

College Dorm Room Essential: Safety

Furnishing a college dorm room comes with a lot of options for personalization—from bedding and décor to kitchen supplies and electronics. One essential for the college residence is safety.

College students tend to want to bring everything they own. The limited number of electric outlets in student rooms can tempt many to use multiple extension cords and power strips, which can cause cords to overheat, creating shock and fire hazards.

Many colleges ban cooking appliances—hot plates, coffee makers, microwave ovens—from on-campus housing so be sure to check before packing.

Safe Electricity offers the following safety tips for college students to help reduce the risk of electrical fires in their student housing:

- ▶ Only purchase and use electrical products tested for safety. The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) publishes a list of approved testing laboratories. Some common approved safety labels include: UL, CSA, and MET.
- ▶ Don't overloading extension cords, power strips or outlets.
- ▶ Use power strips with an over-current protector that will shut off power automatically if too much current is being drawn.
- ▶ If use of an appliance frequently causes power to trip off, or if its power cord or the outlet feels hot, the appliance should be disconnected immediately and the condition reported to the landlord or campus housing staff.
- ▶ Never tack or nail an electrical cord to any surface or run cords across traffic paths or under rugs where they can be trampled or damaged.
- ▶ Use the correct wattage light bulbs for lamps and fixtures. If no indication is on the product, do not use a bulb with more than 60 watts. Use cooler, compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) or LEDs.
- ▶ Keep all electrical appliances and cords safely away from bedding, curtains, papers and other flammable material.
- ▶ Make sure outlets around sinks are equipped with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) before use. If they are not, contact the resident assistant, campus housing staff, or landlord.
 - ▶ Unplug small appliances when not in use and all electronics when away for extended periods.
 - ▶ Always use microwave-safe containers. Metal and aluminum foil can damage the microwave or start a fire. If the microwave is damaged in any way, do not use it.
 - ▶ Smoke detectors should never be disabled, and fire alarms should never be ignored or taken casually—even in a fire drill. Every time a fire alarm sounds, residents should calmly and quickly follow practiced procedures and immediately exit the building. **KCL**



Students certainly want all the comforts of home when heading off to college. The limited number of electrical outlets available in a dorm room may require students to prioritize their gadgets when deciding what to take with them.

For more electrical safety information, visit SafeElectricity.org.