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## NKU dorms going smoke-free next year

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**HIGHLAND HEIGHTS** - Northern Kentucky University officials have decided that the school's on-campus resident halls will become smoke-free next fall. There also will be a limit on the number of returning students who can live on campus.

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"The major concern is fire safety," said Matthew Brown, director of university housing. "The risk of a residence hall fire is very real, and the department of university housing feels it is in everyone's best interest to move toward smoke-free facilities."

This school year, fires have struck a sorority house at Hope College in Holland, Mich., a residence hall at Taylor University in Fort Wayne, Ind., and off-campus housing at North Carolina State University and the University of Kansas.

The Center for Campus Fire Safety, a nonprofit organization that compiles information on campus-related fires, has counted 81 deaths in student housing since January 2000.

NKU will require students to smoke at least 20 feet from a residence hall.

"The reaction has been very positive thus far. A few students have expressed concerns. I spent some time after a student meeting talking to residents who smoke and listening to their concerns," Brown said.

As an accommodation, NKU will be adding more outdoor seating and trash cans.

"Generally, the consensus is strongly in favor of the no-smoking policy," said resident assistant Russell Proctor.

Smoking isn't the only issue facing campus housing. Primarily known as a commuter campus, NKU has been forced to deal with an unexpected problem - too many people living on campus.

As a result, the number of returning students who live on campus will be limited. In 2005, the residence halls had 620 students wanting to move back in. This forced the university to reach its capacity of 1,390 students. NKU will allow only 550 returning students to live on campus starting in fall 2006.

"Over the last five years the demand for student housing has increased by 40 percent. Approximately one-third of this year's incoming class of first-time freshmen decided to live on campus," Brown said.

Students living on campus already have been notified that many of them will have to spend part of their summer looking for a new place to live.

"It has yet to take full effect in the current residents' minds," said Proctor. "By April, I think more will come to realize what a dramatic effect this will have on them."

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