

CHEC Offers Dorm Room Safety Tips

Eager college freshmen will soon begin filling college campuses across the state and nation. Each student will likely bring a computer, television, gaming console, mini refrigerator, microwave, fan and a host of other personal electronic devices, like cell phones and iPods. Sounds like a lot of stuff, right? Don't forget – your college freshman will be sharing that tiny 10 X 10 space with a roommate who will have just as many gadgets, all of which need to be plugged in. Familiarize yourself with the tips below, and use this as an opportunity to teach your child one more important safety lesson – how to avoid turning his or her first college dorm room into an electrical safety danger zone.

- Do not overload extension cords, power strips or outlets. These items can overheat and/or deteriorate causing the potential for an electric shock or fire.
- Get a power strip with an over-current protector. They turn off automatically if too much current is drawn.
- Be aware of electrical outlets too hot to the touch. If the electrical outlet is so hot that you cannot leave a hand on it, unplug all appliances immediately to avoid the risk of shock or fire.
- Do not run cords under doors or carpets. Extension cords can short circuit and overheat or ignite under carpet.
- Use caution when using electrical appliance and never plug more than one high-wattage appliance into a single outlet. Replace frayed or cracked cords.
- Keep a fire extinguisher nearby.

Keep in mind that many residence halls were built years ago, and even with renovations, dorm wiring cannot handle the demands of computers, refrigerators, microwaves, gaming systems and other technologies that require electricity. In fact, the National Fire Protection Association estimates that nearly 1,600 fires occur in on-campus housing each year, and overloaded circuits are one of the leading causes of these fires.

Your child's dorm should provide an escape plan for your student, but your student needs to walk the route and memorize landmarks in case visibility is an issue. Your child should know two exits to the room in case the most natural exit is blocked, and most importantly, your child should never ignore a fire alarm because every second counts in a fire situation.