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Metro

Boston bans MIT house gatherings

City moves after student injured

By **Matt Rocheleau** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT | OCTOBER 23, 2013

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Officials in Boston have indefinitely banned parties and other large gatherings at MIT fraternities, sororities, and other independent living groups located in the city, about a month after an 18-year-old MIT student fell four stories through a skylight and injured himself.

Two Massachusetts Institute of Technology administrators and two leaders of associations that oversee fraternities, sororities, and independent living groups sent e-mail to the organizations Friday saying that until the city issues new inspection certificates, the off-campus groups cannot host gatherings that involve more than the number of people who are legally permitted to live at each location.

Any organization that fails to comply “may jeopardize their own dormitory license,” and, Boston officials

are “seriously considering” making the ban permanent, the e-mail said.

MIT officials said they are working with the groups to find ways to host planned social events in compliance with the ban, including by providing on-campus space.

“MIT is well aware of the hardship this will pose for our Boston-based organizations,” the e-mail said.

There are about 18 MIT fraternities, three sororities, and two independent living groups within the Boston city limits, according to MIT’s online map of the organizations’ locations.

On Sept. 11, a student fell through a skylight at the Phi Sigma Kappa fraternity house at 487 Commonwealth Ave. The house was issued several citations, including for alcohol violations and having an unpermitted roof deck. Officials at Boston’s Inspectional Services Department said they would crack down on other potentially unsafe off-campus properties.

Boston officials have asked for reports justifying the number of people properties can host for events, according to the e-mail from MIT officials.

Inspectional Services told MIT administrators last week that until occupancy reports for all of the houses are submitted and new inspection certificates are issued, “the city cannot guarantee that [the] buildings are safe for any occupancy above the posted legal residential occupancy figure,” according to the e-mail.

The e-mail said MIT officials do not know when new certificates may be issued.

Lisa Timberlake, an Inspectional Services spokeswoman, said the city is “working with the school to make sure their off-campus properties are in code compliance.”

According to an online map, there are six MIT fraternities, three sororities, and two independent living groups in Cambridge, and one fraternity and one independent living group in Brookline.

The e-mail from MIT administrators reiterated a previous announcement to those properties that while not affected by restrictions in Boston, they are bound by a temporary rule MIT imposed last month limiting gatherings to three times a house’s legal occupancy.

Mike Yanovitch, chief building inspector of Brookline, said that beyond enforcement of existing bylaws, there are no special ongoing efforts to crack down on such properties there. Officials in charge of



inspections in Cambridge could not be reached late Tuesday afternoon.

Matt Rocheleau can be reached at matthew.rocheleau@globe.com. For more coverage of area colleges and universities, visit boston.com/yourcampus.

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