

SUBJECT: East Residential Hall Update – Dining Common Food Service to Open Wednesday

Dear East Residence Hall Residents,

We know the ongoing closure of the East Residence Hall has been frustrating, disruptive, and stressful, especially for students who have been displaced or unable to access personal belongings. We want to take a moment to explain what happened, why access to the building has been restricted, what safety considerations are guiding next steps, and our plan to restore access to parts of the building as they are cleared by inspectors. We hope the information below helps clarify what's happening behind the scenes and why timelines can take time to confirm.

What happened?

On Monday, due to the extreme cold temperatures, a sprinkler pipe burst on the 10th floor of the East Residence Hall. The sprinkler that burst was located inside a secured-entry mechanical room near the elevator lobby. Sprinkler systems are under high water pressure, and when the pipe burst it released a great amount of water in a short period of time. The water then traveled across portions of the 10th floor and down into the floors below, traveling through walls, ceilings, stairwells, and utility spaces. Based on initial assessments, approximately 50 rooms in the blue hallway of floors 2-10 were impacted with varying degrees of water damage. Water entered numerous utility and electrical spaces, potentially compromising those systems.

Why is the building placed under “no occupancy” restrictions?

Once the sprinkler pipe failed, several critical safety systems were affected:

- Fire suppression: The sprinkler system needs to be fully repaired, re-pressurized, and tested to meet fire code. Until that happens, the building cannot safely be occupied.
- Electrical systems: City and state inspectors are determining the extent to which water penetrated electrical systems. In a situation like this, water can enter outlets, lighting, fire alarms, elevators, door and building access systems, and emergency systems, creating serious safety hazards or compromising the systems. Several of these systems are not currently operational in East Hall.
- Hidden damage: Even if spaces look dry, water can be trapped behind walls, ceilings, or floors, weakening materials or creating unsafe conditions.

Because of these risks, city and state inspectors, not the university alone, hold the authority to determine whether a building can be occupied or entered.

What are we doing currently behind the scenes?

While access is restricted, multiple teams are working at the same time to:

- Remove water and dry the building using industrial equipment

- Repair the broken pipe and restore the sprinkler system
- Inspect electrical, fire alarm, and safety systems
- Assess the full extent of damage throughout the building

Only after city and state inspectors confirm that conditions are safe can access be restored.

Why can't our students retrieve belongings right away?

We understand how difficult it is to be without essential items like clothing, laptops, coursework, or medications. However, even brief entry isn't allowed until inspectors determine that:

- Fire protection is restored
- Electrical systems are safe
- There is a safe way to evacuate if something goes wrong

Allowing access before that point could put our students and staff at risk.

Reopen the building in stages

Reopening of a building can occur in phases when inspectors determine that specific areas are safe and operate independently from impacted systems. In this case, inspectors have confirmed that the **first floor of the East Residence Hall, specifically the Dining Commons Food Service, operates on separate electrical systems from the upper floors and sustained minimal impact**. As a result, we are able to reopen the Dining Commons Food Service **tomorrow for meal service as usual**, while the remainder of the building remains closed.

Dining Commons Food Service access details:

- **Hours:** Open tomorrow, 2/11/2026
 - **Breakfast**
 - **7:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.**
 - **Lunch 11:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.**
 - **Dinner 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.**
- **Entry:** Please enter **only through the back door facing the softball field**
- **Restrooms:** Available **only in the 1st Floor West Hall**
- **Access restrictions:** No other areas on the first floor are accessible at this time, including offices, common spaces, mailboxes, additional restrooms or any of the upper floors.

We appreciate your cooperation in following these access guidelines as we continue remediation and inspections in the rest of the building. We are very focused on moving to the next stage of getting residents access to their rooms to retrieve their essential items.

When we gain approval for this resident access, we anticipate reopening will happen in several stages:

- Supervised access to retrieve essential items
- Limited re-entry to specific floors or wings

Each step requires inspection approval.

We know that waiting for updates, especially when answers are uncertain, is stressful. We are committed to sharing information as soon as it is confirmed and to communicate clearly, even when timelines are still evolving.

Thank you for your patience as we prioritize safety and work toward getting you back into your space as quickly as possible.

For on-going updates please visit www.umb.edu/reshallsupport