Fire Incident Report
April 10th, 2001, Brown Hall

Incident Summary:

Brief narrative description of incident (location, chronology of events, cause, injuries or physical damage caused)

On Tuesday April 10, 2001 at approximately 5:36 pm, a fire broke out in the 2nd floor co-op kitchen of Brown Hall during preparations for the evening meal. A container of canola oil being heated on the electric stovetop boiled over and ignited. The student doing the cooking turned off the burner and successfully extinguished the fire with a single portable ABC extinguisher. Another student standing nearby received minor second-degree burns from splattering of hot oil caused by the fire extinguisher discharge. Public Safety responded to multiple detector activations.

Heat and heavy smoke activated a total of six detector heads in the kitchen, adjoining rooms, and the hallway. Emergency Services and Public Safety Officers were dispatched to the scene. Public Safety assisted the evacuation of occupants. The Fire Department arrived within 10 minutes and ventilated the area to remove smoke. The only damage was to the recirculating exhaust hood above the stove.

Steps taken or planned as a result (changes in procedure or policy, training, physical alterations/improvements, etc):

- consider installation of an exhaust hood that discharges to the outside
- consider installation of fixed extinguishing systems in “full” kitchens routinely used for meal preparation
- recommend mandatory fire safety training for students
- require additional fire safety training including hands on fire extinguisher training for food coop students
Incident Analysis:

- **How and at what time was the fire first reported?**
  5:36 pm by detector activation

- **Did the person(s) occupying the space where the fire originated and/or the person first reporting the fire respond appropriately?**
  No. Occupant should have called 911 to report the fire

- **Were detectors or pull stations activated? – provide specific details**
  Yes, multiple detectors (6). All activated properly

- **Were portable extinguishers discharged? (proper type, trained individual, limited to one extinguisher)**
  Yes. The student discharged one ABC fire extinguisher to put out the fire. Improper fire extinguisher use caused splattering of oil, resulting in burns to a second student. The student had not been trained in how to use an extinguisher.

- **Were suppression system(s) activated? (provide specific details)**
  There is no suppression in this area.

- **Did all fire protection systems function as intended?**
  Yes

- **Did the dispatcher at Public Safety respond appropriately?**
  Yes. Officers responded to the alarm activations. Per procedures, the Fire Department was not notified immediately.

- **Did Public Safety patrol personnel respond appropriately?**
  When they arrived at the scene, the officers requested the Fire Department due to the heavy smoke condition.

- **How much time elapsed between initial notification to Public Safety and the arrival of the first officer at the actual fire location?**
  Estimated less than three minutes

- **Was the fire department notified?**
  Yes. Following the initial investigation by Public Safety

- **How much time elapsed between initial notification to the Fire Department and their arrival at the scene?**
  Estimated less than 10 minutes

- **Did the local fire department respond appropriately?**
  Yes. The area was ventilated to remove smoke.

- **Were there any problems with the notification and response procedure (communication, system failures, area access, delays, etc.)?**
  No

- **Did occupants evacuate promptly when the building alarm sounded?**
  Yes, occupants vacated voluntarily
- What is the fire alarm activation history for this building for the preceding 12 months?

- Was there a prompt and thorough investigation of the cause(s)? Yes, by the University Fire Marshall

- Did the fire official issue a report (if so append)? No

- What was the official cause of the fire? Unsafe cooking – overheated oil

- Is this conclusion definitive? Yes

- Were there facility or design-related issues identified as causative or contributing factors? No

- Were there human factors identified as causative or contributing factors? (lack of fire safety knowledge, failure to follow policies or procedures, etc.) Yes Poor cooking practices - inattention

- Were timely notifications made to University Officials and the Communications Office? (was a press release prepared?) Internal notifications were made consistent with the incident – no press release was issued

- Was there a post-incident debriefing with representation from the local authorities and each of the relevant departments with fire safety responsibilities? No

- Were the personal needs of any occupants appropriately handled by Public Safety and the Dean of Students or other appropriate University entities Not relevant

- As a result of this fire, is there anything Public Safety should do differently in terms of responding to the fire? No, all protocols and procedures worked and will continue to be followed

- Based on this analysis, does the Fire Marshall believe there is anything other University departments with responsibility for fire safety or the Fire Department should do differently? (maintenance, policy, procedures, training, communication, etc.) Consideration should be given to installing fixed extinguishing systems in “full” kitchens where regular, extensive meal preparation takes place (e.g. Brown, Lockhart, G.C.)

- Have the results of this investigation and any recommendations for changes or improvements been discussed by the Fire Safety Committee and implemented?