Town/Gown Fire Safety Community Service Project 2017

By Ed Comeau, Campus Firewatch

September 2017 was the thirteenth annual National Campus Fire Safety Month. However, this year it was also the launch of a new program, the Town/Gown Fire Safety Community Service Project. This is where students go along with fire fighters into community homes to install smoke alarms, and by doing fire safety, they learn fire safety.

This idea came out of a grant that I had written for the Michael H. Minger Foundation several years ago that we did in high-risk communities and on several Indian Reservations. First Alert approached me with an offer to donate smoke alarms to Campus Firewatch, and I pitched the idea to them and they were immediately on board. Since it was the first time we were trying it on a national scale, we picked selected departments and schools to be part of the project rather than spreading ourselves too thin.

Fire departments are regularly doing home safety visits and smoke alarm installs, so the idea is nothing new to them. Students are often looking for community service opportunities and some schools even require that they do community service, so it works as a natural combination.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5.

Immersive VR Tour, Off-Campus House Fire

By Ed Comeau, Campus Firewatch

Note: You can go through the VR tour and watch an interview with Ben Gondrez and Michael Durkin who put the tour together at www.campus-firewatch.com/vr

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3.

IN THIS ISSUE

1 Town/Gown Fire Safety Community Service Project 2017
1 Immersive VR Tour, Off-Campus House Fire
1 Cladding Fires
2 From the Editor
7 National Campus Fire Safety Month 2017
11 House Resolution 540
13 Campus Fire Log

Cladding Fires

By Ed Comeau, Campus Firewatch

On June 14, 2017, a fire broke out on the fourth floor of the 24-story Grenfell Towers building in London. The fire is believed to have started in a refrigerator and it spread out a window, igniting the exterior cladding on the building, and then quickly spread up the building. At least 80 people died in the fire which essentially gutted the entire building.

In this article, we are going to explore what impact this is having in the United States, where a number of campuses have high-rise buildings. In addition, a growing trend is to also have students living in off-campus, third party residence halls that are privately built that may also be high-rise buildings. Furthermore, students are attending schools abroad that may be liv-
A few weeks ago, I had the chance to go out to Colorado and take part in the Town/Gown Fire Safety Community Service Projects in Colorado Springs and Fort Collins. I walked away from both events incredibly impressed with what I saw. Fire departments, social service agencies and college students all coming together to help make their communities safer by installing smoke alarms, CO alarms and working with the residents to help them with their needs.

This was clearly Community Risk Reduction at its finest, partnering with community organizations and working to address needs more than just fire safety. The smoke alarms help get in the door, but this creates the opportunity to do true CRR.

And these weren't the only communities taking part in this inaugural program – Wilmington, North Carolina; West Lafayette, Indiana; Lafayette County, Mississippi; Worcester, Massachusetts; Boston, Massachusetts all did activities, and more are happening in the coming months in other college towns.

The Town/Gown project came out of a grant that I had written with the Michael H. Minger Foundation several years ago that I wanted to take to the next level, and when First Alert offered to donate smoke alarms to Campus Firewatch, I thought this was a great opportunity to expand it and everyone stepped right up.

But what really has impacted me is the students I talked with. We hear so much negative about the Millennial Generation, but I didn’t see that in these students. They were motivated to help their communities to make them better and safer, and keep in mind, these are their temporary communities for the time they are in school. It really was incredibly inspiring to see, and you can read some of the stories in this issue.

While this program focused on doing community service during September, which is National Campus Fire Safety Month, that doesn’t mean it needs to end. Town/Gown can be done at any time, and something to keep in mind – Martin Luther King Day is a designated National Day of Service. What a great opportunity to help make the community safer with students that want to!

***
On August 20, a fire broke out in an off-campus house in Fort Collins, Colorado where five students were sleeping. The fire started during the night when a metal fire pit, which was resting directly on the wooden deck, ignited the deck. The fire then spread to an adjacent grill, heating the 20-pound propane cylinder which then vented and spread the flames to the eaves off the house and into the interior.

The fire started during the night when the fire pit, which was resting directly on the wooden deck, igniting it, which spread to the grill’s 20-pound propane cylinder.

The students, who had moved in the week before, were alerted by the smoke alarms that had just been checked by the landlord before they moved in. Two of the students on the first floor had to crawl below the smoke to escape and a third one jumped out of his bedroom window. Two of the students in the basement attempted to go up the stairs to the first floor but were forced back by the fire. They then crawled out a small basement window. Several of the students were evaluated for smoke inhalation, but there were no serious injuries.

Lessons Learned

There are several lessons-learned that have emerged from this fire. The first was that the students were using a metal fire pit they had found, but only the bowl part, it did not have any legs, so resting it directly on the wooden deck was certainly a major factor in how the fire started. Having a propane gas grill in proximity to the fire pit and the house was also another issue that exacerbated the incident.

Inside of the house, the fact that there were working smoke alarms was key to the fact that there were no serious injuries in this fire, they gave the occupants the warning to get up and get out.

The basement had two bedrooms, and one of the rooms had been equipped with an escape window. However, in the rush of the moment, the students didn’t realize that this would be a better option and crawled out a much smaller window to escape from the fire.

On the first floor, one of the students had been sleeping in his room with the door closed, and when he was alerted to the fire, he kept the door closed and climbed out a window. Because of the door being closed, the room is in almost pristine condition since the smoke and fire was not able to get to it.

Making use of the lessons

Recognizing the value of this fire and the lessons learned that emerged out of it, Poudre Fire Authority LINK Education Specialist Michael Durkin teamed up with Digital Dome Manager Ben Gondrez from the Fort Collins Museum of Discovery to put together an immersive virtual reality tour of the fire. Using a virtual reality camera they were able to photograph all of the rooms in the house. They then stitched the images together and created a virtual reality tour where the viewer can navigate throughout the house and see the damage that occurred. Gondrez and Durkin also put “hot-spots” in the tour with educational material, such as explaining the importance of a working smoke alarm, how the fire started, or the impact of a closed door.

Equipment

The Samsung Gear 360 camera is widely available and interfaces with a smartphone app to operate it. A tripod is a must, but the camera is so small and lightweight that any tripod will do.

According to Gondrez, they photographed the entire fire scene in about an hour. One of the biggest challenges was lighting the interior of the house since the windows had all been boarded up, and a black fire scene absorbs a lot of light. They used several work lights that they placed below the camera’s tripod to illuminate each room.
Using VR goggles

As I mentioned earlier, you can navigate through the fire scene on a desktop computer, but using VR goggles brings it to a whole new level. You can get them just about anywhere, and when I was in Fort Collins I went to Walmart and picked up a set for $10.00.

You then need to download the RoundMe app onto the smartphone and search for “fort collins fire” to find the tour. The downside is that you need an Internet connection to go through the tour, and if you are doing it using cellular you are using up data.

Engagement

It is possible to navigate through the fire scene on a desktop computer using a mouse, but the real power comes from using it on a smartphone and VR goggles. This is where the “immersive” part of the equation kicks in, placing the viewer directly into the fire scene and letting navigate through it by moving their head.

Durkin had a fire safety table set up at Colorado State University with two VR headsets, and he said that they were engaging with about 50 students an hour. For most of them, to his surprise, this was their first exposure to virtual reality, and they were so taken with the experience. This is definitely a game-changer in terms of getting the students involved in learning about fire safety.

What I find so amazing about this is how relatively easily and quickly Gondrez and Durkin put this together and the impact that it has on people that I share it with (along with the low cost). By teaming up, the Poudre Fire Authority and the Fort Collins Museum of Discovery have developed an incredibly powerful teaching tool that touches upon smoke alarms, two ways out and the value of a closed door. This is a tool that is not only for the students at CSU, but can be used across the nation to demonstrate these important concepts by putting the viewer in the middle of something that they will hopefully never have to experience — a fire.

You can download the RoundMe app to your smartphone on the Apple App Store or on Google Play and search for “fort collins fire.” You can also go through the VR tour on your desktop and embed it on your website by clicking here.

For technical questions on creating a VR tour, you can contact Ben Gondrez at bgondrez@fcmod.org. To view a video about putting the tour together and more information, go to www.campus-firewatch.com/vr.

Students at Colorado State University were able to tour the fire scene using VR goggles.

• • •
What does such a program accomplish?

First and foremost, it is a Community Risk Reduction (CRR) program in that it makes the community safer. We all know that smoke alarms save lives, and research shows that there is a significant shortage of working smoke alarms in homes across the nation. This is even more of a problem in high-risk areas such as low-income or elderly housing, and in areas such as trailer parks. By giving the residents the early warning to escape from a fire, smoke alarms save not only their lives, but also make it safer for the responding fire fighters, another significant benefit.

This program also gives the students the opportunity to learn fire safety by doing fire safety. They learn about the importance of working smoke alarms and how to install them, lessons that they will carry with them after they graduate. They learn more about the fire service and other aspects of fire safety, and as result hopefully become more motivated and serve as fire safety ambassadors among their peers.

The students also have an opportunity to give back to the community. In college towns, the student body might have a bad reputation due to large parties, alcohol consumption and all the other activities that go along with hosting a school in your community. Lost in this are the positive actions that students are taking to make their community a better, safer place.

Lafayette County, Mississippi

Lafayette Fire Department services the area around the University of Mississippi in Oxford. Doug Sullivan Gonzalez is a fire fighter, president of the Lafayette Fire Department and dean of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College so he had the ability to bring together the university and the fire department to take part in the Town/Gown project.

On a Saturday, they assembled three teams of students and fire fighters and went out into the community to install smoke alarms. The area that they chose was mainly single-family houses in a working-class neighborhood. In advance, they had a story in the newspaper and let people know about the install program through word of mouth, which resulted in specific requests. Coupled with going door-to-door, it was a successful day of installing smoke alarms and the students learned a lot, reported Sullivan-Gonzalez, from where to install smoke alarms to how to use a screw gun. They also were exposed to a different part of the world that they normally wouldn’t see, and that was an eye-opening experience for many of them, added Sullivan-Gonzalez.

Colorado Springs, Colorado

The Colorado Springs Fire Department teamed up with students from the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs for a one-day smoke alarm blitz. In the weeks leading up to it, CSFD worked with the area’s community center to promote the campaign with flyers, lawn signs and more.

The teams working in the neighborhood were made up of more than just students and CSFD staff, it also involved community advocates, police, social service and more. This is a great approach, partnering with other agencies and organizations to help expand the program’s reach. By partnering, this also provided resources such as translators.

In addition to seeing they can make a difference in their community, they learned a lot,” observed Colorado Springs Fire Department Fire and Life Safety Educator Kathy Hook. “I heard repeatedly that they didn’t know the importance of smoke alarms, they didn’t know where they go or that they expire. They certainly didn’t know how to hang a smoke alarm. They knew by the end of the day, though.

Fort Collins, Colorado

Fort Collins is the home to Colorado State University (CSU) and the Poudre Fire Authority (PFA). On a rainy Sunday, teams of students and PFA staff descended upon several trailer parks and swept through them, knocking on doors, and I had the opportunity accompany the teams on this blitz.

What was unique about this program is that the students came from CSU’s School of Social Work, studying to become social workers, and this provided them with a unique opportunity for practical applications.

Overall, throughout the month of September, PFA visited 8 mobile home parks, installing 116 smoke alarms, 60 CO alarms and replacing 22 batteries in 86 homes. However, what is so unique about this program is that they did much more than just install smoke alarms — they talked with the occupants about other needs they might have that the fire department could help facilitate. “We identified 42 other social needs, ranging from school supplies and winter clothes to furnace repairs and job assistance,” reported PFA Education Specialist Michael Durkin.

CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE
Durkin had given a presentation in one of the classes at CSU about the opportunity to volunteer with the fire department in installing smoke alarms, and students jumped at the opportunity. While they were certainly interested in helping the community, they didn’t fully appreciate the impact that this would have on them.

“It’s hard to quantify,” said Eric Smith, a senior. “It was just amazing. I’m going to be doing a couple more, and being able to apply the values and ethical principles that social work has built its foundation on is priceless.”

The students were doing more than just helping to install smoke alarms; they were applying the skills that they had been learning in the classroom in real-world situations — a first for most of them.

“What they had us doing was an assessment while installing smoke alarms,” said Chas Erickson, a senior in the Social Work major. “This was the first time that I had a chance to do an assessment. There were lots of needs because we were doing trailer homes, and there was wear and tear on them. Lots of leaky roofs and repairs needed on the furnaces. One elderly man needed assistance with bathing and getting to the doctor, another woman had trouble with organizing her medications.”

In some cases, PFA could help, such as having a paramedic come over and help the woman with her medications, and in other cases it would serve as a conduit for putting the people in touch with various social service agencies that could help them.

Leslie Coblentz was so inspired by her experience that she is putting together a follow-up in one of the trailer parks. “I was just, ‘wow, something needs to be done immediately.’” She got in touch with Durkin and started organizing another install day. She has arranged for dumpsters to be brought into the park to help in cleaning it up because Coblentz learned that the debris in several the yards isn’t from the present occupants but from previous tenants and owners who just left it behind, but there is no way to get rid of it. “I know some people in construction and I am getting the to donate time and materials,” to repair leaky roofs and broken windows, said Coblentz. Along with installing smoke alarms, “I will have a couple of social work students with me to talk to the people about where they can go. These are people falling through the cracks, they don’t know who to talk with. My main goal is to let them know there are people that care about them.”

And the reaction among her peers to the idea of doing home safety visits and smoke alarm installs? “Michael (Durkin) was expecting five or six students, he had 40 in my class alone sign up.”

Her walkaway from the experience was that “This is what you should be doing in social work classes, going into the community. Until you experience it first hand, it is another ballgame.”

**Worcester, Massachusetts**

Students from The College of the Holy Cross went with the Worcester Fire Department and installed 50 smoke alarms along with 40 carbon monoxide alarms in 25 homes. According to Worcester Fire Lieutenant Annie Pickett, the first house they went into was the exact type they were looking for — a woman in her 70’s without a single smoke alarm in the house, “not even the screw holes from old ones,” said Pickett.

The students were accompanied by Pickett, a retired fire fighter and an engine company going door-to-door. In addition, Pickett had pre-canvassed the area and talked about the project at several community meetings in advance, which helped them get into some of the homes.

As would be expected, the students were a bit nervous at the beginning, but after watching Pickett at a few houses, “you could see their confidence come up.”

Home safety visits is something that the Worcester Fire Department is doing more of each day, and this was an excellent opportunity to partner the students with the fire department. “We’re going to do it again with Holy Cross,” said Pickett. “We have a great relationship and we will keep doing this.”

There are many other colleges in Worcester, and Pickett is going to approach them about getting involved. The challenge was that this campaign was in September, which is the start of the school year and many of the students are already committed to other activities. “I’ll know for next year and we’ll get on their calendar earlier,” observed Pickett.

**Boston, Massachusetts**

Boston, also known as America’s College Town, is home to 35 schools and 152,000 students. Boston Fire Department’s new Fire Education Coordinator Michelle McCourt is building relationships with the schools, and working closely with Northeastern University to develop a cadre of Student Ambassadors.

The idea is to have the existing small group of Student Ambassadors start recruiting others into the program so they can then go with the companies on future smoke alarm installs.

**Wilmington, North Carolina**

Wilmington, North Carolina, is also building towards a larger program for a future install program. The Wilmington Fire Department regularly does smoke alarm installations, and has a good relationship with the University of North Carolina Wilmington, and the department’s Risk Reduction Coordinator Wendy Giannini is working towards building teams of students that will be helping with the installs. While they didn’t have students with them, companies were heavily canvassing the off-campus student area around the school and they were very well received, she observed.

“We’re laying the groundwork for the future,” according to Giannini. “We’re working with Greek Life and some of the sororities,” as well as using opportunities during fire drills. Instead of just having engine companies on site observing the drill, the fire fighters are more actively engaging with the students, building relationships and encouraging them to become involved and learn about fire safety.

**Richmond, Kentucky**

The Richmond Fire Department teamed up with the student Association of Fire Science Technicians from Eastern Kentucky University for a day of smoke alarm installs. These are students that are pursuing a degree in fire science, but...
according to Richmond Fire Lieutenant Corey Lewis, many of the students don’t come from a fire service background, so this was a new experience for them.

The area that he picked for the installs was a low-income area that their fire data had clearly shown was high-risk. At first Lewis was nervous about sending teams of students and fire fighters into the area, but “I could not avoid what the information was telling us, that we have fires over there.” It is an older area that has not been redeveloped with older infrastructure and where they have water problems, so the risk is there.

As with several of the other locations taking part in this project, the students were exposed to a part of society that they normally wouldn’t encounter such as multi-generational families living in a single-family home and poverty. While they learned about fire safety, Lewis observed that “their experience was probably the most impactful to me,” listening to their stories when they came back.

Lewis was a key part of the Minger Grant where we developed the original concept, and he used the material from this grant, such as the videos, curriculum and handouts, to teach the students about installing smoke alarms. When they went into the homes, they also talked about more than just smoke alarms, but they triaged their messaging to focus on just the priorities they might see, such as exits, smoking or cooking. Their goal was to avoid message overload and make sure they communicated effectively with the occupants.

To help communicate with the residents, several whom were Spanish-speaking, Lewis had the students download The Vision 20/20 Project’s home safety visit app (Apple and Google) on their phones that featured a series of videos about smoke alarms, speed of fire, cooking and two ways out in seven different languages. This helped significantly and a very effective way of communicating since they did not have any bilingual speakers on any of the teams.

When asked about the reaction of the students, Lewis replied that “they walked away with an understanding of the challenge we face in the fire department when interacting with the public, particularly in a part of the community that has reservations when dealing with authority figures.”

One of the teams did not wind up installing any smoke alarms, despite repeated efforts, changing strategies and changing locations, but this did not dampen their enthusiasm. “Everyone in that group wanted to do it again,” said Lewis. “The experience they saw from the other groups, and wanting to be successful, this is vitally important. This sometimes happens, you don’t get to put up a smoke alarm in every home, but we engaged with the public and sometimes that is the “win” for the day. They might not have let us in, but we might have planted a seed that they need to check their smoke alarms, and sometimes that is the victory.”

West Lafayette, Indiana

This report came from West Lafayette Fire Chief Tim Heath.

On Friday, September 8th, the West Lafayette Fire Department, with help from the Rental...
WARNING

The West Lafayette Fire Department wants to keep you safe. That is why we are reminding you that smoke alarms save lives... but ONLY if they are operating properly.

Here is what you need to do to protect those you love:

- Install Smoke Alarms
  Make sure there is a smoke alarm on every floor, in every bedroom, and near every sleeping area.

- Test All Smoke Alarms
  Push test button on every alarm. If it is working, it makes a loud noise.

- If It Chirps, BEWARE!
  If your smoke alarm makes a chirping noise, it needs a new battery. Replace the battery NOW. DO NOT WAIT!

For smoke alarm inspections, please call the West Lafayette Fire Department:
765.775.5175

Ensuring West Lafayette is always a safe and great place to work, live, and play.
Inspection Team, the NRT, and Purdue Fire Department, went out in the community for our second Smoke Detector Blitz in three years. It was quite a success! We made contact to over 700 residential homes and rental properties. We installed nearly 100 smoke detectors and numerous 9 volt and AA batteries. We accomplished this feat in a mere 3 hours with 30 people! This has continued over the weekend and past few week days. We are still checking detectors and making contacts, this will go on for the rest of September.

Many of the smoke detectors we installed were in residences that only had one smoke detector for the entire house, or none at all. We replaced detectors that, in some cases, were more than 25 years old. In one instance, there was an elderly woman who had 3 smoke detectors at the peaks of her 14 foot ceilings. None of them worked because when the batteries went dead, she never replaced them. She couldn’t reach the detectors. It had been years since she had a working detector in her house. Another homeowner admitted to using a boat oar and beating it off the wall because it would go off every morning when cooking. Another resident had a 4,800 square-foot house and admitted right away that they haven’t replaced any batteries in a long time. When we checked the house, they only had one smoke detector for the entire home! We helped them out by installing new detectors. Another resident used a hammer to quiet their detector. The stories go on and on.

We want the West Lafayette community to know that if they have any trouble with their detectors or simply need a battery replaced because they can’t reach the detector, please call the West Lafayette Fire Department. We will be more than happy to come over and check it out. There is NO cost. If you buy detectors and need help installing them, please call us. We enjoy getting out in the community. We enjoy meeting the residents of the community. You will not be bothering us. We want to help keep West Lafayette safe for our residents.

This project had two objectives – to make the communities safer and for the students to learn about fire safety, lessons that they can use throughout their lives.

“By doing these home visits, students are making homes safer and learning about fire safety,” said Ashley Gocken, brand and PR manager for First Alert. “It is so critical for them to learn it, especially when they are living independently for the first time.”

“They can use all of these safety tips for when they are out of college,” Gocken went on to explain, “when they have their own homes and families. They can practice escape plans,” using the skills that they learned by teaching them to others.

The Town/Gown Fire Safety Community Service Project campaign was a great success in bringing together not only students with fire departments, but many other organizations in the community to help. The smoke and CO alarms donated by First Alert were certainly a catalyst that helped in making all of this possible, but it is the dedication of all of the people in the communities that make it work.

For more information on the Town/Gown Fire Safety Community Service Project, go to www.campus-firewatch.com/towngown.

---

**SAFETY ISN’T EXPENSIVE... IT’S PRICELESS.**

For the price of a pizza, a smoke alarm can protect you, your friends and your roommates. **Install them, test them, maintain them**.
ing in buildings with combustible cladding where this is a significant concern.

In the U.S. building and fire model codes, there is no definition for cladding, explained Tracy Vecchiarelli, a senior fire protection engineer with the National Fire Protection Association in an interview with Campus Firewatch. "It is a material used to cover a structure's exterior. Material wall and façade are words we use in codes to define the exterior walls." Other commonly-used terms might include curtain wall, exterior wall assemblies and many others, adding to the confusion. (For this article, however, we'll continue to use the term “cladding.”)

"Almost every building has a form of cladding on it," said Manager of Codes Dave Bowman from the International Code Council. "For example, most of the time, when you see red brick, it is cladding over a wood frame building, not the actual exterior wall of the building itself." He goes on to explain, "Because some cladding is combustible and burns, there are limitations on the use of cladding in certain types of construction in relation to the potential for flame spread up the building, like what happened at Grenfell."

There are three different types of cladding that are in common use:

- **MCM** – Metal Composite Material
- **ACM** – Aluminum Composite Material
- **EIFS** – Exterior Insulation Finishing Systems

MCM and ACM are essentially sandwich assemblies with some type of insulating material between two layers of metal or aluminum. An EIFS assembly is a rigid foam that is adhered to the exterior of the building and then the foam can be shaped to provide a different look. These systems can be put into place to provide improved weather protection, insulation and aesthetics for the building.

As a direct result of this tragedy, the UK government started evaluating other buildings for the presence of similar cladding, and as of August 31, 2017, they had identified 278 buildings that included 173 social housing, 16 public buildings and 89 private buildings (27 of which were private student residential).

According to the report, "None of these samples (from the buildings) were found to be of limited combustibility."

And this is not a new, or unknown problem. There have been fires going back several years around the globe involving cladding, some of them quite dramatic, and it has had the attention of the fire safety community for some time.

This raises the question of what is the situation in the United States, are there buildings that might be using non-compliant systems? According to an article “London Calling” in the September/October issue of NFPA Journal, “…of the 32 exterior wall fires in high-rises worldwide that were reported by various news sources from 2014 to June 28, 2017, nearly half occurred in the U.S. But few were severe, mostly occurring on assemblies that were added for aesthetics and contained to portions of the building."

The International Building Code and the International Fire Code are the two codes that are in predominant use across the country. In addition, there is a testing standard for evaluating cladding systems, NFPA 285 Fire Test Method for Evaluation of Fire Propagation Characteristics of Exterior Non-Load-Bearing Wall Assemblies Containing Combustible Components. This standard is referenced in the model building codes, such as the International Building Code.

There are varying conditions under which cladding can be used on a building, and they are tied to the building height and whether it has an automatic fire sprinkler system and the amount of cladding, according to Rob Neale, the government relations vice president for the International Code Council.

“In some cases, you are allowed cladding without that test (NFPA 285) if you have a sprinklered building and you have a limitation on the percentage of cladding on the building,” said Bowman. “You can get into the high rise with 50 percent of each surface being cladded on each story, but then you have separations for the cladding, kind of a break. The other thing that comes into play, there has to be a fire separation distance between the building and the lot line.” This is in place to limit the ability of the fire to spread from one building to an adjacent one.

Testing to NFPA 285 can be expensive. “Two-eighty-five is an assembly test,” explained Vecchiarelli, “which means that if you have a certain combination of foam and weather materials, all of it has to be tested together. You can’t mix-and-match and the assume (it passes).” Vecchiarelli goes on to explain, however, that “NFPA 285 is a pretty stable test method, there is no question it is the right test.”

And whether there is combustible cladding used on a building can also come down to how strongly the building and fire codes are enforced in a jurisdiction. “From our perspective, the provisions in the code, it is up to the jurisdiction to enforce what they adopt,” said ICC Senior Staff Engineer Beth Tubbs.

In the United Kingdom, the New York Times reported that the fire service had sounded the warning about the dangers of the exterior wall assemblies as far back as 1999. In the United States, Vecchiarelli goes on to say in the article “London Calling” that, “Building owners may have assemblies they think comply with the right standards, like NFPA 285, but that isn’t necessarily the case. They don’t really know what they have.”

To help building owners determine the code requirements, NFPA created an interactive tool, along with an explanatory video, that is available at www.nfpa.org/exteriorwalls. This tool will take you through the two codes, the International Building Code and the NFPA Building Code.

While the United States may have stricter codes and standards in this area, there are concerns about buildings that were constructed prior to the requirements of NFPA 285. And it has been reported that some jurisdictions have weakened the requirements for testing. In one case, Massachusetts had adopted the International Building Code, but modified it with amendments and was in the process of reducing the requirements for flame tests on EIFS. However, in the aftermath of the Grenfell tragedy, Jennifer Mieth, a spokeswoman for the Massachusetts Department of Fire Services, reported that the amendment had been removed and the Massachusetts building code will continue to follow the requirements for testing as outlined by the ICC.

While the Grenfell tragedy may have happened in the United Kingdom, this is certainly a U.S. issue. As stated in “London Calling” “…Dig deeper, however, and questions arise as to whether NFPA 285 is being followed correctly and if the U.S. could in fact experience a fire like Grenfell.”
July 3, 2017  
Residence Hall  
Rhode Island College  
Providence, Rhode Island  

A fire broke out at approximately 4:00 a.m. in a residence hall. The building was vacant at the time and the fire was determined to have been arson.

July 20, 2017  
Athletic  
University of Vermont  
Burlington, Vermont  

A fire broke out in the evening in an unoccupied field house. The building suffered significant fire and water damage.

July 28, 2017  
Off-Campus  
Hutchinson Community College  
Hutchinson, Kansas  

A Hutchinson Community College student was sentenced to five years in prison for a fire that broke out in his off-campus apartment where he was conducting chemistry experiments. The fire set off the sprinklers in his 12th floor apartment. He threw the items into the alley below to conceal his actions, and it was determined that he had done at least 50 previous experiments.

July 31, 2017  
Academic - Laboratory  
Northern Michigan University  
Marquette, Michigan  

A fire broke out at approximately 8:30 a.m. in a third-floor chemistry storage room.

August 1, 2017  
Residence Hall  
Univ. of Nebraska at Kearney  
Kearney, Nebraska  

A fire broke out at approximately 3:16 p.m. in a residence hall. Construction crews were cutting through an exterior wall when the fire broke out, but it was extinguished before the fire department arrived. Twenty-five students were displaced by the fire and were able to return at 4:30 p.m.

August 9, 2017  
Academic - Laboratory  
University of Delaware  
Newark, Delaware  

An afternoon fire broke out in a research laboratory building. The fire was caused by construction crews in the basement and the fire traveled through the ventilation system to the second floor. One fire fighter was transported for heat exhaustion.

August 20, 2017  
Off-campus  
Colorado State University  
Fort Collins, Colorado  

A fire broke out during the night in an off-campus house occupied by five students. The fire was started when a fire pit, which had been resting directly on a wooden deck, ignited the deck. The fire then spread to an adjacent grill and impinged on the 20-pound propane tank, which vented and spread the fire towards the eaves on the house. The fire then spread into the interior. Smoke alarms alerted the occupants to the fire. Two of the occupants on the first floor were able to crawl below the smoke and escape. A third student on the first floor, who was asleep in his room with a closed door, climbed out of a window. Two of the students in the basement tried to escape by going up the stairs but were forced back by the flames and climbed out a small basement window despite one of the bedrooms being equipped with a larger escape window.

August 20, 2017  
Greek - Fraternity  
University of Delaware  
Newark, Delaware  

A fire broke out in an exterior trash receptacle at the Kappa Alpha fraternity at approximately 5:30 p.m. The fire damaged a portion of the roof, a door and caused minor damage inside of the house.

August 22, 2017  
Residence Hall  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
Rochester, New York  

A fire broke out in an RIT residence hall at approximately 8:00 p.m. and displaced 10 students. Three of the housing units were damaged in the fire which appeared to have started in a kitchen.

August 29, 2017  
Academic - Classroom  
Christian Brothers University  
Memphis, Tennessee  

Two students were working on a drone and left a battery plugged into a charger when they left the room. The battery caught fire and caused significant damage to the room.

August 29, 2017  
Off-Campus  
Michigan State University  
East Lansing, Michigan  

A fire broke out in an off-campus house during the evening. It was
August 31, 2017
Greek - Fraternity
University of North Alabama
Florence, Alabama
A fire broke out on the second floor of the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity at approximately 4:00 p.m. Fraternity members tried to fight the fire with a garden hose, but were unsuccessful. It was reported that fire fighters had difficulty with water pressure while fighting the fire. The building is a complete loss and eight students were displaced by the fire.

September 1, 2017
Residence Hall
Dixie State University
St. George, Utah
A cell phone battery pack that was being charged while lying on a bed caught fire shortly before midnight. The fire was controlled by a housing manager using a dry chemical fire extinguisher.

September 3, 2017
Greek - Fraternity
MIT
Boston, Massachusetts
Boston police broke up a part at the Phi Delta Theta MIT fraternity that had 116 people in the building. Fraternity members tried to fight the fire with a garden hose, but were unsuccessful. It was reported that fire fighters had difficulty with water pressure while fighting the fire. The building is a complete loss and eight students were displaced by the fire.

September 6, 2017
Residence Hall
Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison
Madison, Wisconsin
A burnt pop-tart in a microwave set off the building’s fire alarm system at approximately 9:00 a.m. There was a light haze in the hallway.

September 18, 2017
Residence Hall – Sprinkler Save
University of St. Thomas
St. Paul, Minnesota
A fire caught fan in a room in a residence hall at approximately 8:00 a.m. The fire was extinguished by activation of the building’s automatic fire sprinkler system.

September 21, 2017
Academic - Laboratory
Dickinson College
Carlisle, Pennsylvania
A fire broke out in a piece of lab equipment at approximately 12:45 p.m. Damage was limited to the equipment and smoke was vented out of the building.

September 26, 2017
Academic - Classroom
Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana
Smoke caused students in the College of Architecture and Planning to evacuate at approximately midnight. The smoke was caused when a filter on a laser cutter caught fire. Damage was limited to the filter.

September 26, 2017
Residence Hall
Anderson University
Anderson, Indiana
A fire broke out in an air handler at approximately 12:00 a.m. spreading smoke throughout the building.

September 28, 2017
Academic - Classroom
University of Massachusetts
Amherst
Amherst, Massachusetts
A fire in an industrial-grade oven broke out. Plant material inside paper bags caught fire. No further information was available.

September 28, 2017
Residence Hall
Southern University
Baton Rouge, Louisiana
A fire broke out in a residence hall room at approximately 2:36 p.m. and was brought under control by 3:00 p.m. The cause was determined to be electrical, and the entire building had fire and water damage.

September 29, 2017
Off-Campus
University of Delaware
Newark, Delaware
A fire broke out at approximately noon in an off-campus house occupied by four University of Delaware students. The fire was caused by an electrical malfunction in one of the bedrooms. Smoke alarms were reported to be working.

September 29, 2017
Student Center
Cal Lutheran University
Thousand Oaks, California
A fire in an electrical room caused widespread power outages across campus and in the neighborhood around the university. The fire occurred during triple-digit heat. Doors with electrically-controlled access did not work and had to be propped open to allow students to enter the buildings.

October 1, 2017
Residence Hall - Sprinkler Save
Rutgers University
New Brunswick, New Jersey
A grease fire in a kitchen on an upper floor broke out at approximately 3:00 p.m. The fire was brought under control by the activation of the building’s automatic fire sprinkler system. Water caused damage to the apartments below and displaced 26 students.

October 2, 2017
Residence Hall - Arson
Tulane University
New Orleans, Louisiana
A freshman was seen on video tape attempting to light a ceiling tile on fire on the sixth-floor lobby of a residence hall. He was booked on suspicion of aggravated arson and was released on bail.

October 8, 2017
Residence Hall
Huston Tillotson University
Austin, Texas
A fire in a residence hall room broke out at approximately 7:54 p.m. The fire was caused by an electrical short in the base of a lamp that was resting on a cardboard box. Damage was limited to the room of origin.

Unknown Date
Residence Hall
Washington State University
Pullman, Washington
A fire broke out in a microwave at approximately 2:30 p.m. when a student placed a Pop Tart in it. The unit burst into flames and a resident used a portable fire extinguisher to put out the fire.
Congressional Resolution for Campus Fire Safety Month

This resolution was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives by Representatives Bill Pascrell and Peter King to recognize September 2017 as Campus Fire Safety Month.

H. RES. 540

Expressing support for the designation of September 2017 as “Campus Fire Safety Month”.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 26, 2017

Mr. PASCRELL (for himself and Mr. KING of New York) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce

RESOLUTION

Expressing support for the designation of September 2017 as “Campus Fire Safety Month”.

Whereas recent student-related housing fires in New York, Indiana, Wisconsin, and other schools across the country have tragically cut short the lives of some of the youth of our Nation;

Whereas since January 2000, at least 172 people, including students, parents, and children have died in campus-related fires;

Whereas approximately 86 percent of these deaths have occurred in off-campus occupancies;

Whereas a majority of the students across the Nation live in off-campus occupancies;

Whereas a number of fatal fires have occurred in buildings where the fire safety systems have been compromised or disabled by the occupants;

Whereas it is recognized that automatic fire alarm systems and smoke alarms provide the necessary early warning to occupants and the fire department of a fire so that appropriate action can be taken;
Whereas it is recognized that automatic fire sprinkler systems are a highly effective method of controlling or extinguishing a fire in its early stages, protecting the lives of the building’s occupants;

Whereas many students are living in off-campus occupancies, Greek housing, and residence halls that are not adequately protected with automatic fire sprinkler systems and automatic fire alarm systems or adequate smoke alarms;

Whereas it is recognized that fire safety education is an effective method of reducing the occurrence of fires and reducing the resulting loss of life and property damage;

Whereas students are not routinely receiving effective fire safety education throughout their entire college career;

Whereas it is vital to educate the future generation of our Nation about the importance of fire safety behavior so that these behaviors can help to ensure their safety during their college years and beyond; and

Whereas by developing a generation of fire-safe adults, future loss of life from fires can be significantly reduced: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) supports the establishment of “Campus Fire Safety Month”;

(2) encourages schools and municipalities across the country to provide educational programs to all students throughout the school year; and

(3) encourages schools and municipalities to evaluate the level of fire safety being provided in both on- and off-campus student housing and take the necessary steps to ensure fire-safe living environments through fire safety education, installation of fire suppression and detection systems and smoke alarms, and the development and enforcement of applicable codes relating to fire safety.