

**West Chester University**  
**Department of Environmental Health and Safety**

**Fire Prevention and Protection Policy**

**Purpose**

To set forth a policy is to establish the minimum requirements necessary to provide a reasonable level of life safety and property protection from the hazards of fire, explosion, or dangerous conditions in new and existing buildings, structures and premises.

**General**

Each year, many lives are lost and millions of dollars in property is destroyed by fire. West Chester University is committed to providing its students, staff, faculty, and guests with a safe environment to learn, live and work. Failure to do so may jeopardize the safety and the well-being of not only yourself but others.

**Policy**

1. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are published for general information:

- A. **Arson:** Arson is defined as the malicious and intentional burning of property. Arson is a crime. Anyone caught setting fires or maliciously destroying fire protection equipment will be subject to University disciplinary action as well as prosecution by external authorities.
- B. **Cooking Appliances:** All ranges, ovens, food boilers, upright broilers, charcoal broilers char-broilers, griddles, deep-fry fryers or similar appliances utilized to heat, cook or process food for human or animal consumption.
- C. **Decorative Material:** All materials such as: curtains, draperies, fabrics, streamers, and surface coverings applied over the building finish for decorative, acoustical or other effect. Additionally, batting, cloth, cotton, hay, stalks, straw, vines, leaves, trees, moss and similar items utilized for decorative effect, including foam plastic, materials containing foam plastic, seasonal lighting and poster tapestry, etc..
- D. **Exit Stairway:** An exit component, that is separated from all other interior spaces of a building or structure by fire-resistive construction and opening protectives, and provides for a protected path of egress travel in a vertical direction to the exit discharge.

**West Chester University**  
**Department of Environmental Health and Safety**

- E. **Exit Sign:** A sign internally illuminated with the word “EXIT” imprinted thereon which marks the location of exits leading to the exterior of the building.
  - F. **Fire Hazard:** Any condition, arrangement, or act which will increase, or may cause an increase of the hazard or menace of fire to a greater degree than customarily recognized as normal by persons in the public service of preventing, suppressing or extinguishing fire; or which may obstruct, delay, or hinder, or may become the cause of obstruction, delay or hindrance to the prevention, suppression, or extinguishment of fire.
  - G. **Fire Rated Stairwell:** Enclosed stairwell with fire rating which connects all floors of a building and provides a ground floor exit.
  - H. **Fireworks:** Any combustible or explosive composition or any substance or combination of substances or any article prepared for the purpose of producing a visible or an audible effect by combustion, explosion, deflagration, or detonation.
  - I. **Occupied Building:** Any building in which a person or persons are present.
2. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
- A. **Fire Safety Specialist:** The Fire Safety Specialist shall be responsible for the organization and coordination of the campus fire prevention and protection activities. The duties of the Fire Safety Specialist shall include the following:
    - 1. Supervision of the fire and life safety related activities in campus buildings.
    - 2. Supervision of the maintenance, testing, and repair of all fire and life safety systems, equipment and apparatus for compliance with all applicable laws and regulations. This includes all building and campus fire alarm systems, fire extinguishers, fire pumps, fire sprinkler and standpipe systems and chemical fire suppression systems.
    - 3. The enforcement of this policy and the correction of potential fire hazards.
    - 4. Supervises and/or conducts fire and life safety inspections of campus buildings, other structures, grounds, fire and life safety protection systems, and

**West Chester University**  
**Department of Environmental Health and Safety**

fire protection equipment for compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.

5. Conducts the training of university personnel and students in fire prevention techniques, the proper use of fire and life safety equipment, and other safety-related concerns.
6. Reviews building renovation and new construction plans for compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
7. Inspects ongoing building renovation and new construction job sites for compliance with applicable life safety, fire and building codes.
8. Provides consultation services and recommends fire protection systems and fire rated construction techniques to Facilities Design & Construction and Physical Plant Operations.
9. Approves emergency plans for control of fires, evacuation of building occupants, and salvage of property, and control of students and employees.
10. In conjunction with the West Chester University (WCU) Department of Public Safety, local fire officials, and the PA State Police Fire Marshal, assists with and/or conducts investigations of fires to determine the origin, cause and extent of such fires and the damage caused hereby. The Fire Safety Specialist shall keep a record of all fires and all facts concerning the same, including contributing factors, deficiencies of personnel or equipment, and actions necessary to prevent similar incidents from occurring. The PA State Police Fire Marshal holds jurisdiction over all fire incidents and shall be the chief investigator in all instances. Determination of crime scene status shall be the responsibility of the PA State Police Fire Marshal and the WCU Department of Public Safety. All fires shall be treated as crime scenes until a determination is made otherwise.
11. Supervises and observes, when on duty, fire exit drills in campus buildings.

**West Chester University**  
**Department of Environmental Health and Safety**

12. Advises the Director of the Environmental Health & Safety of ways to improve fire and life safety.

**B. Facility Administrator/Resident Hall Director:** The Building Facility Administrator for each university building, with the exception of Resident Halls, shall serve as a point of contact with the Fire Safety specialist for fire safety related issues. Resident Hall Directors shall serve as a point of contact with the Fire Safety specialist for fire safety related issues in Resident Halls. The Facility Administrators and Resident Hall Directors shall assist the Fire Safety Specialist with implementation of this policy in their respective buildings. The duties of Facility Administrator/Resident Hall Director shall including the following:

1. Facility Administrators and Resident Hall Directors shall take steps to eliminate existing fire hazards documented in inspection reports filed by EHS staff.
2. Resident Hall Directors shall conduct fire exit drills within their assigned building in accordance with this policy.
3. Facility Administrators/Resident Hall Directors shall notify the Public Safety Department when their assigned buildings are occupied outside the hours of normal occupancy.
4. Facility Administrators/Resident Hall Directors shall notify the Public Safety Department when their assigned buildings are closed and vacated.
5. Facility Administrators/Resident Hall Directors shall designate meeting locations for accounting of occupants. Designated meeting location shall be away from building or in adjoining buildings etc. They should be away from driveways or other access ways to building. Specific work areas or floors of building should gather at separate locations to prevent confusion.

3. PROCEDURES

**A. Reporting Fire:** The person discovering any fire, regardless of the degree of intensity, shall immediately initiate the following actions:

**West Chester University**  
**Department of Environmental Health and Safety**

1. Activate any available fire alarm manual pull station in those buildings equipped with a fire alarm system.  
Or  
Verbally notify the building's occupants of the fire in those buildings not equipped with a fire alarm system.
  2. Locate the nearest telephone in a safe area away from the fire and dial Public Safety at 610-436-3311. When the Police Dispatcher answers, give notification of the nature of the fire emergency, the name of the building, and the exact location (floor and room number or area) of the fire.
  3. Evacuate the building, and report to the building's designated area and await further instruction.
4. **Fire Prevention Responsibilities:** Every member of the University community is charged with the responsibility of constantly exerting every effort to prevent the occurrence of fires: Specific guidance follows:
- A. **Disposal of waste material** (combustible) – Good housekeeping is the backbone of fire safety and should be a primary concern in every type of occupancy, from the simplest dwelling to the most complex research facility. Rubbish, trash, waste paper, oily rags, or other flammable materials will not be allowed to accumulate in or about a building. Such materials will be promptly disposed of in a metal covered receptacles provided for such use and will be collected daily.
  - B. **Storage of flammable material** – Paints, oil, and other flammable liquids and chemicals used for routine maintenance and in chemistry labs will be stored in approved fire resistant cabinets or remote locations. Gasoline, kerosene, oily insecticides, and other related flammable liquids will not be stored in occupied buildings.
  - C. **Use of flammable and combustible materials** - Materials other than those with a water base will not be used unless specifically authorized by the Fire Safety Specialist. Solvents or cleaning fluids will not be used in occupied buildings or in unventilated rooms, unless specifically authorized. Whenever an approved solvent or cleaning fluid is used the user will exercise every precaution to prevent an explosion or fire. Flammable liquids will be stored in safety cans, properly identified.

**West Chester University**  
**Department of Environmental Health and Safety**

- D. **Bulletin Boards & Postings** – Only bulletin boards and designated areas shall be utilized for the purpose of attaching informational wall posting and posters within campus buildings. Bulletin boards and postings shall not be attached to the inside of any exit stairway, nor shall they be placed to obstruct exits, access thereto, access from or visibility thereof. Areas adjacent to elevators shall not be posted, except for administrative information postings to all occupants. Bulletin boards and postings shall not be attached to corridor walls within student residential occupancies with the exception of bulletin boards next to Resident Assistant rooms.
- E. **Report of Fire Hazard** – The Fire Safety Specialist shall be notified of any potential fire hazards, including but not limited to, defective electrical wiring or components, excessive build-up of trash, improper storage of combustible and flammable materials, damaged fire detection and protection equipment, blocked exit paths, defective exit doors and exit hardware, etc. Defective electric wiring, fixtures and exit lights or defective gas pipes and fixtures will be reported immediately to the Work Control Office for repair during normal working hours and to the Department of Public Safety after normal working hours, weekends, and holidays. Repairs or alteration to electrical wiring and fixtures, or gas pipes and fixtures shall be made only by authorized maintenance personnel. It shall be the responsibility of the Facility Administrator/Resident Hall Director to notify the Fire Safety specialist of any exit lights that are not in proper working condition.

**West Chester University**  
**Department of Environmental Health and Safety**

- F. **Restrictions on the use of Decorative Materials** – Decorative items which contain paper or other combustible material shall not be used without prior approval of the Fire Safety Specialist. Decorative materials shall include such items as curtains, draperies, streamers, cloth, cotton, batting, straw, vines, leaves, trees, or moss when in use for decorative effect on wall or ceiling coverings, or when used for acoustical or other effect, but shall not include floor coverings, ordinary window shades or material one fortieth of an inch or less in thickness applied directly to and adhering tightly to a non-combustible base. No decorative material shall be used which as applied will ignite and allow flames to spread over the surface when exposed to a match flame test conducted by the Fire Safety Specialist. Holiday decorations shall also meet the requirements set forth in the Holiday Fire Safety Policy.

Combustible materials are prohibited from being hung from the ceiling covering the light fixtures within the student's room.

Curtains and/or drapes will be restricted to non-combustible materials which do not require periodic flame proofing.

Curtains used in Asplundh Hall and SOMPAC shall be fire-proofed as required by applicable standards.

- G. **Smoking** – Smoking or carrying of a lighted pipe, cigar, cigarette or any other type of smoking paraphernalia or material is prohibited in all university buildings. Smoking is only permitted in approved designated smoking areas.
- H. **Parking of Automobiles** – The parking of automobiles is regulated by the Public Safety Department. In addition, the following fire precaution will be observed:
- (1) Fire Department inlet connections and fire hydrants shall be maintained free of obstructions and vehicles at all times.

**West Chester University**  
**Department of Environmental Health and Safety**

- (2) When required by the Fire Safety Specialist, approved signs or other approved notices shall be provided for designated fire lanes to identify such lanes or prohibit the obstruction thereof. Signs or notices shall be freestanding signs or marked curbs, sidewalks, or other traffic surfaces that have the words “FIRE LANE–NO PARKING” painted in yellow in an approved size and spacing. Signs or notices shall be maintained in a clean and legible condition at all times and replaced when necessary to provide adequate visibility.
- I. **Fire Exits** – The corridor and stairway approaches to ramps, doors or other exits will be kept free of obstruction at all times to insure immediate use in case of an emergency. Any fire exit not provided with an illuminated exit sign will be properly posted with an “EXIT” sign by Plant Operations on the inside surface above the door leading to the exterior of the building. During inclement weather, snow and ice will be kept clear of entrances and exits by assigned Facilities or contractor personnel, with periodic inspections by the Facility Administrator to insure that this has been accomplished.
- J. **Use of Electrical Appliances and Equipment** – All electrical equipment and/or appliances shall bear the seal of approval of the “Underwriter’s Laboratories, Inc.” The use of electric irons is prohibited except in Laundry rooms.

All cooking is restricted to designated kitchens with the exception of Resident Hall rooms, where microwave ovens are permitted. Other cooking appliances (with the exception of microwave ovens), electric heaters, and kerosene heaters are prohibited for usage in the Resident Hall rooms.

Extension cords shall be for temporary use only. Extension cords shall not exceed 10 feet in length and no electrical cord of any type shall be spliced. Electrical cords shall not run under rugs or be supported by nails or other metal fasteners. Electrical outlets and cords shall not be used to supply more than two appliances (toasters, coffee makers, portable heaters, toaster ovens, etc). Portable space heater shall not be plugged in to an extension cord. Surge protection strips shall not be plugged in to each other.

**West Chester University**  
**Department of Environmental Health and Safety**

All electrical Vending Machines shall be properly grounded and shall be maintained to prevent accumulation of dust, grease, and lint on and around the motors or compressors.

Any alterations or additions to a building electrical system shall be approved by the Plant Operations and shall conform to the National Electrical Code. Wiring shall not be run from one room to another for the purpose of amplification.

The use of UL listed decorative lights for decoration is permitted with the following restrictions:

- (1) Decorative lights shall not be installed on ceilings or over doorways
- (2) Scotch tape shall not be used to install decorative lights
- (3) Decorative lights shall not come in contact with or otherwise obstruct any fire protection device (such as sprinkler system piping) or fire notification device (such as a smoke detector or horn/strobe)
- (4) Decorative lights shall not be wrapped around sprinkler piping, sprinkler heads, smoke detectors, horn/strobes, curtain rods, bed posts, or bed frames
- (5) Damaged decorative lights shall be removed and destroyed immediately

**K. Precautions for the use and storage of compressed gases:**

- (1) Where oxygen is being used, it is the responsibility of the user to insure that cylinders are securely strapped to an immovable object or to a wall and to insure that the following sign is prominently displayed: "OXYGEN IN USE-NO SMOKING"
- (2) Where oxygen or other compressed gas is being stored, cylinders will be securely strapped to the wall or placed in regular conveyor carts designed for storage purposes.
- (3) Storage areas for flammable gases shall constitute "No Smoking" areas, with appropriate signage designating same.

**West Chester University**  
**Department of Environmental Health and Safety**

- (4) Compressed air or gas cylinders which have not been subjected to hydrostatic tests within the past five years shall not be used. It is the responsibility of the user to check the last testing date. Markings are branded on steel cylinders in one-half inch figures, indicating the month and year within 10 inches of the neck of the cylinders and immediately under the valve, e.g. "6-80" indicate that the cylinder was tested in June 1980. Areas where gas cylinders are stored or used will be designated "No Smoking" areas and signage posted.
- L. **Stocking of Supplies** – Storage of materials in any building shall not be higher than thirty (30) inches below ceiling/joists and shall not exceed designed structural floor load capacity. A minimum sprinkler head clearance of 18" shall also be maintained.
- M. **Disposal of Cigarettes** – Cigarettes shall be completely extinguished by mashing them in an ash tray or sand urn. Cigarette stubs may be emptied into metal wastebaskets only after a thorough inspection to preclude the presence of live ashes. Ash trays will not be emptied into waste receptacles when there are less than twenty (20) minutes remaining before the close of business or leaving the area unattended.
- N. **Installation and/or Removal of Portable Air Conditioning Units** – No portable air conditioning unit will be installed or removed without the specific approval of Plant Operations.
- O. **Gasoline** – The use of gasoline as anything other than a motor fuel is prohibited, and the storage or use inside buildings other those designated by the Fire Safety Specialist is strictly forbidden.
- P. **Spray Painting** – Spray painting with oil base paints is prohibited unless specific approval has been given by EHS personnel.
- Q. **Storage of Flammable Liquids** – Flammable liquids shall be stored in approved containers and cabinets.
- R. **Fireworks** – The introduction, sale, possession, or use of Fireworks on the University property is prohibited unless approved by the Fire Safety Specialist.
- S. **Fire Rated Stairwells** – Fire rated stairwells will be kept clear at all times. No bicycles, paper on walls, or storage of any kind shall be permitted. Bicycles found anywhere other than the owner's room and/or the bicycle storage room or basements will be removed by the Fire Safety Specialist.

**West Chester University**  
**Department of Environmental Health and Safety**

- T. **Fire Exit Doors** – Jamming, blocking, decorating, or propping materials against fire exit doors is prohibited. Fire doors will be kept close at all times unless connected to an approved hold-open device interfaced with the building’s fire alarm system.
- U. **Candles and other Open Flame Devices** - Candles and other open flame devices are prohibited. The presence or use of candles, incense burners or other open flame devices is prohibited in all University facilities. This policy shall not apply to devices such as Bunsen burners used in laboratories, building fireplaces that have previously been approved for use, food preparation activities associated with Food Services and candles for approved applications.

Individuals requesting use of an open flame device for a specific event must obtain approval from the Fire Safety Specialist.

- V. **Charcoal Grill(s)** – The barbecue grill(s) must be at least ten feet (10) away from any other type of activity. A roped off area or some other means of physically separating the barbecue grill area from the other activities will reduce the chances of an accidental fire or a burn injury from occurring.

On-site fire extinguishing equipment to deal with a fire emergency must be present. Two 10 LB ABC fire extinguisher shall be left near the grill(s) throughout the burning phase for fire emergency response. The fire extinguisher may be borrowed from EHS. A university staff member or student staff member shall be present at all times to provide a fire watch and to observe the grill(s) while they are in use. The university staff person shall be trained in the use of a hand portable fire extinguisher.

Only use self-lighting charcoal as the fuel source. Charcoal lighter fluid, wood, paper, etc. shall not be used.

Safely extinguish the fire and dispose of the fire residue when done grilling by sprinkling the charcoal with water out of a bucket and onto the charcoal by hand. Stir the fire with a wooden stick. Report the above procedure until the fire has been completely extinguished. The extinguished charcoal shall be allowed to sit for twenty (20) minutes before disposing of the fire residuals into a metal can.

The person responsible shall obtain the necessary grill use permit and insure that an attendant is present at all times while the fire is lit.

Refer to the university’s Grill Permit/Policy for specific information.

**West Chester University**  
**Department of Environmental Health and Safety**

- W. **Propane Gas Grill(s)** – Propane gas grills shall be located a minimum distance of fifteen feet (15’) away from all buildings.

On-site fire extinguishing equipment to deal with a fire emergency must be present. Two 10 LB ABC fire extinguishers shall be left near the propane gas grill(s) throughout the grilling for fire emergency response.

A university staff member or student staff member shall be present at all times to provide a fire watch and to observe the grill(s) while they are in use. The university staff person shall be trained in the use of a hand portable fire extinguisher.

The person responsible shall obtain the necessary grill use permit and insure that an attendant is present at all times while the fire is lit.

Refer to the university’s Grill Permit/Policy for specific information.

- X. **Area Rugs** – Area rugs and the like are permitted for use in offices and dormitory rooms with the following restriction:

(1) Area rugs and the like shall not restrict the clear and complete opening of any exit door. No special physical effort shall be needed to open said doors.

5. **Removal of Records and Equipment**

A. General Guidelines

The primary concern in the event of a fire shall be the evacuation of students and all other personnel from danger areas. No person will be allowed to enter a fire area for removal of records, equipment or personal belongings, except when directed to do so by the Fire Safety Specialist, West Chester Borough Fire Chief, or designee. All records and equipment will be removed in accordance with the priority levels established herein. Selected record containers and selected items and equipment will be labeled with the wording “Fire Priority”. No priority will be placed on drawers containing blank forms or office supplies. It is recommended that departments containing priority documents consider purchasing fire proof containers for said documents. There is no guarantee that documents categorized as “Fire Priority” which are not appropriately protected will be safe from fire and fire fighting practices.

**West Chester University**  
**Department of Environmental Health and Safety**

B. Document Classification

1. Fire Priority I
  - (a) Records which require permanent retention and which cannot be easily replaced.
  - (b) Records which are essential to the operation of the section and which cannot be easily replaced.
2. Fire Priority II

Selected valuable portable equipment necessary to the operation

6. **Fire Drill Procedures**

A. Resident Halls

In compliance with State regulations, Resident Halls shall conduct monthly fire drills. Monthly fire drills are held at varying hours and apply to all occupants of the building.

B. All other Occupancies

For all other occupancies, fire drills shall be held at regular intervals of every six months, or more frequently when necessary to familiarize all occupants with drill procedures and to establish the conduction of the drill as a matter of established routine.

C. Compliance

State Law requires that all occupants of the building evacuate. Persons responsible for classes should be the last to leave the classroom and the last to return following an all clear signal. This same individual should appoint someone to accompany any handicapped person who is physically unable to participate in the Fire Drill, to the nearest Horizontal Fire Exit and remain with that person until the fire drill has been completed. Vertical evacuation by Handicapped persons and those assisting them will not be necessary during Fire Drills. All drills must be conducted in an orderly and dignified manner, keeping in mind the importance of speed in evacuating the building.

**West Chester University**  
**Department of Environmental Health and Safety**

1. Employees must become familiar with fire exits nearest their teaching post, research post, or office. As a general rule, use the closest exit but pre-determine an alternate exit route. Students in residence halls should make every attempt to avoid using the center stairwell during an emergency; however, it may be used if all other exits are impassable. Become familiar with the posted fire evacuation plans of every building on campus that applies to you. This preplanning is of extreme importance. It is your responsibility to know the way out of a building in the event of an emergency.
2. Do not re-enter evacuated building until authorized to do so by the official conducting the drill.

7. **Fire Equipment**

Tampering with fire safety equipment such as fire extinguishers, alarm pull stations, smoke detectors, heat sensors or sprinkler systems are prohibited, and violators may be prosecuted. Making a false fire report, warning, or threat of fire by any means of communication is prohibited, and violators may be prosecuted.