HAMILTON COLLEGE
FIRE SAFETY COMPLIANCE GUIDELINES

FIRE SAFETY is not just some service provided by an on-campus office or the local Fire Department, nor is it something that is purely tied to a building's design (i.e. smoke/heat detectors, sprinklers, fire extinguishers, etc.). Rather, it is a combination of these **AND** each employee's and student's behaviors with regard to controlling/minimizing fire hazards in the first place. In other words, policies can be written, appropriate engineering and design practices can be implemented, and drills can be performed, but this is all irrelevant if the Hamilton College community fails to act in a responsible manner with regard to fire safety issues.

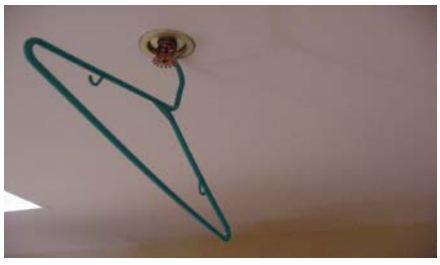
These compliance guidelines are not designed to be a formal policy document that outlines all of the fire safety regulatory obligations on behalf of the College and its many constituents. Rather, it is a communication tool that hopes to bridge the gap between those compliance obligations and our collective behaviors as an institution, so as to 1—both minimize our susceptibility to fire safety hazards, and 2—improve our performance during the state mandated campus-wide fire safety inspections held each fall semester.

1. Building Detection/Suppression/Protection Equipment

Individual buildings on campus, and their occupants, are protected from fires through 2 general strategies. The 1st is the equipment designed to detect and suppress fires, including smoke, heat, and carbon monoxide detectors, as well as sprinkler systems and fire extinguishers. Beyond the incredible amount of effort that goes into maintaining the thousands of detectors and hundreds of sprinkler/extinguisher systems on campus, there is much that the community can also do to keep these systems maximally operable:

Smoke/Heat Detectors

- These devices must be free to monitor ambient air conditions without obstruction.
- They should never be touched or tampered with, in a fashion that impairs their monitoring capabilities.
- Be careful when generating dusts (like vacuuming) or mists (like using hairspray or taking long showers) since detectors may interpret fine aerosols or mists as smoke.



Sprinkler Systems/Heads

- These devices—heads and associated piping—must not be obstructed in any fashion (like by hanging objects).
- Further, nothing should be stored (like boxes/papers on shelving) within 18" of a sprinkler head.

Fire Extinguishers

- These devices must not be obstructed in any fashion (like by staged objects in front of cases, or on the extinguisher itself).
- Further, these devices should only be used by properly trained personnel, and are only intended to respond to "incipient" fires, not full scale fire fighting.

The 2nd type of fire protection equipment maintained by college buildings includes those devices which serve to 1—notify occupants that a potential fire/fire condition exists, 2—direct occupants to their evacuation routes, and 3—control the spread of the fire/fire conditions. These include fire alarm pull stations, audible/visual alarm strobes, exit/egress signage, and fire/smoke doors.

Audible/Visual Fire Alarms

- These devices must not be obstructed in any fashion (like by staged/hanging objects).
- Evacuate whenever the alarm system is initiated.

Fire Alarm Pull Stations/Panels

- These devices must not be obstructed in any fashion (like by staged/hanging objects).
- Use the pull station if you see or suspect that there is a fire or fire condition, or in any other circumstance where emergency responders (Campus Safety) is needed, and other means of communication are unavailable.

Exit/Egress Signage

- It is critically important (especially to those not familiar with a building) for exit/egress signage to be visible, unobstructed, and not tampered with, as they direct evacuating personnel to a means of egress.

Fire Doors

- Fire doors are normally on self-closing devices, and they may or may not have magnetic hold opening devices that keep the doors open during non-emergency conditions.
- You can also tell if your door is a fire door by a small metal template on the inside door jamb.
- Never prop or obstruct a fire door, thereby impairing its ability to close during a fire.

Smoke Doors

- Unlike fire doors, smoke doors exist merely to minimize the spread of smoke during a fire.
- Smoke door are usually signified by the presence of a self-closing device, and sometimes a magnetic hold open as well.
- Similar to fire doors, smoke doors may not be propped or otherwise obstructed from closing.

2. Combustible/Other Storage Practices

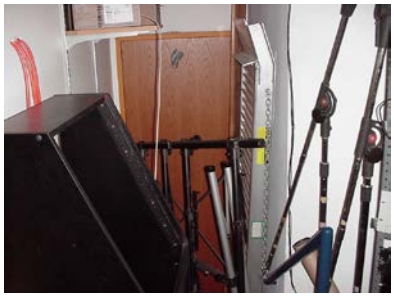
Anything that can burn, from clothing to books to boxes on a shelf, is considered a combustible. While no one expects every dorm room, office space and storage area to be neat and completely devoid of "clutter" at all times, a number of practices routinely result in fire safety violations, as follows:

Office Practices

- Offices that store combustible material (like paper work, books, boxes, etc.) beyond the capacity of existing shelving space, are citable fire safety violations if such practices either:
  - constitute an excessive fire load to the space, or
  - would impede an occupant's ability to evacuate in the event of a fire/alarm signal.
- Minimize combustible storage on office floors, or find more suitable storage locations outside of your office.

Dorm Room Practices

- Decorative wall or ceiling hangings (like tapestries, tie-dye fabrics, flags, cloth articles, beer banners, etc.) that are combustible in nature, are forbidden from being staged in a student's living quarters or common spaces.
- The only acceptable decorative wall/ceiling hangings include simple paper posters, or any of the articles from above which are either non-combustible by design (with a stamp/label to prove it) or those that are made non-combustible by shielding within a glass picture case.



Other Storage Practices

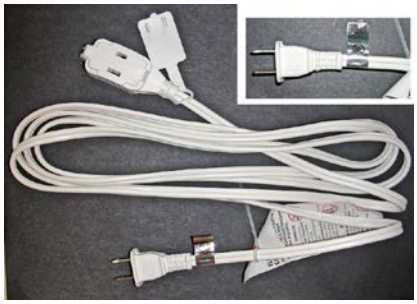
- Miscellaneous materials, whether they are combustible or not, may never be stored in such a way as they obstruct or block an emergency exit/egress.
- Further, combustible materials may never be stored in mechanical spaces, such as boiler rooms, electrical panel closets, and attics with air handling equipment/ductwork.

3. Electrical Equipment/Devices/Appliances

While saying that all electrical equipment/devices/appliances must be UL listed and otherwise in good working condition is generally sufficient in many commercial/industrial settings, the unique nature of the academic world (especially in NYS) obligates the college to restrict a number of items for either code compliance or policy reasons. Although the examples/lists that follow are not exhaustive, they do address the most routine fire safety considerations relative to equipment/devices/appliances that arise at Hamilton.

Electrical Power/Connection Equipment—Extension Cords

To the greatest extent possible, electrical power should be drawn directly from existing AC power outlets. Where this is not possible or is otherwise not feasible, consider the following:



Light Duty Extension Cords

- Light duty extension cords (typically white or brown) that are either single plug varieties or multi-plug adapters are forbidden on campus in any venue or location.
- It does not matter how long they are in use, or whether they are personally owned or owned by the college. If they run a radio in an office or student residence, they are a fire safety violation.

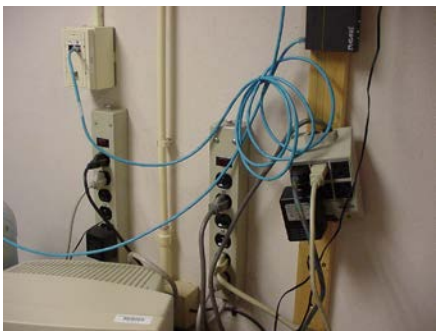
Heavy Duty Extension Cords

- Heavy duty extension cords (typically orange or yellow) are permissible **ONLY** if they are for temporary purposes.
- Examples of approved uses of this type of cord are to run power tools or a fan to clean up a spill.
- It is not appropriate to use this type of cord for a computer workstation, desklamp, TV or stereo equipment. These items are intended to be stationary, and the use of heavy duty cords in this manner will result in a fire violation.

Protected Outlet Strips

- Protected outlet strips (with "trippable" breakers) are the only approved device to provide electrical connection power on a less than temporary basis.
- These devices should never be "piggy-backed" one to another, and care should be taken to ensure they are not overloaded.
- Only 1 outlet strip is permitted per duplex outlet.
- Outlet strips with 15-20 foot cords are available as needed.

Picture A



Picture B

Picture C

Additional Extension Cord Considerations:

- Picture A—extension cords of any variety may not be run through walls, or be staged in areas where doors or other pinch points may result in an electrical shock hazard;
- Picture B—as per the above, although outlet strips are generally approved, they may not be piggy-backed one to another.
- Picture C—electrical devices may not be "home-made", as in this example of both heavy duty and light duty extension cords hard wired into an electrical box.

Electrical Devices/Appliances

Electrical Devices

The following devices are restricted from use in living and working spaces, as specified:

- Small air conditioning units (unless specifically approved/installed by the Physical Plant);
- Space heaters (again, unless specifically approved by the Physical Plant for a heat related problem associated with the facility/building).
- Electric blankets;
- Multi-plug adapters/gang boxes; and
- Specialty lighting, including halogen lights, lava lamps, and sun/heat lamps;
- ***Special note on multi-colored lamps:**

Multi-Colored Lamps

- These lamps types may only be used with bulbs at approved/UL listed wattages.
- Note the damage to 4 of the 5 shields in left picture. This fixture was approved for bulbs at 40 watts max; but bulbs at 100 and 75 watts were actually being used.

Electrical Appliances (Related to Food Cooking/Cooling/Preparation)

All students and employees are encouraged to eat and/or prepare food in established dining halls or other building/dormitory kitchenettes specifically designed for food preparation. The types of approved/unapproved devices in this category are dependent upon location, as follows:

- Student Suites and Administrative Buildings with Kitchenettes:
    - Since these locations are "designed" for food cooking activities, the only additional electrical appliances that are approved for use (beyond those that are provided for and maintained by the college) include blenders, coffeemakers, griddles, popcorn poppers, toaster ovens, and toasters. These approved devices **MUST** be used and staged in the kitchenettes themselves **AT ALL TIMES**.
- Student Living Quarters and All Other Building/Facility Locations:
    - The only other approved electrical appliances for locations without kitchenettes include small combination microfridges/microwaves (as in the picture below), and coffeemakers/coffee pots with automatic shutoffs. These devices are approved since they are food "warming/cooling" appliances, as opposed to food cooking appliances.

- Other Generally Approved Electrical Appliances (If UL Listed):
    - The following appliances/devices are generally approved is UL listed and used safely:
        - Radios, stereos, electric razors, small portable televisions with self-contained antennas, personal computer with a rating of less than 200 watts, clocks, portable hair dryers, VCR/DVD players, fax machines, small fans and desk lamps. Electric hair curlers and hot combs should be used with caution (only one should be plugged in at a time).
- Restricted Electrical Appliances Regardless of Location

- The following appliances are restricted from use in any college dormitory, or academic/administrative facility whatsoever:
    - Broilers, crock pots, electric frying pans, griddles, heating coils, hot plates, large microwave ovens (over 1100 watts), large refrigerators, deep fryers and George Foreman grills.

4. Other Hazardous Articles/Materials

Restricted Hazardous Articles

The following hazardous articles are restricted from use/storage in all living and working spaces on campus:

- Candles or incense (whether lit or for decorative purposes only);
- Real Christmas trees;
- Holiday lights (the kinds that can be plugged in); and
- Excessive combustible material (as per the above).

Restricted Hazardous Materials

Restricted hazardous materials generally include those materials which are flammable and/or explosive by their very nature, or are otherwise regulated by the NYS fire code. The specific types of hazardous materials which are restricted from use/storage in all living and working spaces on campus include the following:

- Fireworks;
- Firearm ammunition;
- Flammable/combustible liquids associated with cooking/painting/fuels, such as gasoline, kerosene, propane, aerosol paint cans, paint thinner, varnish, sterno, and camping fuels:
    - Any of these chemicals must be used/stored in designated areas, such as academic labs/studios or cooking areas;
        - Exception—Personal care products with flammable propellants (hair spray) are permissible.
- Propane/charcoal grills:
    - Regarding propane powered grills with attached propane tanks:
        - Such devices are forbidden from being used or stored within any living/working space, or upon covered porches/balconies/patios;
        - They should be both used and stored at least 10 feet away from any building structure, or upon uncovered decks external to buildings.
    - Regarding charcoal fired grills:
        - Small, portable charcoal grills (with legs less than 12 inches in length and a cooking surface no larger than 250 square inches) may be used external to buildings upon covered porches/balconies/patios so long as there is a non-combustible surface underneath (like a brick or stone catchment).
        - For charcoal grills larger than the above, they are forbidden from use upon covered porches/balconies/patios, and should observe the same 10 foot building clearance that applies to propane powered grills during use.
        - The use and possession of lighter fluid is prohibited. Only EZ-light type charcoal is permitted with a maximum of one bag allow to be stored by residents. Charcoal must always be kept dry to prevent spontaneous combustion, and should only be stored indoors or in a dry, enclosed area.
        - All spent coals/embers must be thoroughly extinguished prior to disposal.
        - Charcoal grills that are free of charcoal, coals, and ashes, may be stored indoors, upon covered porches/balconies/patios, or uncovered decks.
- Smoking:
    - In accordance with College policy and the NYS Clean Indoor Air Act, smoking is prohibited inside all campus buildings and facilities, and within 25 feet of all residential facilities. As a further courtesy, smokers should stay at least 25 feet away from any non-residential facility entrance or HVAC air intake manifold so environmental tobacco smoke does not otherwise affect non-smokers.

5. Responses to Fire Alarms (In General)

Although the college spends considerable time and resources to maintain and upgrade its fire detection and suppression equipment on campus, errant alarms will occur. They may be false alarms (where a detector or pull station is accidentally or purposefully activated), or they may be true alarms for errant reasons (where a smoke detector activates following exposure to steam). Further, the college is required to perform up to 4 fire drills every year, depending upon the building design and its occupancy type.

While the department's of Campus Safety and Physical Plant work very hard to minimize the number of false and errant alarms, it is very important for all students and employees to react to each and every fire alarm as if it's the "real thing". For fire alarms where the cause is not known, adhere to the guidance contained in this section. If the fire alarm is for a true fire or smoke condition, follow the guidance in the next section.

RA's and Students
RA's must communicate to the students they are advising where their respective "muster points" are (building specific) for student accountability purposes.

Building Coordinators and Employees
Similarly, Building Coordinators must communicate to the employees they represent where their respective "muster points" are (building specific) for employee accountability purposes.

Students/Employees Occupying Spaces Other Than Where They Principally Live/Work
Faculty teaching classes of students, and faculty/administrators/staff supervising students or other employees, frequently perform such activities in buildings/facilities other than where all involved parties are principally accounted for as per the above. It is incumbent upon the employees in charge of the academic or administrative function to determine the building's "muster point" and communicate the location accordingly to those students/employees under their care/supervision.

6. Responses to True Fires or Smoke Conditions Indicative of a Fire

- Immediately report the fire to Campus Safety—x4000 by on-campus phone, 859-4000 by cell phone—or activate a nearby fire alarm pull station if one is accessible.
- Remain calm, turn lights on, and dress appropriately.
- If your door is cool to the touch:
    - First close any open windows in your room, then open door slowly.
    - Evacuate the building via designated emergency egress routes. Do not use elevators!
    - If there is smoke or heat, crawl on your hands and knees.
- Proceed to the MUSTER GATHERING POINT to await further instructions.
- If door is warm, DO NOT OPEN IT!
    - Seal the space under the door with a towel.
    - Open window, hang a sheet or towel out of the window, and close it.
    - Open window at regular intervals to announce your location, and then close it.

7. Responsibility for Fire Safety, and Conclusions

As alluded to above, fire safety at Hamilton College is the responsibility of every student and employee. Adherence to no one single fire safety strategy is capable of eliminating every fire hazard. Only by a combination of design/engineering controls, safe working/learning/living practices, and appropriate student/employee behaviors, may the greater Hamilton College community minimize its collective risks to fire hazards in the first place.

Failure to follow the guidance contained in this document puts your lives and the lives of your fellow students and co-workers at risk. Additionally, non-conformance with the NYS Fire Code may result in formal violations/citations against the college. While the purpose of this document, again as noted, is to be educational and informative regarding fire safety considerations, every employee and student should realize that the college is legally and morally obligated to promote and manage fire safety accordingly. While "engineering and education" is the preferred methodology for achieving this goal, the college must take appropriate action against those who purposefully or willfully disregard fire safety, including but not limited to the following:

- Disciplinary action up to and including expulsion for students and termination for employees who tamper with or otherwise disregard the fire safety equipment, policies and training they are afforded.
- Departmental, professional, and personal financial responsibility for fire safety citations and penalties in certain situations where the violations in their living/working areas were easily correctable and communicated, but were not corrected within the time frames granted by NYS.