

Is the University of Tampa's Campus Housing Safe?

It is well known that the University of Tampa has more students enrolled than they can provide housing for, but now students are reporting that the housing available is not in acceptable conditions, and that they cannot easily get ahold of the Facility Maintenance Office to help them.

“We have had problems with our AC unit all year, on top of bathroom leaks, no heated sink water, and broken door handles,” said Ava McHale, a first-year student living in on-campus housing. “Campus maintenance is just not responsive.”

According to the University of Tampa official website, “The goals of the Facility Management Department are to provide safe, reliable, quality service to support the academic goals and community involvement of the University. Department staff aim to maintain a safe, clean, and attractive learning, working, and living environment.”

Students living on campus can reach out to Facilities Management via QR code, email, or phone and submit a maintenance request for any faulty building equipment or utilities found in their dorm rooms. According to Christian Martinez, an Office Assistant for Facilities Management, the facilities crew should respond to a work request within a day or two, but according to Allie Voto, a first-year student living on campus, “Campus maintenance is not very reliable.”

She added, “We called at least five times for them to come fix a leak in our ceiling, and it took them forever to come check out. When they finally came back to try and fix it, they took out a couple of our ceiling tiles and left a trashcan to collect dripping water.”

Voto said, “Our room remained like that for over two weeks. They forgot to send a crew to fix the pipes, and they hadn’t realized until we called again asking them to replace the tiles. It was another week before our room was back to normal.”

Kailey Stellrecht, another first-year student said, “When I moved into a dorm from the Barrymore Hotel halfway through first semester, the AC unit was stuck below 65°F making our room conditions unlivable. Come to find out, my roommates had been submitting requests for it to be fixed since the beginning of the semester, and it still hadn’t been.”

According to the University of Tampa website, faulty air conditioning is among the list of emergency maintenance requests because it creates a situation that could cause serious bodily harm or injuries.

Stellrecht said, “It is the second semester already and our AC still doesn’t work properly. We often have to leave the unit turned off.”

When asked how long a typical AC repair takes, Christian Martinez said, “Most HVAC repairs are done within 24 hours, depending on the required parts and their availability.”

He added, “We take all the calls, emails, web submissions, contractor sign-ins as well as temporary contractor parking passes throughout the campus and in some cases, it can be all hands-on deck.”

Martinez said that they receive approximately 60-plus calls and a minimum of 100-plus electronic QR and email maintenance requests daily. He added that the most frequent requests received are clogged toilets and showers, power related issues, and AC problems.

Martinez said, “In most cases, it takes Facilities within 24-48 hours, excluding weekends, as responses to maintenance requests vary based on the number of requests received.”

McHale said, “We have never received timely help from Maintenance, which is crazy because we are paying so much for a faulty room.”

She added, “I know that maintenance has to respond to a lot of issues around campus, but they should really have a crew specifically available to respond to dorm issues so that us students can live in a safe environment.”