NEW ORLEANS (AP) - Ten Tulane University fraternity members faced felony charges Wednesday and the school suspended Pi Kappa Alpha following accusations that the group burned pledges with hot water and pepper spray during a "hell night" initiation.

The fraternity members face felony battery charges - punishable by up to 15 years in prison - in an alleged hazing incident in which two pledges received second- and third-degree burns from boiling water and crab boil being poured on their bodies.

"The two students were treated at a local hospital for severe burns that occurred during the hazing," Officer Garry Flot, a New Orleans police spokesman, said in a news release.

A Tulane spokesman refused to comment on the allegations or the status of the students on Wednesday, but the school issued a news release saying it had suspended its chapter of Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity and would investigate.

"This fraternity is no longer a recognized fraternity at Tulane," the school's news release said. "The university has zero tolerance for any type of hazing or other incident which can potentially endanger the well being of any student."

The Pi Kappa Alpha International Fraternity released a statement Wednesday saying that actions such at those alleged to have happened at the New Orleans chapter were "reprehensible, and are completely contrary to our mission."

The organization also suspended the Tulane chapter.

All 10 of the fraternity members had turned themselves in to New Orleans police by Wednesday afternoon. They were booked with aggravated second-degree battery.

At least two of the pledges were scalded with hot crab boil and pepper spray late April 25 or early April 26 to see who could stand the most pain, said attorney Paul Hesse, who represents one of the victims.

"Our client has severe second-degree burns to his back, buttocks, shoulders, arms, over 20 percent of his body," Hesse said. "He is getting medical treatment twice a day and is in a lot of pain."
His client is unable to attend school, but Tulane has agreed to allow him to take final exams when he has recovered, Hesse said.

Hesse would not identify his client, saying he feared reprisal.

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Tulane fraternity fought earlier complaints

By Brendan McCarthy

Although Pi Kappa Alpha headquarters revoked the charter of its Tulane University chapter this week after allegations of hazing surfaced, years earlier the international fraternity blasted the university's student government association and school newspaper for airing more serious accusations of misconduct.

The head of the fraternity, also known as PIKE, wrote a letter in May 2006 addressed to Tulane University officials claiming that its local chapter members were "unfairly and inappropriately accused of misconduct" and requested that the school discipline student government officials and student journalists for their actions, which the organization called reckless, unsubstantiated and defamatory.

This week, the university suspended the PIKE chapter after allegations that members poured boiling water on pledges and caked them with flour, crab boil, vinegar, cayenne peppers and wasabi sauce.

Ten members were booked with aggravated second-degree battery, which carries a penalty of up to 15 years in prison and a maximum $10,000 fine, after victims with second- and third-degree burns were treated at a local hospital.

The 2006 letter of rebuke from the international fraternity came after allegations of the use of date-rape drugs and sexual assaults that were made by the school's student government. Fraternity officials declined further comment Friday, saying the letter "speaks for itself."

The Tulane student government had written PIKE international headquarters and the university administration requesting that the university examine charges that fraternity members drugged and sexually assaulted women at their annual Saturate party.

On Wednesday, Tulane University acknowledged that it had not responded to that request.

"Apparently, there was no response from Tulane to this letter, which we regret," the university's statement said.
Letter spoke of abuse

The student government request came on the heels of a Tulane police investigation into complaints stemming from the same party, and unidentified "sanctions" handed down by a university judicial board for violations of the student conduct code.

But the university has since Wednesday declined to detail those allegations or the punishments the university judicial board later meted out to the fraternity.

"I can't find the answers to these questions tonight," university spokesman Mike Strecker said late Friday.

In an early draft of the letter that the student government ultimately sent, in toned-down form, to the administration, the association complained of previously light punishment for serious violations at the annual Saturate party.

"Such egregious and continuous abuse of the students and the rules requires (far) greater action than a series of slaps on the wrist and monetary fines which have clearly done little to correct the situation," reads the draft letter, a copy of which was included in the association meeting minutes and posted on its Web site.

The edited letter sent by the student organization had fewer details, but included the same general allegations of drugging and date rape of women at the party. It asked the university and the national fraternity organization to investigate.

The rebuke from PIKE's headquarters came in response to allegations printed in the school's newspaper, in an article titled, "Fraternity investigated for date rape drugs."

In a letter to school officials, PIKE's executive vice president took issue with the student government's charges, "which we and the chapter believe to be completely false." The letter blasted the school newspaper, the Hullabaloo, for perpetuating the "false and defamatory charges" against the chapter and damaging its reputation.

Tulane to review policies

The fraternity executive, Raymond L. Orians, requested that Tulane administrators "take action to reprimand or otherwise discipline" the student government and the student journalists. He further asked for a public retraction and apology from the student publication, as well as assurances that such "reckless conduct" would not occur again.

The Hullabaloo's editor-in-chief had acknowledged in a follow-up article that the headline of the initial story was "unfortunate." The paper published an explanation that conceded the fraternity had not been investigated; rather, the article focused on the student government association's request that university officials examine the allegations.
The school took no disciplinary actions against the journalists or members of the student government, Strecker said.

The PIKE international fraternity did not return a request for comment Friday. The students booked in the hazing case could not be reached for comment.

They include: Jeremy Bendat, 22, of Los Angeles; William Dougherty, 20 of Voorhees, N.J.; Kevin Dunn, 20, of Bellmore, N.Y.; Preston Gelman, 20; Randall Graham, 20, of Grosse Pointe Farms, Mich.; Danny Lazzeri, 20, of Scottsdale, Ariz.; Joseph Lorono, 20, of Rye, N.Y.; Nicholas Maddern, 22, of South Hamilton, Mass.; Oded Nissim, 20; and Joseph Stevens, 23. The hometowns of three of the arrested students were not available.

On Friday, Tulane University President Scott Cowen released a statement vowing to scrutinize student policies in the wake of the hazing allegations.

"The university will immediately undertake a thorough review of its student conduct procedures, including its handling of student complaints and related student issues to ensure the efficacy of its policies, procedures and processes for the safety and well-being of Tulane students," Cowen said. "This review will be conducted by a panel of experts from around the country."