**PRESS RELEASE**

Students return to campus, but is their accommodation still safe?

**28 February 2022:** The issue of fire-safety requirements for student accommodation is again being highlighted now that university students are slowly returning to campuses as Covid-19 restrictions are eased. “Fire-safety requirements for student accommodation are by nature more onerous than other building types,” comments [ASP Fire](http://www.aspfire.co.za) CEO **Michael van Niekerk**.

This is because any building in which rooms are rented out as accommodation is deemed to be on par with a hotel. As it is a densely populated residential environment, such a building must comply with all regulations and standards. In terms of fire safety, fires can be dealt with through three main actions: Controlling the growth of a fire to prevent it from spreading, suppressing a fire to cool it rapidly, and finally extinguishing a fire so that no heated substances remain.

Evacuation should be safe and easy and allow unrestricted access for emergency services. Fire-detection systems must be installed to be able to detect any fire as soon as possible, thereby warning occupants to allow them to exit in time.

“Buildings that accommodate large numbers of people are often not designed with specific occupant characteristics in mind,” stresses van Niekerk. ASP Fire not only offers its fire engineering expertise for new buildings, but can also bring existing non-compliant buildings, especially older buildings, up to standard.

Moreover, historic buildings that accommodate residents, or that are converted to accommodate residents, pose a particular challenge in that they often lack modern fire-safety elements vital for the safe evacuation of residents, or to prevent fire or smoke from spreading rapidly throughout the building.

Looking at the latest trends in the property-development market, van Niekerk points to the current largescale repurposing of commercial and even industrial buildings into long-term residential units. Another trend is an increased demand for affordable student accommodation, such as the refurbishment of the Hatfield Square mixed-use student accommodation in Pretoria, designed by the Paragon Group for owners and developers Respublica and Redefine.

***Ends***

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**Notes to the Editor**
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**About ASP Fire**
ASP Fire operates across the entire African continent from its Gauteng base, providing professional, accredited fire risk management and support to its clients. ASP Fire designs, installs, and maintains a full range of fire detection and suppression equipment suited to clients’ needs. ASP Fire provides a holistic, proactive, and preventative fire solution based on integrated fire risk assessment, training, and consulting, with the installation and maintenance of fire detection and suppression systems that meet SABS, NFPA, FPASA, FDIA and SAQCC standards.

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