NAME

CLASS

TEACHER

DATE

A Dumb Decision May Have Saved My Life

It has been challenging for college campus administrators to prevent dormitory fires throughout the years. There are nearly two-thousand campus fires annually despite safety manuals, fire safety education, and strict protocols on campuses and in dormitories. In college dormitories and fraternity houses, students use microwaves and hot plates, candles, and smoking products, all potential fire hazards. Smoke detectors need to be checked regularly, and fire extinguishers must be readily available on each level of buildings. When high school students and their parents tour colleges, they ask about sports, clubs, class size, and even the food choices in the cafeteria. However, one glaringly obvious omission from these inquiries is the concern for fire safety and emergency protocols. Students having a good time could easily put themselves or others at risk by making poor decisions related to fire safety.

How can students safeguard themselves against dorm fires? The answer is not as simple as one might initially think. There are many sources of college campus fires, including cooking, open flame, arson, appliances, and electrical distribution, to name a few. To reduce dorm fires, students in residence halls must consider prevention methods and understand how fires start, the speed at which they spread, and the severe injuries resulting from a seemingly small fire.

I have rarely lit candles in my dorm room because I have heard of the many instances of students falling asleep with candles burning, with detrimental results. In the YouTube video, *Dominic's Story*, I learned that a business major in college, Dominic Fasintino, died in his bunk bed after falling asleep with a lit candle. Despite his friends' heroic efforts to save him, Dominic died what must have been a horrific death. His mother, Donna Henson, explained that Dominic's fraternity house did not have fire extinguishers on his third floor and was not sprinkled. She says, looking back on the priorities she and her son had before he accepted enrollment in college, that "If I had it to do over again, if the housing is not sprinkled, I would not send my child there" (YouTube, 2016). After watching this video, I now recommend students touring colleges ask whether the dorms do fire drills and how often. I also suggest they make sure there are working fire extinguishers on every level and ample smoke detectors.

I covered my smoke detector in my dorm room a while back because my friends wanted to smoke, and I was afraid to tell them no. Thankfully, the worst that happened was that I got caught, written up, and reprimanded. In the video *Syracuse University Controlled Burn*, I learned that a fire could engulf an entire room in less than two minutes. Considering that in Syracuse, even with 24/7 staffing, the fire department "takes an average of four to six minutes to respond" to fires" (OSSR,2016). If a cigarette butt had fallen without our knowledge, a fire could have started and consumed the whole room in less than two minutes. According to the Syracuse controlled burn video, the room is up to twelve-hundred degrees by the two-minute mark. I cannot imagine if I would have died or any of my friends or fellow dormmates just because I had been too scared to stand up to my friends and ask them to smoke outside.

Since getting written up by my resident advisor for covering a smoke detector, I have learned a lot during this rectification process. Now, I unplug appliances, use battery-operated candles, and never let anyone smoke in my room. Additionally, I would never cover a smoke detector. In fact, on the contrary, I now check the detector regularly for function and make sure the batteries are actively working. I have talked to my friends about fire safety and my family.

I have discussed this incident with my family at my house, who was initially upset at my ignorance. However, we worked together to create a fire escape plan in an emergency. We have also changed over to battery-operated candles throughout the house, installed two extra smoke detectors based on recommended safety protocols by the national fire safety organizations, and put a fire extinguisher on each level of our home.

What shocked me the most regarding fires was how quickly they spread. They say knowledge is power. For me, learning that an entire floor of your dwelling can be consumed within two minutes may have saved lives. I don't know if that knowledge will ever come in handy. Truthfully, I hope it does not. However, it is comforting to know that thanks to my assignments after breaking the rules, I now possess the knowledge to prevent fire, spread the word about fire safety, and establish an immediate escape plan in case of an emergency. A dumb decision may have saved my life and the lives of others. I will never cover a smoke detector again, nor will I allow indoor smoking in my home, dorm room, car, or workplace. I understand my foolishness and am sorry I made the poor decision I did that night in my dorm. I must say, though, that my stupidity ultimately led to a greater reverence for fire safety and the insistence on my friends adhering to safety standards when visiting me.

Works Cited

Firewatch, C. (n.d.). Dominic's Story. Retrieved May 12, 2022, from https://www.youtube.com/?watch=

OSRR, S. (2016, August 31). Syracuse University Controlled Burn. Retrieved May 12, 2022, from https://www.youtube.com/?watch=