

UC Monthly Safety Spotlight, November 2011

Fire Safety

Get to Know Your UC Fire Marshal: Your Ally in Fire Prevention

Your campus- or medical center-based UC Fire Marshal orchestrates a network of resources and requirements to protect your facility from the devastating effects of fire. As distinct from firefighters who respond to emergencies, Fire Marshals focus primarily on fire prevention, education and regulatory compliance. UC Fire Marshals are your professionally trained, expert fire prevention consultants,” says Garry Mac Pherson, EH&S Director, UC San Diego and liaison to the UC Fire Marshals’ Work Group. “They understand every detail of fire codes and how they apply to our operations.”



Garry Mac Pherson, Liaison to the UC Fire Marshals’ Work Group

Fire Marshals and their staffs monitor fire prevention infrastructure such as alarms, sprinklers and suppression systems, and enforce regular maintenance of these essential resources. They enforce proper measures for evacuation exits, exit lighting and building occupant load to be sure people are not putting themselves at risk. They conduct inspections and assist department staff in tailoring fire prevention plans and response procedures. This includes challenging environments such as research facilities and vivaria as well as laboratories, with their specific requirements for chemical and gas storage and air exchange systems. Helping campus departments conduct evacuation and emergency response drills is another function of the Fire Marshal’s office.

“You may not see the fire prevention staff when you attend a large campus celebration, graduation, sports event or performance, but you can be assured they are present in the background providing for fire safety.” Garry Mac Pherson

“Each campus addresses fire prevention training and prevention procedures based on their particular needs, says Mac Pherson. “But Fire Marshals from all UC facilities also work together on centralized projects. We have monthly conference calls and we meet annually to address particular challenges and explore ways to share program ideas, expertise and technical innovations. We’re following the “Power of Ten” philosophy to efficiently share our resources.”

As advanced technologies and methods for fire prevention are introduced, Fire Marshals determine what measures should be applied to improve efficiency and still meet fire code requirements. They serve as liaisons across campus operational units such as facilities management, architectural review, emergency/continuity management to ensure a comprehensive approach to meeting safety goals. For example, the Fire Marshal plays a key role in coordinating emergency response exercises in conjunction with campus-based as well as city- or county-based first responders. They also work with the California State Fire Marshal to ensure that all elements of fire codes are implemented on UC campuses.

Continued

UC Monthly Safety Spotlight, November 2011

Fire Safety

Get to Know Your UC Fire Marshal: Your Ally in Fire Prevention (continued)

Another example is the Fire Marshal's vital role in planning new construction or remodeling. In a process that often begins years before breaking ground on a new project, the Fire Marshall meets with building design and construction experts to ensure that adequate fire suppression measures are engineered into the new facility. When a fire does occur, the Fire Marshall assists the fire department in conducting a post-event investigation.

Fire Marshalls are committed and passionate for all the right reasons—the safety of everyone on campus. They tirelessly promote what they know makes a difference. And if the campus has done a good job on the prevention side, the chance of harmful exposure is minimized. Our goal is to see everyone go home safety at the end of the day.”

A well-informed, well-trained campus community is a priceless asset in effective fire prevention. Empowering people with information and training is one of the most important responsibilities of the Fire Marshall's office, whether they directly provide training or arrange for outside resources. On some campuses, fire prevention staff also provide fire prevention and emergency preparedness data to be included with law enforcement information in the campus CLERY report.