/275-3243.

If in smoke or heat crawl, keep low to avoid deadly smoke, heat and fumes. If there is smoke in corridor, stay in room, close and seal doors, dial Security at x13 for help (or 585/275-333 from a cell phone), stand by window.

Before opening any doors, feel the door first. If it is hot, don't open the door. If it isn't hot, brace yourself against the door, open it slightly, and if heat or heavy smoke is present, close the door and leave by an alternate exit.

If you can't leave the room, keep the door closed. Open the windows from the top to let out heat and smoke and from the bottom to let in fresh air. Don't break the window; you may need to close it if smoke enters the room from outside. Seal the bottom of your room door and air vents with a rug, blanket or towel. Then hang a light colored object (towel, bed sheet, shirt etc.) out the window to attract the Fire Department's attention. If there is a phone in the room call Security at x13 (or 585/275-3333 from a cell phone) and report that you are trapped. Be sure to give your building name, floor and room number.

If you can leave the room, leave a light on and close all doors behind you. Leave all material in your room or office to avoid wasting time. Take your key in case you cannot reach an exit and you have to return to your room.

Go to the nearest exit or stairway. As you evacuate the building, do so in a calm and orderly fashion. Walk, don't run! Keep conversation levels down. If the first exit is blocked, go to an alternate exit or stairway. Never use an elevator during a fire emergency. A mechanical or electrical failure could leave you trapped at the fire floor or between floors.

If necessary, cover your mouth and nose with a damp cloth to help you breathe.

If you are not able to self evacuate, either proceed to an enclosed stairwell or to a designated area of safe refuge, depending upon your building. If you go to an enclosed stairwell, be sure to position yourself so as not to block or impede pedestrian flow or access to the stairwell.

If you go to a designated area of safe refuge, use the two-way communication device to contact University Security, giving your exact location – building, floor and stairwell/room number.

If all exits are blocked, go back to your room, close the door, open the window, as previously described.

A plan to alert students in the residence halls has been developed. Such actions are only to be performed when it can be done without undue risk. Areas of particular concern are sleeping rooms, locker rooms, laboratories, practice rooms, and any other areas where the occupant may be unable to hear the alarm. Buildings should be evacuated using designated ways of egress (corridors are marked exits). Unless involved in the fire themselves, these will provide 1 hour or more of protection from heat and smoke. When in the fire-affected zone, move quickly away from the fire and beyond any fire door; evacuation to safety may then be done in an expeditious but calm manner.

Stand clear of the area after evacuating to give emergency apparatus and personnel room to maneuver. Go to a designated meeting area and stay there. Residence Life staff will attempt to determine if everyone is out of the building. If possible, call Security (x13, or 585/275-3333 from a cell phone) from a neighboring area and give as much information as possible.

Each person not involved in the emergency procedures should follow the directions of fire, security, and other emergency personnel. No persons may re-enter an evacuated building until permitted by emergency personnel.

Each university member has the responsibility of knowing the location of the fire alarm station, fire extinguisher and primary and secondary exit routes for their primary place of occupancy while on university property. Should a fire be discovered or suspected; a fire alarm should be sounded immediately by activating the pull station. (If time permits, call Security at x13 or 585/275-3333 from a cell phone.)

If you discover or suspect a fire, sound the building fire alarm immediately by activating the pull station. All fires, even small ones must be reported. When an alarm sounds, every building occupant shall evacuate the building immediately. Treat every alarm as an actual emergency.

Be especially aware of handicapped persons in your building. They may need your help to reach a point of safety such as a stairwell. Report to the command post the location of the individual. Rescue others only if you can do so safely. Do not take time to collect jewelry, money or other valuables.

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

Fire extinguishers should be used only after you follow **RACE** (see above) and the area is evacuated.

Fire extinguishers are strategically located throughout the university's buildings. Fire extinguishers are only to be used for incipient fires and if you have been trained within the last year on their use. Extinguishers are used on a voluntary basis only and when it is certain that there is no personal risk to their user. Training classes may be arranged by contacting the University Fire Marshal. Report all extinguishers that are missing, damaged, or discharged, and don't block access to extinguishers. See the Guidelines for Fire Extinguishers and Their Use for additional information

Used properly, a portable fire extinguisher can save lives and property by extinguishing a small fire or containing it until the fire department arrives. Portable fire extinguishers, however, are not designed to fight large or spreading fires.

Candles, Lanterns and Incense

The use of candles, lanterns, tiki lamps, etc. for ambiance or mood purposes can be extremely hazardous and is strictly prohibited. Some recognized religious ceremonies or festivals in which candles play a significant role, such as the Jewish Festival of Lights or Christmas, require the presence of candles. Exceptions are made for these recognized religious or festive uses of open flames with permission from the University Fire Marshal.

Fire Place Safety

Some buildings, including fraternities and sororities, may have working fireplaces. Such fireplaces can represent a potential fire safety hazard. The following is a checklist for the safe maintenance and operation of a fireplace. Contact University Facilities (see above section) for assistance in the maintenance and repair of your chapter fire place.

FIREPLACE MAINTENANCE

- Keep the fireplace in good condition by repairing cracks in the flue lining, bricks and mortar.
- Keep flue clear of soot, creosote and obstructions. Inspect the fireplace and chimney at least once a year to prevent creosote buildup. A copy of the inspection report must be submitted to the University Fire Marshal.

SAFE OPERATION OF A FIREPLACE

- Install a screen that completely covers the fireplace opening to keep sparks from flying out. Keep combustible materials such as carpets, furniture, paper, logs and kindling at least 3 feet away from the fireplace. Arrange andirons so logs can't roll out.
- Use only enough fuel to keep the fire at the desired temperature. Avoid "roaring" fires. They can start chimney fires from soot and creosote deposits in the flue.
- Do not use gasoline or other flammable liquids to kindle or rekindle a fire because the flammable vapors can explode. Never use or store fuels near a fire; explosive vapors can travel the length of a room.

- Keep the damper open while the fuel is burning to provide for efficient burning and to prevent accumulation of poisonous or explosive gases.
- Never burn Christmas tree greens. They cause many sparks when burning and can cause a chimney fire.
- Remove colored comic sections before rolling newspaper into logs. The colored inks contain lead and can produce toxic gases.
- Do not use coal, charcoal or polystyrene packaging in a fireplace unless the fireplace is designed to handle the excess heat and smoke which occurs when burning these materials.
- Do not treat artificial logs (made from sawdust and wax) the same way you treat real wood logs. Use only one at a time. If you use more, they can produce too much heat for some fireplaces to withstand.
- Be sure that all ashes have thoroughly cooled before you dispose of them. Put ashes in a lidded metal container to prevent a possible fire and provide a sturdy place to store them. Ashes make good fertilizer in gardens, flowerbeds, etc.
- Be sure the fire is out completely before retiring for the evening.

SAFE SUPPLY OF AIR FOR A FIREPLACE

- A fireplace fire requires about five (5) times as much air as most buildings need for liberal ventilation. With today's tightly-constructed buildings incorporating weather-stripped doors, caulked windows and self-closing exhaust vents, a fireplace can set up reverse draft and suck poisonous carbon monoxide fumes from combustion-type (natural gas, etc.) water heaters or furnaces and discharge them into the living room.
- In tight buildings, the fireplace may also consume enough oxygen from the air in the building to cause problems to occupants. To be safe, a positive source of outside air should be supplied to all fireplaces and wood-or-coal burning stoves to bring in enough fresh air for efficient burning. This can be provided by installing an outside air vent or opening a window when the fireplace or stove is being used. To keep smoke from entering the room, turn off exhaust fans and close the registers of forced air-heating systems, which are near the fireplace.

Space Heaters

Contact Facilities Work Control Center for any heating, ventilation, and air condition (HVAC) problems as the HVAC system in your area may just need an adjustment. The use of space heaters in student residences and chapter houses is strictly prohibited.

Guidelines for Safe Holiday Decorations

There has been an increasing tendency in recent years for student residents and staff to decorate their individual rooms, offices and residence facilities for holidays. There are numerous fire safety-related hazards that can be created by such decorations. Policies concerning holiday decorations may vary dependent upon the type of building construction and fire detection and suppression equipment utilized. The following are a number of holiday decoration guidelines for Off-Site Housing and River Campus Facilities:

- The use of natural trees (cut or alive), natural wreaths, boughs, or greenery are prohibited except as approved by the Fire Marshal because of its fire potential and rapid flame spread.
- Only use artificial trees, wreaths, boughs, garland or greenery labeled as fire resistant or flame retardant and that are UL (Underwriters' Laboratories) listed or classified are permitted.
- Artificial trees may be metallic or non-metallic.

- Do not place electric lights on metallic trees. Remote spotlights are recommended for use with metal trees to avoid an electrical hazard.
- Christmas trees and related decorations are not permitted in corridors, aisles, stairways or passageways. Trees and related decorations are not allowed to obstruct the usual view of exit signs.
- The following combustible materials are prohibited for use in holiday decorations – hay or straw, bamboo, dry moss, wood shavings, dry leaves, wood back, corn stalks and corn shucks, saw dust, tumbleweed, flammable powders or liquids, plastic sheeting/pallets, untreated cotton batting, flock, paper streamers or confetti in large quantities.
- For holiday decorations, use plastic or foil decorations such as satin balls, plastic icicles, and holiday ribbon. Spray snow and tinsel are also permissible.
- Combustible materials may not be placed on the surface of doors facing hallways, stairwells, or other exits (resident room doors, bathrooms doors, stairwell doors, exterior doors, etc.) Examples of combustible materials include paper, contact paper, and plastics, etc. One exception to this is a single memo or message board may be placed on a resident room door facing the hallway. The size may not exceed 200 square inches.
- Posting of resident names is permitted on a single or name board placed next to the door on the masonry wall, not on the door. Room numbers may not be covered, and the nametag or sign may not exceed 200 square inches for both residents combined.
- Posting of flyers and other combustible material is permitted only on general purpose bulletin boards, hall council bulletin boards and authorized posting areas for residence hall staff.
- Every electric light set used must bear the Underwriters' Laboratories (UL) or Factory Mutual (FM) label and be identified for indoor use.
- All holiday lights must be turned off before leaving the area.
- The use of holiday lights, electric ornaments and extension cords in corridors and over exit doors is prohibited.
- Extension cords used for temporary holiday decorations must be UL listed, be a minimum of 16 gauge wire and properly plugged into a wall outlet.
- Use no more than three sets of holiday lights per extension cord.
- Before use, light strings should be carefully checked to ensure there are no loose sockets and that wires are not frayed or damaged.
- Light strings can generate enough heat to ignite paper or cardboard. Holiday lights should not come into contact with paper, packages, cloth or other combustible items.
- Electrical outlets should not be overloaded – cube taps are prohibited.
- Light strings should not be attached to walls or molding with staples, tacks, nails or paper tape. Use electrical tape or string them with cup-type hooks.
- The use of candles, lanterns, oil lamps or any type of other open flames is prohibited. (Refer to *Candles, Lanterns and Incense* section.) As an option, electrical candles may be used.

Barbecue Grill Guidelines

The use of gas or charcoal grills may be permitted provided the following guidelines are adhered to:

- Charcoal grills may never be used indoors.
- Grills must be kept at least 15 feet from any structure or any combustible materials.

- Grills are never to be used on a building patio, porch or roof, particularly if there is combustible structure above.
- Units may have a maximum grill area of ten (10) square feet.
- A minimum of two-2 ½ gallon pressurized water extinguishers, a sixteen (16) quart pail of water or a charged water hose must be present during grill use.
- An attendant trained in the use of a fire extinguisher must be provided.
- When using a charcoal grill, flammable charcoal lighter fluid will be used prior to lighting. Never add lighter fluid after the coals are lit. If more charcoal is needed, add pre-soaked coals.
- Used charcoal should be left in the grill until cold to the touch or thoroughly soaked in water before disposal. Do not place coals in dumpster until they are all cold.
- Never leave a cooking or lit grill unattended.
- When using a barbecue grill, do not wear loose fitting clothing that could catch on fire.
- All gas lines, valves and connections shall be listed for their use.
- All gas lines, valves and connections on gas grills will be periodically inspected to detect leakage. If a leak is detected, the grill will not be used until the gas leak is repaired.

Sanitarian's Office

The Sanitarian's Office of the Environmental Health & Safety Department provides food protection and general sanitation services. The main function of this office in regards to the Chapter Houses is to ensure living conditions meet a certain standard of sanitation and the kitchens consistently comply with Part 14 of the New York State Sanitary Code, and, most importantly, that proper food safety principals and practices are being followed to minimize the risk of food borne illness among house members and guests. The Sanitarian's Office provides regular inspections and necessary re-inspections of the kitchen and houses. Reports are sent to pertinent House Officers, Alumni Presidents, the Director of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs, and Facilities. Backed by an agreement between the Sanitarian's Office and the Fraternity Quad Advisory Council, the Sanitarian has the right to shut down any kitchen that significantly does not meet State Code. This is a last resort, however, sometimes a necessary action to protect the house members from a regulatory or food safety risk. The Sanitarian's Office is available at all times for consultation or problem solving. The Office is available 24/7 for any real emergencies that arise. Pete Castronovo, Senior Sanitarian, administers the Sanitarian's Office and can be reached at 585/275-8405.

Pest Control Unit

The Pest Control Unit of Environmental Health & Safety provides pest prevention and pest abatement services to the Chapter Houses. The Senior Sanitarian manages the Pest Control Unit, which works closely with the Sanitarian's Office to help minimize pest infestations. The Pest Control Unit provides a regular monthly service to each Chapter House; however, if pest problems are noted between regular services, the technicians are available and should be contacted. Pests can spread disease and need to be taken seriously. Many pest issues result from inadequate sanitation or deficiencies such as gaps under outside doors or leaving doors and windows open without screens. The Pest Control Unit is available 24/7 for pest control emergencies, and can be reached at 585/275-3241.

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