From the US Fire Administration and FEMA:

Every year college and university students experience a growing number of fire-related emergencies. There are several causes for these fires, however most are due to a general lack of knowledge about fire safety and prevention.

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) offers these tips to help reduce and prevent the loss of life and property in dormitory and university housing fires.

The Facts

In cases where fire fatalities occurred on college campuses, alcohol was a factor. There is a strong link between alcohol and fire deaths. In more than 50% of adult fire fatalities, victims were under the influence at the time of the fire. Alcohol abuse often impairs judgment and hampers evacuation efforts.

Cooking is the leading cause of fire injuries on college campuses, closely followed by careless smoking and arson.

The Cause

Many factors contribute to the problem of dormitory housing fires.

• Evacuation efforts are hindered since fire alarms are often ignored.
• Building evacuations are delayed due to lack of preparation and preplanning.
• Vandalized and improperly maintained smoke alarms and fire alarm systems inhibit early detection of fires.
• Misuse of cooking appliances, overloaded electrical circuits and extension cords increase the risk of fires.

September is also National Preparedness Month

National Preparedness Month (NPM) is an annual event to focus attention on the need to minimize risks by preparing for emergencies. To encourage the citizens of Wisconsin to take steps to prepare for a potential crisis, Governor Jim Doyle has proclaimed September as Wisconsin Preparedness Month.

According to a recent survey conducted in 2009, only about 20% of Wisconsin residents have made basic preparations for large-scale emergencies, like flooding and tornadoes. A great place to start in preparing for emergencies is ReadyWisconsin.wi.gov, the website for Wisconsin Emergency Management’s preparedness campaign, ReadyWisconsin. The site provides information on how to build a disaster kit, how to make an action plan and how to be informed about dangers and impending threats.