

NORTHWESTERN COLLEGE

2026 Annual Fire Safety Report for Calendar Year 2025

Overview

The Higher Education Opportunity Act (Public Law 110-315) became law in August, 2008, requiring all United States academic institutions to produce an annual fire safety report outlining fire safety practices, standards, and all fire-related statistics for on-campus student housing. The following public disclosure report details all information required by this law as it relates to fire safety at Northwestern College. The annual security report can be found on the Northwestern College website under “Campus Life” and “Safety and Security” <https://www.nwciowa.edu/campus-life/safety>; or by requesting a printed copy from the Campus Safety and Security office (Rowenhorst Student Center, 712-707-7475).

College-Owned Student Housing

College-owned housing at Northwestern consists of dormitories, apartments, and residential houses. The table below provides information on the fire safety systems and features in place in each building.

Fire Safety Systems in NWC Student Residential Buildings							
Facility	Fire Alarm Monitoring	Interior Wall Construction Material	Fire-Rated Doors	Sprinkler System	Smoke Detection	Fire Extinguishers	# of Fire Drills per Calendar Year
Colenbrander Hall*** – 703 Albany Ave SE	X	Cinder Block	X		X	X	2
Hospers Hall – 617 Albany Ave SE	X	Cinder Block	X		X	X	2
Fern Smith Hall – 104 8 th St SW	X	Cinder Block	X		X	X	2
Stegenga Hall – 205 7 th St SW	X	Sheetrock	X	X	X	X	2
Heemstra-Suites**** – 604 Arizona Ave SW	X	Sheetrock	X	X	X	X	2
Bolks Apartment A (S) – 615 Colorado Ave SW	X	Sheetrock	X	X	X	X	2
Bolks Apartment B (E) – 613 Colorado Ave SW	X	Sheetrock	X	X	X	X	2
Bolks Apartment C (N) – 609 Colorado Ave SW	X	Sheetrock	X	X	X	X	2
Courtyard Village N – 701 Colorado Ave SW	X	Sheetrock	X	X	X	X	2
Courtyard Village E – 703 Colorado Ave SW	X	Sheetrock	X	X	X	X	2
Courtyard Village S – 705 Colorado Ave SW	X	Sheetrock	X	X	X	X	2
Vanderhill** Cottage – 616 Arizona Ave SW	X	Plaster		X	X	X	2
West Hall* – 710 Arizona Ave SW	X	Concrete	X		X	X	2
Christy Suites – 116 6 th Street SW	x	Sheetrock	X	X	X	X	2

*West Hall was razed summer 2013 and is no longer in use

** Vanderhill Cottage was razed the winter of 2022 and is no longer in use

*** Colenbrander Hall was razed in the fall of 2024 and is no longer in use

**** Heemstra Suites formally known as North Suites.

The fire alarm system in all buildings is monitored 24 hours/day, 7 days/week by Heartland Security located in Melrose, MN and Emergency 24/Baker Group located in Des Moines, IA. Any time an alarm is activated, the local fire department is notified immediately and personnel in the Campus Safety and Security Office and Maintenance Department are notified.

Specific Fire Prevention Policies

It is the policy of Northwestern College to provide faculty, staff, students, and visitors with the safest possible environment, free from potential fire hazards. To that end, periodic fire safety inspections of all college buildings are conducted by the Environmental Health and Safety office and by third party auditors.

Fire and life safety features of the buildings shall be in compliance with all applicable standards of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) adopted by the State of Iowa and the local Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ; the Orange City Fire Department or OCFD). When a deficiency is noted, the Maintenance Department will oversee its correction and maintain the records.

Only artificial Christmas trees will be allowed and shall be of fire-retardant or non-combustible material. Indoor trees must be placed out of the way of traffic, not blocking doorways, exits, exit signs or any fire protection equipment (fire hose cabinets, fire extinguishers, sprinkler heads and piping, fire alarm pull boxes, smoke detectors, etc.), or placed in any manner that could present a fall or trip hazard, or impede egress. Trees and their lights must be removed after the event or before Northwestern's annual Christmas closure.

Decorations shall not be hung or posted on any fire protection equipment (fire hose cabinets, fire extinguishers, sprinkler heads and piping, smoke detectors, fire alarm pull boxes etc.), on or near exits, on or near exit or emergency lights, on or near any other protective or operating feature provided by the college, or in any manner that could present a fall or trip hazard, or impede egress. Decorative lights, including Christmas lights, as well as floodlights, power strip extension cords, or electrically operated ornaments must be U.L. rated and approved for use.

Only power strip extension cords with a built-in circuit breaker and decorative lights in good condition (free from damage or exposed wiring) shall be used. They shall not be hung or posted on any fire protection equipment (fire hose cabinets, fire extinguishers, sprinkler heads and piping, smoke detectors, fire alarm pull boxes, etc.), on or near exits, on or near exit or emergency lights, on or near any other protective or operating feature provided by Northwestern, or in any manner that could present a fall or trip hazard, or impede egress. Extension cords or decorative lights may not be routed under rugs or carpets, through doorways, or in any manner that could present a fall or trip hazard, or impede egress.

Smoking

As Northwestern College is an educational institution in the State of Iowa, it is *illegal* to smoke on Northwestern College property. Both indoor and outdoor smoking is prohibited by Iowa Administrative Code 641 – Public Health, Chapter 153 – the Smokefree Air Act. This prohibits smoking in any building, vehicle, or outdoor area such as campus green areas, sports fields or stadiums, roads or sidewalks.

Open Flames

To minimize the potential for fires, it is Northwestern's policy to prohibit open burning and the use of combustible decorations at all times (unless in accordance with other college policies and procedures, and/or authorized by the OCFD.) Open burning as defined by Northwestern is any open/exposed flame or combustion that produces heat, light or smoke, and has the potential to cause a fire. Examples of open burning are, but not limited to; candles, incense, and pyrotechnics. The following items are prohibited in any college-owned or operated facility indoors (unless in accordance with other college policies and procedures, and or by the OCFD): any open flame device or object including candles, incense sticks and related accessories, smokers (gas, electric, charcoal) and related accessories including lighter fluids and lighters, hibachis, and other similar type products. Flammable or combustible liquids, fireworks, firecrackers, rockets, flares, sparklers, and similar devices are also prohibited.

Bonfires are allowed only in the permanent fire pit on campus and no flammable liquids may be used to start it such as gasoline, propane, lighter fluid, etc. – only paper. Fire pit rules must be observed (see [Student Handbook](#), page 36).

Portable Electrical Appliances

To minimize the potential for fires, it is the policy of Northwestern to prohibit the use of the following items in any college-owned or operated facility indoors (unless in accordance with other college policies and procedures, and or by the AHJ): halogen lamps, portable space heaters, smokers (gas, electric, charcoal), slow cookers, deep fryers, electric skillets, electric woks, griddles, sandwich makers/grills, toaster ovens and other similar type products used for cooking/warming purposes are also prohibited except when used in areas designed and built for such purposes and only while the use of these devices is under direct supervision.

Fire Evacuation Procedures and Testing

Steps to Follow if You Become Aware of a Fire

- a. Close the door to the room where the fire is located to isolate it (if possible).
- b. Activate the nearest fire alarm and dial 911. Sounding the alarm and making the call can save lives and property by giving building occupants the maximum amount of time to evacuate the building and minimizing fire department response time by giving immediate notification.
- c. Notify Campus Security at (712) 395-1077, giving the same information you gave to the 911 dispatcher.
- d. After the alarm is activated, and if you are trained, you may use a hand-held fire extinguisher if the fire is no larger than wastebasket-size.
- e. Calmly assist others to evacuate the building by following exit signs to the nearest safe exit. The nearest exit may not be the one you used to enter. DO NOT use the elevator.
- f. If possible, assist any person with disabilities who may need help in evacuating the building (see below).
- g. Remain outside the building at a safe distance to wait for the fire department to arrive. Direct them to the location of the fire.
- h. Proceed to your designated assembly area (see page 4).

Steps to Follow if You Hear a Fire Alarm

- a. Remain calm, and attempt to keep others calm.
- b. Before opening a door, feel it with the back of your hand. If it is hot DO NOT open the door. Instead, follow another exit route.
- c. If you are trapped in a room, seal the cracks around the door with towels, linens or clothes (soaked in water if possible). Open your window for air and hang objects out the window to attract attention. Shout for help. If smoke is filling the area you are in, keep low to the floor. Take short breaths to avoid inhaling smoke. Place a wet towel over your nose and mouth. Keep your head six to eight inches off the floor.
- d. If the door is not hot, brace yourself and open it slowly. If hot air or fire rushes in, close the door and refer to part c.
- e. If you can leave, close all the doors behind you and proceed to the nearest safe exit. The nearest exit may not be the one you entered. Leave the building and report to the designated assembly area (see page 4).
- f. If possible, assist any person with disabilities who may need help in evacuating the building (see below).
- g. It is the law in the State of Iowa that when a fire alarm goes off for any reason in the building you are in, you must evacuate and remain outside until told by campus or fire authorities that you may re-enter.

Procedures for Evacuating Persons with Disabilities:

- a. All faculty, staff and students who are able are expected to assist those with disabilities.
- b. Do not use elevators!
- c. To assist a person who is visually impaired, announce the type of emergency and offer your arm for guidance. Tell the person where you are going and the obstacles you encounter.
- d. Alert those with hearing limitations about the emergency and initiate their evacuation.
- e. Persons who are mobility-impaired or disabled at ground-floor locations may exit without help.
- f. Persons with wheelchairs on higher floors or basements, should:
 - If there is time, notify 911 that you are evacuating to a safe area in an *enclosed stairwell* and provide the location.
 - If others are with you, have them notify evacuation staff outside the building that you are in a designated safe area providing them with a location.
 - Once in the designated safe area, *keep the doors shut to prevent smoke or fire from entering*. Evacuation staff will be looking in designated safe areas regardless of whether or not you were able to contact them. Wait for assistance.
 - If others are evacuating, those in wheelchairs should wait as long as possible out of the main traffic path until most of the non-impaired people are evacuated, so as to not impede the evacuation others.
 - To evacuate those with wheelchairs from non-ground-level floors, be prepared to abandon the wheelchair if necessary. Ask the person to determine the best carry options. Make sure you have enough people to provide assistance. Reunite the person with the chair as soon as it is safe to do so.
- g. Once outside, proceed to the assigned assembly area (see below) and make the person as comfortable as possible.

Student Housing Evacuation Assembly Areas	
Facility	Assembly Area
Stegenga Hall	De Witt Learning Commons
Bolks and Courtyard Village Apartments	Stegenga Hall
Heemstra Suites	Stegenga Hall
Hospers Hall	De Witt Theatre Arts Center
Fern Smith Hall	Rowenhorst Student Center
Christy Suites	DeWitt Learning Commons

Fire drills are held each semester in all residence halls and academic buildings. In the academic buildings, the schedules for the drills are coordinated with faculty so no testing or hazardous laboratory work will be interrupted. The day and approximate time window is announced to faculty and staff in advance so that they may convey evacuation procedures to the students in their class that meets during the given time window. In the residence halls, the occupants are not given any advanced warning. After a drill, before anyone is allowed back in the building, a response team will search the building to be sure all have evacuated.

Fire Safety Education and Policies

All residence hall and apartment residents (including those with special needs) and all Residence Life Staff members receive fire safety training at the beginning of each semester. During the Residence Life Staff training before the start of the fall semester, basic fire safety instruction is given including training on how to use a fire extinguisher. Basic fire safety instruction is provided to all students living in residence halls who attend the orientation program at the beginning of each academic year. In addition, the "Get Out and Stay Alive" fire safety brochure from the US Fire Administration is included in the packet of information given to each residential student when they arrive on campus each year. Residence Life holds fire drills in the living units once per semester. Fire drills for the academic and administrative buildings are held once per semester led by Environmental Health and Safety Office with direct support from the Maintenance Department. Campus Security will coordinate with the Orange City Police and Fire Departments in the investigation of any fire incident.

All employees receive information on fire evacuation procedures at their initial orientation session. An annual email is also sent out at the beginning of the fall semester each year with links to all available documents that contain fire safety information and procedures.

Emergency Response and Notification

It is the goal of Northwestern College to provide faculty, staff, students, and visitors with the safest possible environment. When a significant fire emergency requires an emergency response beyond evacuation, it is extremely important that the campus community be informed in a timely manner of the actions that people should take. Therefore, Northwestern College's policy is to notify, without delay and taking into account the safety of the community, all members of our campus community as to the nature of the fire emergency and the response necessary.

When a fire emergency occurs, campus members are instructed to contact the Orange City Fire Department at 911 (8-911 from a campus phone) and Northwestern College's security department (707-7475 or cell number (712) 395-1077), who then investigates the report and issues any alerts needed to protect or inform the campus community. The Director of Campus Safety and Security or his/her designee has the authority to initiate the alert.

Emergency Notification Methods

Northwestern College maintains close communication with local emergency management officials in order to keep the college community informed of emergencies. Depending on the nature of the situation, the Emergency Response Team will utilize any or all of the following methods to issue emergency notices and/or security advisories to keep the college community informed of important safety and security information as it becomes available:

- **NWC Alert Notification System** – This communication system allows Northwestern College to send out emergency messages via text, phone calls, email, Facebook, and Twitter. All campus email addresses and office phones are automatically sent emergency notifications. Individuals who have registered their cell phone numbers with Northwestern, and have not opted-out of emergency notification, will also receive text and phone messages. The alert will provide notification and instructions. The system is also tied into the National Weather Service so tornado warnings for Sioux County are automatically sent out by the NWS. Because the campus is small, it is the general policy to send the alert to all areas on campus rather than segmenting the campus. Follow-up alerts are sent as needed to keep the campus community informed. Each semester Computing Services uploads the current campus contact information into the alert system, and the system is tested after the upload is complete (once per semester).
- **E-mail** – Notices and official security advisories can be sent via e-mail to the NWC e-mail address of students, faculty, and staff. All official notices and security advisories will be identified as such and will be identified as being sent from a member of the Emergency Response Team. Information regarding emergency response and evacuation procedures will be sent via e-mail annually.
- **Local Media (radio, television)** – When appropriate, announcements and advisories may be broadcast by the local media.
- **Social Media** – When appropriate, announcements and advisories may be posted on Facebook and Twitter.
- **Website Updates** – In some cases, information updates from the Core Emergency Response Team will be posted on the college's website.
- **Posted Copies of Notices and Advisories** – When appropriate, timely security advisories will be posted in visible locations across campus, including in residence halls. In such cases, the notices or advisories will be printed on official college letterhead and bear the signature of a member of the Core Emergency Response Team.

Future Improvements to Campus Fire Safety

At this time, no future improvements to campus fire safety are planned.

Reporting of Fires and Fire Statistics

Per federal law, Northwestern College is required to annually disclose statistical data on all fires that occur in on-campus student housing facilities. Listed below are the **non-emergency** numbers to call to report fires that have already been extinguished in on-campus student housing. All fires must be reported, no matter how small. If you find evidence of a fire or you hear about a fire, please contact one of the following:

Director of Campus Safety & Security: (712) 707-7475

Director of Environmental Health: (712) 707-7403/7330

NWC Maintenance Department: (712) 707-7170

When calling, please provide as much information as possible about the location, date, time, and cause of the fire.

Campus Fire Log

A log of all reported fires on campus is kept by the Director of Campus Safety & Security and Director of Environmental Health. The log contains information on fires in all buildings, not just on-campus student housing facilities. Each log entry includes the following information: the date the fire was reported, the nature of the fire (cause), the date and time of the fire, the general location of the fire, the number of persons who received fire-related injuries, number of deaths related to the fire, and the value of property damage caused by the fire.

Printed or electronic copies of the fire log are available to anyone by contacting the Director of Campus Safety & Security at (712) 707-7475 or the Director of Environmental Health at (712) 707-7330.

Fire Statistics

2021-2023 statistics as reported to the Northwestern College Campus Safety and Security Office and Maintenance Department.

Fire Statistics Summary – On-Campus Student Housing Facilities			
Facility	2023	2024	2025
Colenbrander Hall*** – 703 Albany Ave SE	0	0	0
Hospers Hall – 617 Albany Ave SE	0	0	2
Fern Smith Hall – 104 8 th St SW	0	0	0
Stegenga Hall – 205 7 th St SW	1	0	0
North/Heemstra Suites* – 604 Arizona Ave SW	0	0	0
Bolks Apartment A (S) – 615 Colorado Ave SW	0	0	0
Bolks Apartment B (E) – 613 Colorado Ave SW	0	0	0
Bolks Apartment C (N) – 609 Colorado Ave SW	0	0	0
Courtyard Village N – 701 Colorado Ave SW	0	0	0
Courtyard Village E – 703 Colorado Ave SW	0	0	0
Courtyard Village S – 705 Colorado Ave SW	0	0	0
Vanderhill Cottage – 616 Arizona Ave SW	0	0	0
West Hall** – 710 Arizona Ave SW	NA	NA	NA
Christy Suites – 116 6 th Street SW	NA	0	0

**West Hall was razed summer 2013 and is no longer in use

*** Colenbrander Hall was razed the fall of 2024 and is no longer in use

Details of Reported Fires						
Fires by Year and Facility		Category of Fire	Cause of Fire	Fire-Related Injuries* *	Fire-Related Deaths***	Property Damage
2013	Bolks Apartments A (S)	Unintentional	Cooking	0	0	\$100-999
2015	Hospers Hall	Unintentional	Fire Place	0	0	\$100-999
2023	Stegenga Hall	Unintentional	Electrical	0	0	\$0-\$100
2025	Hospers Hall	Unintentional	Cooking	0	0	\$100-\$999
2025	Hospers Hall	Unintentional	Cooking	0	0	\$100-\$999

**Fire-Relate Injuries: any injury to a person directly related to the fire that resulted in treatment at any medical facility

***Fire-Related Deaths: any death of a person directly related to the fire that occurs within one year of the date of the fire