



Three Consecutive Days of Fire Alarms at McMahon: A look into what happened



The exterior of the McMahon Residence hall. The fire alarms went off three times from Jan. 24 to Jan. 26. PHOTOS COURTESY OF UCONN CAMPUS HOUSING ON FACEBOOK

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From Jan. 24 to Jan. 26, students evacuated the building as Brien McMahon Hall fire alarms were activated each day.

On Jan. 24, a fire drill that is required to be conducted within 30 days of the academic semester was held. According to UConn Fire Chief Christopher Renshaw, the fire drills are done during evening hours. However, they were set off around noon “due to the impending storm and colder weather that was forecasted.”

On Jan. 25, according to university spokesperson Stephanie Reitz, low temperatures caused a water pipe to freeze and burst, triggering the fire alarms.

On Monday, Jan. 26, the use of a hair care product too close to a smoke detector activated the alarms, according to Reitz.

“I assumed someone burned popcorn in their dorm.”

ANNE HOAGLUND

After the pipe burst on Jan. 25, elevators on the North side of the building, the ground floor and the laundry room located on the ground floor were closed off to students for a short period of time. UConn Facilities Operations quickly repaired the damaged pipe, according to Reitz.

McMahon Resident Assistant Anne Hoaglund, a senior political science and sociology double major, saw the pipe leak on the ground floor after the alarms went off on the second day.

“I assumed someone burned popcorn in their dorm,” she said.

Hoaglund said when she saw the water spill, she was confused about how the leak happened.

She said she worried about “the extent of the damage and how it could impact residents.” She was one of the resident assistants on duty working to get students to exit the building.

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ALEX HOUDSHELL

When the fire alarms activated, a buildup of students blocked the stairways as many were hesitant to exit the building. After resident assistants’ persistence, the majority of students complied.

Still, due to active snowfall and frigid temperatures, a few students remained in the building.

According to Patch, by Monday morning, the total snowfall at Storrs was 14.9 inches. Weather tracker website timeanddate reports Storrs being 14 degrees Fahrenheit around the time students were evacuating the building on Jan. 25. Some of the students that did not leave the building were wearing shorts, slippers, or were in their pajamas.

“We recognize and sympathize with the inconvenience that our students and employees face when these incidents occur, and our public safety personnel work to identify and address the issues quickly so we can safely allow people to return and reoccupy the spaces,” Reitz said via email.

Reitz added that everyone should treat the fire alarms seriously and exit the premises when fire alarms are activated.

USG ELECTIONS UNDERWAY, INTENT TO RUN FORM DUE MONDAY

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The Undergraduate Student Government is kicking off their election process for the 2026-2027 school year, with intent to run forms due Monday, Feb. 9.

The open positions for the spring 2026 election include student body president and vice president, who must run as a joint ticket, as well as chief diversity officer and comptroller. There are various student senator seats open for each school and college and ten multicultural and diversity senate seats.

The intent to run form is the first step in the election process, which allows those interested to fill out what position they are running for and to include a short statement and photo that appears on the ballot. The election voting period opens on March 3 at noon and closes March 5 at noon.

“For anyone considering running, it is worth remembering that leadership is not about having all the answers going in,” said Andy Zhang, current student body president. “It is about the ability to show up and learn. Even after the process ends, the skills, confidence, and understanding gained from stepping into the role stay with you. I know that will certainly be true for me.”

Zhang said it is common to feel

uncertain leading up to the intent to run date, which he remembers feeling this time last year.

“Many people question whether they are qualified enough, whether they belong in the space, or whether the process will be worth the stress and vulnerability that comes with it,” he said. “What often matters more than complete confidence is a willingness to step forward despite uncertainty.”

Candidates running in the election must collect student signatures before being placed on the ballot. President and vice president tickets require 100 signatures, and chief diversity officer and comptroller require 50. Signatures are due to USG chief justice by 11:59 p.m. on Feb. 12.

Those running for president, vice president, comptroller and chief diversity officer will participate in a USG debate on Feb. 23 at 6 p.m. in the Student Union Theater.

Many candidates also choose to campaign by making social media accounts or creating flyers to introduce themselves to the student body.

“The campaigning can feel awkward, conversations can be unfamiliar, and the entire process can be intimidating at times,” Zhang said. “But it is also a rare opportunity to challenge yourself and learn how to communicate your values to a community in a meaningful way.”

Academic senators do not need to obtain signatures or participate in the debate, USG Chief Justice Ella Bennett said.

“It’s a lot less pressure to do that and a great, easier way to get involved in USG,” she said. “They still have to go to Senate meetings and caucus and committee meetings, but it’s an easier transition into USG for a student who might be looking for less commitment, but still getting involved.”

President, vice president, comptroller and chief diversity officer positions are paid positions. Bennett said senators are unpaid however they may be academically compensated by taking a one credit political science class with no additional attendance requirements.

Bennett is overseeing the application material for the election. Any questions can be directed to her email at chiefjustice@usg.uconn.edu. More information about each position and the application process can be found in the USG election packet.

“If you have an idea of something you’re passionate about that you want to advocate for the student body, I think USG gives you the platform to do that,” said Bennett, who joined USG this year. “I think that’s a really powerful thing, especially in the day and age that we live in where it’s hard for students’ voices to be heard.”



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