



The Sig House

A Newsletter from the Board of Grand Trustees

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Is Ignorance Bliss?

The old saying that ignorance is bliss can unfortunately play out very badly for a house corporation depending on the circumstances. Like any landlord, the house corporation expects the tenants to treat the property respectfully and in compliance with the law and life safety practices. But fraternity houses are "dynamic" environments and common sense does not always reign supreme. Consider two scenarios:

Scenario A. Tappa Kegga Day has a party and someone decides it would be fun to spray the fire extinguishers in the air. During the night, a candle starts a fire, there are no extinguishers to help contain the blaze and injuries result. The house corporation is sued for lack of fire extinguishers yet is exonerated because there was no way for the house corporation to know the extinguishers had been discharged (assuming there were adequate extinguishers originally).

Scenario B. The fire does not occur until a year after the party. A house corporation, like any landlord, is expected to maintain reasonable knowledge of the condition of the property. The failure of the house corporation to have checked the fire extinguishers for such a long period is sufficient to impose liability and possibly take the case from simple negligence (which might have been the case) to gross negligence where punitive damages become allowed.

There are many adjustments we could make to the scenario such as the chapter returning the empty fire extinguishers to their wall slots and whether or not the chapter is able to manipulate the gauges to show the tanks are full or empty to allow us to look at many alternative outcomes. But the main points are to know when ignorance is *not* bliss and

when the house corporation has the duty to regularly inspect the property. Since chapter houses are routinely high maintenance, it is safe to assume that inspections should happen frequently. If the chapter is on notice that inspections will happen on certain dates, it will likely trigger some clean up that otherwise might not happen. That's real bliss!

Food Service Bonanza

Many chapter houses offer full meal services to the brothers either using a catering service, sharing services with other fraternities or sororities or an in-house cook. Some chapters have opted not to have meal services because of inadequate numbers, cost and hassle.

But philosophically, the idea of chapter provided meal services makes sense. Providing regular meals fulfills both a basic human need and the higher purpose of encouraging brotherhood. Brothers that interact more frequently help foster the lifelong friendships and commitment that the Seven Founders envisioned.

There are a number of businesses that can assist with chapter meal services:

Campus Cooks offers healthy and customized food services. It has been in business since 1995 and serves fifty houses in multiple campus locations. Their program includes an on-site cook who prepares meals and snacks. Campus Cooks manages staffing, payroll, food and supply ordering and menu preparation.

Campus Cooks supplies greater menu variety by incorporating feedback from clients, while ensuring that the clients stay within budget. Additionally, Campus Cooks has regular training to improve the cook's skills, food served

and kitchen management.

Culinary Consultants Purchasing Services (CCPS) is the nation's only group purchasing organization that focuses exclusively on fraternity food programs. It's goal is to decrease food prices and equipment costs while increasing service and quality of products. CCPS has negotiated a contract with one of the largest and most reputable food distributors in the nation, US Foodservice. This agreement gives CCPS clients access to quality food products and an average cost savings of 15% over other food providers.

CCPS offers other benefits including:

1. An exclusive recipe and menu book composed of over 200 recipes and their nutritional value.
2. A competitive health insurance program designed for house directors and eligible staff members.
3. Helping locate a quality chef for your chapter.

Whether your chapter already has a meal service or is contemplating the benefits of having one, both of these companies can provide expertise to ensure it's more cost effective and successful. See the House Corporation Resource Directory for contact information.

Annual Reports Are Due

All Sigma Chi house corporations must complete an informational report to the Grand Trustees each year. Those that do and own a chapter house qualify to apply for the Outstanding House Corporation Award. **Forms will be distributed by February 28th and deadline for submission is March 31, 2011.**

Bed Bugs Bite

Bed bugs are two words that no one wants to hear, particularly the board of a house corporation! They can cause a variety of serious concerns. They create an unbearable living environment which could result in lease defaults and the related drop in rental income. Bed bug infestations are becoming more and more common so it's best to be prepared and to react quickly.

How do they get in?

- They hitchhike on clothes, luggage, boxes or furniture.
- They are about 1/4 inch long so can hide many places, like inside stereo speakers, the paper tube of a hanger, behind a shirt button or inside a screw hole or split in the wood of a bunk bed frame.

What do they do?

- They are parasites that feed on blood and are most active at night.
- Their bite has an anesthetic component so the host can't feel it when bitten.
- They're attracted to body heat and the carbon dioxide that we exhale.
- They multiply very rapidly and can spread from room to room under walls and even crawl through electrical outlets.
- They can become dormant for up to a year giving the impression that they are gone when they are not.
- While a bed bug bite is irritating, bed bugs do not carry or transfer diseases.

What do we do to kill them?

The method that delivers immediate and lasting results is a high heat treatment to the entire room. The room is heated to 140 degrees for 3-4 hours. It's best to hire a pest control company that specializes in this service.

A large diesel or gas industrial heater is located outside of the house with flexible duct work running through the bedroom window to deliver super heated air. A roll of coated insulation is taped to the inside of the bedroom door and an oven thermometer is placed inside the room to monitor the heat.

Remove any material from the room that could melt or warp from heat such as soft plastics like vinyl blinds. Food and aerosols or solid deodorants should also be removed. Leave all clothes, sheets and mattresses in the room.

Put the fire alarm system in test mode, shut it off or temporarily disable the fire alarm smoke/heat detectors in the room since the heat will cause them to activate.

Turn on fans inside the room to circulate the heat in the room and around furniture. To ensure even heat exposure set mattress or couches on end. Begin heating the room and check the

thermometer every half hour to make sure it is consistently rising. Heat the room at 140 degrees for at least 3 hours. It could take 8 hours or more for the room to cool down and the heat to dissipate from the furniture in the room to a comfortable level again. It would be advisable to have the residents plan to be away from the house for that night.

The key to control is quick remediation. The residents won't tolerate them long and will move out, possibly permanently, if the problem is not addressed. Take a big bite out of the bed bug problem if it appears in your chapter house.

By Grand Trustee Chad Ward

House Corporation Resource Directory

ARCHITECTURAL & PLANNING SERVICES

Reid Studio Architecture LLC 217.390.7403
Rod Reid rod.reid@comcast.net
Chapter house renovation and construction design; collects data, analyzes project requirements, develops cost estimates; assists locating design and construction team members.

CHAPTER HOUSE FINANCING OPTIONS

Constantine Capital, Inc. 816.300.0604
Bob Schock robert.schock.ze@sigmachicago.org
Provides affordable financing options to Sigma Chi house corporations for chapter house purchase, life & safety upgrades, new construction, renovation and loan guaranty

FINANCIAL & DATABASE MANAGEMENT

OmegaFi www.omegafi.com 800.276.6342
Chapter and alumni management tools to bill and collect dues and rent, manage rosters and records, pay bills and employees and file tax returns.

GreekBill, Inc. www.greekbill.com 800.457.3816
Web-based billing and financial management service enables billing, collecting, budgeting, reporting, online payment options

FOOD SERVICES

Campus Cooks 847.309.1859
William Reeder wreeder@campuscooks.com
Comprehensive program includes an on-site cook who prepares meals and snacks plus management of staffing, payroll, food and supply ordering, menu preparation.
www.campuscooks.com

Culinary Consultants Purchasing Services

Stan Faulkner Support@infocccps.com 314.422.3407
Brian Heider www.infocccps.com 847.566.7533
National buying program exclusively for fraternity chapters with food programs. Instant cost savings with no major changes to existing food program.

FUNDRAISING ASSISTANCE

Grand Trustee Bruce Morgan Casner 202.543.4600
bruce.morgan.casner@sigmachicago.org
Advice on ways to qualify for tax deductible donations.

Pennington & Associates 785.843.1661

Patrick Alderdice patricka@penningtonco.com
Capital campaign coordination, gift management, alumni relations programs, website development
www.penningtonco.com

INCORPORATION ASSISTANCE

Grand Trustee Harvey Silverman 703.319.8806
harveyas@aol.com

Ask the Grand Trustees

Q Our house corporation has an active chapter member on the board. This is typically the House Manager since many of the issues we discuss pertain to physical plant repairs and concerns. It seems that this position creates an undesirable link between the two entities, however, we are reluctant to change it because we think it's important for the active chapter to be represented in house corporation decisions that affect the structure they are living in and the rent that is collected from them. Do you have any suggestions?

A No member of the active chapter nor its chapter advisor should serve on the house corporation. The fraternity and the house corporation are separate and distinct legal entities and must remain so to insulate the general fraternity from liability. It is also done to protect the individuals serving on the house corporation from liability for the acts of the members of the active chapter. An example is a chapter advisor that is aware of a situation at the chapter house involving underage drinking that the house corporation would not otherwise be aware of. In the event of a related incident, a plaintiff could contend that the house corporation is liable because a voting board member was aware of that situation and it was not prevented.

The responsibility of the chapter advisor is to give guidance and counsel to the undergraduate chapter and the role of the house corporation is to maintain the property, rental agreement and related rules. Those two objectives should be separated as much as possible. The house corporation should have nothing to say about chapter operations except as they relate to the rental agreement. The house corp can seek input from the chapter and chapter advisor but they must not have a vote nor sit on the house corp.

We're Here to Serve

The Board of Grand Trustees is available to assist house corporations in a myriad of ways. There is over *600 years of combined professional expertise* in such critical areas as real estate development, property management, project administration, politics, maintenance, renovation, insurance, tax planning, accounting, construction, fund raising, legal, education, housing, risk management and more.

While each Grand Trustee is assigned specific provinces to oversee, this combined expertise is available to all house corporations. The key to tapping this gold mine is to contact your province's Grand Trustee with a specific request for assistance. If your request is outside of your Grand Trustee's specific area of expertise, other colleagues will assist in providing real solutions. Give us a try.

Fire Sprinkler Systems

The best weapon for controlling a fire in its early stages before it becomes deadly is an automatic fire sprinkler system, an integrated system of underground and overhead piping connecting one or more automatic sprinkler heads. It is a specialized system requiring professional design, installation and maintenance in conformance with standards set forth by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

An automatic sprinkler is comprised of closed nozzles that hold back water under pressure within the piping, much like a hose nozzle does when it is closed. It also acts like a hose nozzle because it breaks the stream of water into a fine spray.

These closed nozzles have a metal seal over the sprinkler head waterway which holds the water back. This seal is held in place by either a glass bulb or metal fusible link which are designed to either break or melt in the event of high temperatures from a fire.

Each sprinkler has its own heat sensitive element that must be heated to activation temperatures of about 165° Fahrenheit before the sprinkler will operate. A fire creates a plume of hot air and gases that rise to the ceiling and spread out. When the hot gasses reach the nearest sprinkler head, they melt the fusible element that holds the metal seal in place, the seal falls away and the sprinkler sprays water on the fire.

A fire sprinkler system is sprinkler head specific. Thus, when one sprinkler is activated, it does not automatically activate other sprinklers throughout the chapter house. Each head must be individually activated.

There is a myth that the water damage from extinguishing a fire is more destructive from a sprinkler system than from the more standard fire extinguishing from fire departments. The fact is that a fire hose delivers an average *ten times* more water per minute than a fire sprinkler system. If a fire is big enough, fire hoses may be the only way to put it out but when fire sprinklers are properly designed and functioning, the fire will be more localized and easier to bring under control with much less water.

The original habitational fire sprinklers were pendants, which protected a maximum area of 12 feet by 12 feet in a given room. Today, however, there are at least a dozen different types of external sprinkler apparatuses, including flush, recessed, and sidewall styles. The coverage has also increased to an area of 20 feet by 20 feet, which can ultimately reduce the number of sprinklers themselves and reduce aesthetic concerns. As more and more chapter houses become sprinklered, this industry will be in an even better position to perfect the look of sprinkler systems in chapter houses.

Information from www.campus-firewatch.com



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Back Row L to R: Joel Jensen (Grand Praetor Representative), Bob Schock, Chad Ward, Harv Silverman, Rich Hronek, Ray Baumgarten, Tony Flores, John Watson, Bruce Casner, Tommy Geddings, Bill Robinson, Scott Ross, Bill Bowlin, Tom Ely

