

## Fire and Life Safety

**Original Implementation:** July 16, 2013

**Last Revision:** July 26, 2016

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to aid in protecting the physical, human, fiscal and environmental resources of the university. To help achieve this goal the Department of Environmental Health, Safety, and Risk Management (EHSRM) provides various personal and group training sessions, safety guidelines and procedures on the EHSRM website (<http://www.sfasu.edu/safety/>) and fire and life safety inspections throughout the campus on a regular basis.

EHSRM has the primary responsibility to establish and enforce policies and procedures that ensure university compliance with fire and life safety guidelines.

### POLICY STATEMENTS

1. The university's fire and life safety program is designed to prevent or reduce property loss and injury from fire and explosions arising from storage, handling, and use of flammable and combustible substances, materials, and devices. The fire and life safety guidelines and procedures available on the EHSRM website are essential in promoting fire and life safety and enhancing university compliance with applicable fire and life safety standards.
2. Non-compliance with fire safety codes and standards can result in sanctions against the university, as well as posing serious risks to students, employees, visitors, and university property. Disciplinary action may be taken against university students and employees who do not comply with this policy and associated regulations. Offending materials and substances may be confiscated permanently for further protection of the surrounding environment.
3. The university's fire and life safety program will comply with the NFPA 1 Fire Code and NFPA 101 Life Safety Code and all referenced materials therein, as well as all procedures listed in the EHSRM Web page and the SFA Campus Safety Information Web page.

### DEFINITIONS

1. **Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ)** – National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) title for the organization, office, or individual responsible for enforcing the

requirements of a code or standard, and approving equipment, materials, an installation, or fire and safety procedures in accordance with NFPA rules and regulations.

2. **Egress** – A continuous and unobstructed way of travel from any point in a building or structure to a public way consisting of three separate and distinct parts 1) the exit access, 2) the exit, and 3) the exit discharge.
3. **Exit Corridor** – A pedestrian pathway that allows direct access to the outside of a building and allows access to a building entrance and subsequent pathways to the outside of the building.
4. **Flammable and Combustible Materials** – A general classification given to gaseous, liquid, or solid materials that are capable of being easily ignited and burn rapidly. Examples of common flammable materials are: natural gas, liquefied petroleum gas, gasoline, oils, organic powders, films, paper and paper materials, powdered solids such as powdered metals, sawdust, plastics such as polystyrene, polyethylene, synthetic and natural rubbers, aerosols, paints, lacquers, floor cleaning agents, and all other flammable organic material that has not been specifically treated to be flame retardant.
5. **National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)** – An international professional nonprofit organization with the mission of reducing the worldwide burden of fire and other hazards on the quality of life by developing and advocating scientifically based consensus codes and standards, research, training, and education. NFPA serves as the world's leading advocate of fire prevention and is an authoritative source on public safety.
6. **Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratory (NRTL)** – An organization which is recognized by Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) as one which tests for safety, and lists or labels or accepts equipment or materials. Examples of NRTL's are: Underwriters Laboratory (UL) MET Laboratory, Electrical Testing Labs (ETL), and Canadian Safety Agency (CSA).
7. **Open Flame** – Any fire regardless of size or origin. This includes, but not limited to, candles, incense burners, and fireworks capable of igniting flammable or combustible materials in the area of the flame, spark, burner, or explosive.
8. **State Fire Marshal (SFM)** – Any official member of the state fire marshal's office.
9. **Violation** – A condition or hazard identified as an infringement of applicable state, local, and national fire and life safety standards.
10. **Fire Door** – A door with a fire-resistance rating (sometimes referred to as a fire protection rating for closures) used as part of a passive fire protection system to reduce the spread of fire or smoke between compartments and to enable safe egress from a building or structure.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The director of EHSRM (or designee) has primary responsibility to administer and oversee compliance with the university's fire safety program. Duties of EHSRM include:
  - a) Inspecting university buildings and property for fire safety hazards, risks, or in response to a notice of a possible violation. In carrying out this duty, the EHSRM officer or representative shall have the authority to enter any university building, structure, room, office or laboratory (university employees may accompany the EHSRM officer on an inspection of their area);
  - b) Recommending preventative and corrective action and working with university departments to assure appropriate action is taken;
  - c) Establishing and coordinating fire safety training programs (ex: fire drills) to comply with regulatory requirements or upon request of department heads;
  - d) Serving as the official university contact with state and local fire marshals and other state agencies regarding fire safety;
  - e) Preparing mandated reports and compiling and disseminating data related to the fire safety program;
  - f) Communicating local, state, and national fire safety requirements to university officials;
  - g) Maintaining records related to the fire safety program in accordance with the record retention schedule of the university and the state of Texas;
  - h) Serving as an advisor for the university departments on fire safety issues;
  - i) Serving as the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) for fire safety codes and standards;
  - j) Investigating all fires occurring on university property;
  - k) Working closely with the local fire department, police department, and other emergency response agencies to assure they are informed about the campus so as to be prepared in case of an emergency; and
  - l) Approving waivers of university fire and life safety policies and procedures.
  
2. Vice presidents, deans, directors, and chairs (or designees) in academic and staff positions have the following responsibilities:
  - a) Ensuring departmental procedures comply with this policy;
  - b) Identifying specific fire hazards and deficiencies within their department and purchasing appropriate equipment (such as NRTL- approved surge protectors);
  - c) Ensuring compliance from departmental employees who disregard this policy;
  - d) Communicating identified hazards and deficiencies to EHSRM;

- e) Correcting procedural violations as soon as practical upon receipt of a violation notice;
  - f) Consulting with the director of EHSRM for fire safety concerns, if necessary;
  - g) Reporting all fire incidents to EHSRM;
  - h) Arranging for payment of costs and fees associated with eliminating fire hazards due to the department's negligence; and
  - i) Training of departmental staff by ensuring employee participation in new employee or new faculty orientation and ensuring employees are aware of all fire exits and building evacuation procedures.
3. University employees and students have the following responsibilities:
- a) Compliance with university fire safety and related policies and procedures;
  - b) Reporting deficiencies of fire prevention, suppression, or evacuation features in university buildings to the appropriate university department for repair;
  - c) Familiarization with fire extinguishers and fire alarm pull station locations in the vicinity of the area occupied;
  - d) Reporting all fire incidents to EHSRM;
  - e) Familiarization with emergency protocols established in the campus safety procedures listed on the SFA Campus Safety Information Web page; and
  - f) In the event of a fire alarm, fire drill, or any fire related incident, authorized personnel shall enter the building to conduct life safety assessments while SFA employees and students are required to evacuate the SFA facility and will not reenter the facility until an authority (NFD, UPD, or EHSRM) gives the "all clear" announcement to reenter.
4. Residence Life will disseminate fire prevention policies and procedures to student residents in their Community Living Guidelines.
5. Student residents shall abide by all Residence Life Community Living Guidelines and procedures.
6. Faculty members should inform students of fire safety and evacuation procedures.

## **FIRE PREVENTION PLANS AND GUIDELINES**

1. Fire prevention is an important component of the university's fire safety program and being proactive against any potential fire and life safety hazards offers the greatest protection against injury or property loss. The EHSRM fire and life safety plans and guidelines are outlined in detail on the EHSRM Web page. All university employees and students need to be aware of potential fire safety hazards and report them to EHSRM for corrective action.

2. The following fire prevention procedures apply to all university property:
  - a) Open flames, smoldering burners and ignition devices are prohibited in university buildings. This includes candles, fireworks, oil lamps, and any combustible materials activated by sparks or heat.
  - b) Exceptions for the use of open flames, burners and ignition devices include authorized exceptions listed below; these do not require approval prior to use. All other exceptions require written approval from the director of EHSRM. Request for such exceptions must be submitted at least ten working days prior to the proposed use.
    - i. commercial cooking in designated food preparation areas complying with NFPA 96, Standard for Ventilation Control and Fire Protection of Commercial Cooking Operations;
    - ii. open flame burners used in university approved laboratories complying with NFPA 45, Standard on Fire Protection for Laboratories using Chemicals; and
    - iii. employees or students engaged in welding, brazing, or similar flame or spark producing operations must obtain authorization from their supervisor or manager. The supervisor or manager in the work area must adhere to all reasonable fire safety protections and procedures and obtain a hot work permit, if applicable.
  - c) Electrical connections must conform to the following requirements:
    - i. Electrical equipment must be NRTL listed and shall be plugged into electrical wall outlets. The use of extension cords to provide permanent electrical connections is prohibited.
    - ii. Only power strips that are NRTL approved may be used. Power strips cannot be plugged into each other in a series.
  - d) Flammable and combustible liquids must be stored in specially designed flammable materials storage cabinets and fire resistant containers within campus buildings. Large quantities of flammable materials (more than authorized under NFPA 45, Standard on Fire Protection for Laboratories using Chemicals) must be stored outside of buildings or in special hazardous storage areas in compliance with the NFPA codes.
  - e) Mechanical rooms and stairwells cannot be used for storage at any time.
  - f) The use of devices such as doorstops, wedges, or restraints to hold a fire door open is prohibited with the exception of magnetic door hold open

devices that are connected to the fire alarm system and are deactivated when the fire alarm is activated.

- g) In rooms with sprinkler heads, storage and furnishings must be at least eighteen inches below the sprinkler head to ensure the sprinklers are effective during a fire. No material shall be attached to a sprinkler head.
- h) In rooms without sprinkler heads, storage and furnishings shall be at least twenty four inches or more below the ceiling.
- i) Corridors and stairways leading to exits must have at least forty- four inches clear width of unobstructed clutter-free space at all times. Temporary Storage in any hallway or corridor must have approval from the director of EHSRM prior to the event. All corridor doors in the path of egress must be operable without the use of keys, special tools, or knowledge.
- j) Exit doors must be equipped with a latch equipped with a releasing device having an obvious method of operation to allow easy egress during a fire. Installation of deadbolt locks or additional locking devices is prohibited.
- k) Barbeque grills, hibachi-type grills, camping stoves, deep fat fryers, and other cooking devices are prohibited in university buildings, in door openings, on balconies, within forty feet of university buildings or near any flammable materials. Organizations grilling for public consumption on campus are required to have an outdoor cooking permit from EHSRM. Hot coals must be doused with water and properly disposed of in designated hot coal dumpsters. Tailgating cooking events should follow the official tailgate policies and procedures provided by the athletics department.
- l) Holiday decorations must be flame retardant and only up for a maximum of 30 days. Live Christmas trees are prohibited in university buildings and artificial trees must be flame retardant. All holiday lights must be NRTL approved. All decorations should be taken down prior to leaving for the holidays.
- m) Portable electric heaters are highly discouraged, but may be used if specifically approved by the department head. Only electric heaters with an automatic shut off when tipped over may be used. If approved, keep all portable heaters at least three feet away from any flammable items and ensure the portable heater is NRTL approved. Portable heaters must be turned off when leaving the room or leaving for the evening.

- n) Modifications to university property structures or life safety systems in regards to fire and life safety require authorization of EHSRM. Costs of reversing and correcting unauthorized building/system modifications may be charged to the person or department which caused the modifications.
- o) Cooking devices, such as popcorn poppers, microwave ovens, and coffee pots used on university property must be NRTL approved. All electrical appliances and devices shall be used in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions and intended use.
- p) Building occupancy will not exceed the limits set forth by the NFPA 1 Fire Code, NFPA 101 Life Safety Code, or special provisions provided by the EHSRM.

## **FIRE SAFETY SYSTEMS**

1. The PPD shall maintain and ensure installed fire alarms, sprinklers, fire pumps, and smoke detectors, are operational at all times. Vice presidents, deans, directors, and chairs shall be familiar with the fire systems within their areas.
2. Respective departments accountable for building maintenance (PPD, Residence Life, and Auxiliary Services) shall ensure proper monthly and annual inspections are conducted for emergency exit lighting and illuminated EXIT signs per NFPA 101 Life Safety Code.
3. EHSRM shall ensure that the proper monthly and annual inspections are conducted for fire extinguishers per NFPA 101 Life Safety Code.
4. Departments with cooking exhaust systems are responsible for the maintenance of the hoods, grease removal devices, fans, ducts and fire suppression fuse links in their kitchen areas per NFPA 96.
5. Any non-operational fire safety systems found or observed by the faculty, staff or students must be reported to PPD or EHSRM for immediate corrective action.
6. Tampering with the fire safety system is a criminal offense and will be handled as such by the University Police Department.

## **WAIVERS**

The director of EHSRM is responsible for granting waivers to university fire and safety policies and procedures. Waivers may be granted on a case-by-case basis or as a blanket approval which applies to a specific type of event, function, or use.

## **POLICY COMPLIANCE**

It is imperative that SFA employees comply with federal, state, and local environmental health, safety, and risk management legislation, and relevant government fire and life safety codes. In addition, it is essential that employees observe industry best practices and comply with SFA safety policies, procedures, and programs. Noncompliance may result in disciplinary action.

**Cross Reference:** Health and Safety (13.10); Risk Management (13.19); National Fire Protection Association; Texas State Fire Marshal

**Responsible for Implementation:** Vice President for Finance and Administration

**Contact for Revision:** Director of Environmental Health, Safety, and Risk Management

**Forms:** None

**Board Committee Assignment:** Building and Grounds