

CAMPUS FIRE SAFETY RIGHT-TO-KNOW

Overview and Talking Points

- The legislation was first introduced following the 2000 fire at Seton Hall University that killed three freshmen and injured over 50 students.
- This fire was a turning point in campus fire safety awareness across the country.
- The legislation had been introduced in every session of Congress since 2000 and advocates had been working tirelessly for its passage.
- The legislation had bipartisan support when it was passed in 2008 and signed into law in August 2008
- The new law requires schools to report fire safety information annually to the Secretary of Education including (but not limited to):
 - Number of fires
 - Number of injuries and fatalities related to fires
 - Damage caused by fires
 - Fire protection in residence halls
 - The number of fire drills
- In addition, the Secretary of Education is to compile a list of “best practices”
- The focus is on on-campus residence halls. It does not include off-campus housing or Greek housing that is not owned by the school.
- All of the information is to be made publicly available
- This information will help prospective parents and students evaluate the level of fire safety at a school and include this in the decision-making process when selecting a school
- This public disclosure will encourage schools to upgrade fire safety at their schools
- This public disclosure will also “level the playing field” by requiring uniform reporting
 - Currently, the only reporting is being done voluntarily through the Princeton Review
 - This is not an open process, uses non-disclosed scoring system
 - Since the reporting is voluntary, not all schools report, leaving some at a disadvantage
- Schools currently have this information already on hand, it just is not reported
- A number of schools have already started compiling and posting this information
- This will provide an opportunity for schools that already have exemplary programs to showcase them and be role models for other institutions across the country

Additional Update

The language that was proposed to the Department of Education (ED) to be published in the Federal Register regarding the requirements for fire safety reporting on campuses is available online at Campus Firewatch.

<http://www.campus-firewatch.com/resources/rtk/Round%203%20Issue%20Paper%2011%20fire%20safety%2005.13.09.pdf>

This language has been developed after three meetings of Team V and its safety subcommittee. In the final meeting on May 13, 2009, consensus was not reached on two of the other 31 issues, which meant that there was no consensus on all 31 issues. NOTE: There WAS a tentative agreement on Issue Paper #11 Campus Fire Safety Right-to-Know– the lack of consensus occurred on two other, non-fire, issues. As a result, the Department of Education will now publish the proposed regulations in the Federal Register using what they believe to be the most appropriate language. While it is hoped that they will use what was recommended for Issue Paper #11, this will not be known until the proposed regulations are published sometime this summer. Therefore, the following proposed regulation may change when it is published in the Federal Register.

More information is in the May 2009 issue of Campus Firewatch.