



Saint Paul Fire Department
645 Randolph Avenue
Saint Paul, MN 55102
(651) 224-7811

Investigation Report

Case

Case Details

SPFD211222055883	Blank, Joseph	Closed	21-260-658
Case Number	Lead Investigator	Status	Name
Confidential	Accidental	Cooking	
Confidentiality	Disposition	Fire Cause	
12/22/2021	09:44		
Start Date	Start Time	End Date	End Time
Saint Paul Fire Department		Saint Paul Police Department	
Primary Fire Department	Secondary Fire Department	Law Enforcement	

Case Narrative

The fire department was called to the report of smoke coming from the rear of a multi-family dwelling and a possibly trapped victim. Firefighters arrived to find a working fire on the second floor of the structure in the rear and reported that the victim was still trapped. The 911 caller stated that he saw smoke coming from around a door that was affixed closed with screws across a door opening into the adjoining victim's apartment and no sounds of any alarms sounding. The witness states that he also heard the victim in the adjoining apartment yelling and banging around but he was unable to make out what was being said. The witness left his apartment via the front staircase and ran downstairs and outside to the rear staircase of the building and attempted to force entry into the victim's second floor entry door without success. The witness then broke out a window to the east of the door to enter the apartment but was driven back by heat and smoke shortly before the first fire company arrived. Investigation revealed that the victim was using an electric two burner stove that was sitting on the floor next to the couch, to heat a large pot of food. The electric two burner appliance was in close proximity to combustible materials, which ignited. There were no identified working smoke detectors in the victim's apartment.

Case Background

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Case Synopsis

This report is based on presently known and available facts, data, and information.

Investigation Comments

Fire

Ignition Sequence

Cooking	Common room, den, family room, living room, lounge		
Fire Cause	Area of Origin	Equipment Power Source	Equipment Portability
Area of Origin Comments			
Heat from powered equipment, other		Multiple types of material	
Heat Source		Material Ignited	
Stove, heating			
Equipment Involved In Ignition	Equipment Make	Equipment Model	Equipment Serial Number

Fire and Smoke Spread Information

Confined to building of origin	
Fire Spread Material	Fire Spread Avenue
Smoke Spread Material	Smoke Spread Avenue
Fire Comments	

Weather

		5	SE
Visibility	Relative Humidity (%)	Wind Speed (Mph)	Wind Direction
14.0	0	No	
Temperature (Fahrenheit)	Precipitation	Lightning	Information Obtained From Weather
Cloudy			
Weather Comments			

Property Details (1 of 1)

Property

N/A			
Name			
1762 Englewood Avenue			
Address		Apt/Suite/Room	
Saint Paul	Ramsey County	Minnesota	55104
City	County	State	Postal Code
\$173,300.00	\$50,000.00	\$150,000.00	
Pre Fire Value	Content Loss Value	Structure Loss Value	
Property Description			

Area

Structure	Urban	
Area Type	Area Description	Area Quality

Structure

Multifamily dwelling		Occupied		
Property Use		Structure Occupancy		
	No	Not Operating		
Alarm Type	Smoke Detector Present		Smoke Detector Performance	
None				
Sprinkler Standpipes		Sprinkler Standpipes Performance		
77		24	2	
Structure Length (Ft)	Structure Height (Ft)	Structure Width (Ft)	Number Of Stories	Number Of Units
Wood Frame	Type V	StructureMaterial_Wood		
Construction Type		Structure Type		Structure Material
Basement	Wood	Pitched	Asphalt	
Foundation	Exterior Covering	Roof Type	Roof Material	

Study of the interior of the structure started via a door labeled "B" to the basement level which was located on the west side of the structure. This door showed signs of forced entry. It was later learned that firefighters forced this door open during fire suppression activities. The staircase ran from south to north along the west wall of the foundation. There were no signs of smoke or fire in the basement.

Examination of the water heater, furnace and electrical panel did not show signs of smoke or fire damage. The gas forced air furnace was missing its front cover.

Inspection of the electric panels revealed that panel #3 belonged to the fire damaged apartment on the second floor. The main circuit breaker was turned off by firefighters during suppression activities. One circuit breaker was found in the tripped position in this panel. The #21 breaker was tripped and not identified on the index panel on the door.

Investigation of unit #4 on the first floor, at the midpoint of the structure showed no signs of smoke or fire damage. The door on the east side entrance was damaged by forced entry. It was learned that firefighters forced this door open while performing search and rescue activities. There was water damage visible in this unit coming from the ceiling above and several broken ceiling tiles were located on the floor.

Study of unit #2, located on the south side of the first floor, showed signs of forced entry through the north door to the unit. There were no signs of smoke or fire damage.

Observation of the front foyer on the first floor, just inside the front door showed no signs of smoke or fire damage. Inspection of the front door revealed no signs of forced entry.

Entry into unit #1 led to a two story unit that was located in the northwest corner of the structure. Observation of the door showed no signs of fire damage and minor to moderate smoke damage visible on the walls.

Moving to the second floor via a staircase that runs from north to south along the east side of the structure shows no signs of smoke or fire damage. At the top of the stairs was the door to unit #3. The door was in the open position and showed no signs of forced entry.

Examination of the unit interior revealed minor smoke damage throughout with the exception of the south wall in the living room around a doorframe. Around the living room doorway to the south, there was heavy smoke damage on the majority of the doorframe from approximately the baseboard level continuing to the top of the doorframe. This smoke damage pushed past an item covering the door frame as opposed to flowing into the room as an unrestricted buoyant gas. A veneer piece of wood was found screwed to the top of the doorframe. This piece of wood matched a door that is found on the floor of the unit in the Livingroom. Inspection of the door laying on the floor in the Livingroom is the same color of wood and firefighters report that this door covered the open doorframe along the south wall of the unit that they removed. There are several approximately three inch screws attached to the door that match holes in the doorframe with the smoke damage. Continuing toward the south, the doorframe was approximately one foot deep.

The depth of the doorway accounted for an addition to the main structure toward the south. On the south side of the doorframe was a second door with a left hand hinge. This door was found in the open position. The door revealed an even layer major smoke demarcation that extended from the top of the door down toward approximately two feet above the floor and moderate smoke damage continuing to floor level.

Entry to unit #3A was made via the rear deck on the second floor on the south side of the structure. The left hand hinged door was removed by firefighters during rescue efforts. Observation of the interior of this room revealed heavy contents of personal belongings. This room showed the greatest amount of fire damage in the structure.

Examination of this unit showed smoke damage and no flame damage in the bedroom, and bathroom while moving in a clockwise direction inside the apartment. Smoke damage increased in the living room and heat and fire damage was visible in this room closest to the east wall.

A "V"-shaped fire pattern was visible on the east wall of the living room that started at the baseboard and extended to the ceiling level. The remaining portions of the pattern were clean burned where firefighters hadn't removed the lath and plaster during firefighting operations. A couch was in the center of the living room and was positioned facing toward the south and running east to west with its east side up against the east wall. Mass loss to the couch increased moving from the west end of the couch which suffered only smoke damage as compared to the east end which suffered heavy fire attack to its structural wooden members. At the east end of the couch there was increased mass loss to the front leading face of the couch [REDACTED]

Excavation of the area of greatest damage on the east end of the couch in the area at the bottom of the "V"-shaped pattern revealed a computer tower that fell from a cabinet located directly to the south. Examination of the computer tower showed no minor heat damage to the interior of the unit that was exposed. Also found in the area of origin were cigarette butts and a two burner Intertek electric stove, model # 3068964. In that was positioned on the floor in the area of the couch with the greatest mass loss. Inspection of the electric stove showed that it was plugged into an extension cord that was plugged into a strip outlet that was plugged into a wall duplex outlet on the south side of the room to the east of the back door. Examination of the electrical cords, plugs and outlets did not reveal any signs of fire origination. A large pot of rice and beans was found on the electric stove and the burner and controls on the side where the large pot of food was sitting was fire damaged and the other side of the electric stove was undamaged. Examination of the flooring where the electric stove was sitting showed that the wooden flooring suffered fire damage underneath the electric stove on the side where the large pot of food was positioned. An internet search about the electric stove did not reveal any recalls or fires related to this model of stove.

Observation of the large pot of food showed circular patterns to the bottom side of the pot that was exposed to heat from the coil heating element. The interior of the pot revealed only small amounts of burning to the very bottom layer of food on the interior surface of the pot.

An examination of the attic space revealed heavy fire damage that extended upward along the east wall of unit #3A and into the attic. The attic suffered major smoke and fire damage on the south side of the attic and moderate smoke and fire damage toward the north end. Firefighters cut several ventilation holes into the roof of the structure during fire suppression activities.

Interior Exam

Study of the north elevation reveals soot staining to the gable end vent and melting and fire damage to the vinyl siding and smoke damage to the soffit above the gable vent. The front storm door and interior door were in the open position.

The study of the east elevation showed smoke staining to the gable vents at the peak of the roof and soffit above. The electric meters, meter box and raceway were located on this side of the structure and showed no signs of damage. The single gas meter was found in the "off" position and locked off by the utility company. The gas meter showed no signs of smoke or fire damage. Both utility meters have been eliminated as a causation of the fire.

The ground on the exterior of the south side of the structure contained a large amount of burned fire debris that firefighters removed from the attic above unit #3. Examination of the second floor exterior, that is accessed via a rear staircase to a deck, revealed that the back door to the upstairs unit #3 was found on the deck. The door showed heavy fire damage to its upper half of the interior face and observation of the deadbolt and doorknob lock shows that only the doorknob lock was engaged during the fire. Firefighters report having to pull the door outward during forcible entry to gain access to the interior of unit #3A.

Firefighters completely removed the back door on the south side of the structure during firefighting operations. A large hole was cut into the structure above the back door. This hole extended from above the back door to the peak of the roof during overhaul procedures. Observation of a window located to the east of the back door showed smoke and heat damage above the window.

The west elevation study revealed smoke damage from a roof gable vent that extended into the soffit at the peak of the roof. Two holes were opened in the roof during fire suppression operations and showed no smoke or fire damage around the openings. A railing to a second floor balcony was sawed open during fire suppression activities and did not show signs of smoke or fire damage.

Exterior Exam

Alarm and Security Services

None

No

Sprinkler Standpipes

Smoke Detectors Present

Smoke Detector Locations

Fire Suppression

Closed And Locked

Closed And Locked

Doors

Windows

Other Entrances

Alarm Protection/Security Comments

Utilities

Electrical Status

Electrical Entrance

Fuel Status

Fuel Type

Fuel Company

Water Status

Water Company

Telephone Status

Utility Comments

Witness Statement

Mortimer	Michael	T
Last Name	First Name	Middle Name
Owner		
Type	Employer	
Interviewed Date	Interviewed By	Interviewed By Other
556 Vicky Ln		
Street 1	Street 2	
Shoreview	Minnesota	55126
City	State	PostalCode
White	03/02/1945	
Race	Date of Birth	Driver's Liscense Number

Q: How long have you owned the property?

A: 40 - 45 years.

Q: Do you know what age the building is?

A: 1879 or something like that.

Q: Any recent electrical or mechanical work done to the structure?

A: No, not really. We did a little work downstairs but that's been years.

Q: How many apartments do you have in this structure?

A: There's four; the kid had some problems so we closed off a bedroom that went to Steve's and then gave him [Arthur Paul Haston] the back.

Q: So is it its own apartment? When you say he has problems, what do you mean?

A: Well he was a drug addict.

Q: Was that the person who was taken to the hospital.

A: Yeah.

Q: And Steve is another renter upstairs?

A: Yeah, he's the one who had smoke through his door. So he [referring to Arthur Haston] needed a place to live so we closed off the door that went - the hallway from Steve's and he's been living there for like 10-12 years.

Q: So it's been like a five plex for like 10 years?

A: Well I hope it's not a five plex, it's just a four plex.

Q: Does he have his own way in and out of his apartment? Does he have his own kitchen and stuff?

A: No, I didn't put a kitchen in there because it's a four plex.

Q: No problems with electric or gas lately?

A: No. Last night the heat didn't work but then everybody said it was fine so then I didn't even worry.

Q: Did someone call you about that?

A: I forget who - I think he called and said.

Q: The occupant of that unit?

A: Yeah.

Q: What was his name?

A: Art Haston.

Q: And he said he wasn't getting heat in his unit?

A: Yeah.

Q: What kind of heat is it?

A: It's just forced air.

Q: Gas forced air furnace?

A: Yeah, so then I called the guy in the front and he said he had heat and Mike came home from work and said he had heat so I didn't worry about it.

Q: How did you find out about the fire today?

A: Steve called my cell.

Q: Anything else that you think is important for me to know?

A: No, just that they checked it all out a couple of years ago. He did have a tendency to take his smoke detector batteries out and take them apart - he smoke a lot so.

Q: Did he smoke cigarettes?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did he have any other medical problems that you're aware of other than the addition - was it drugs or alcohol?

A: Kind of all of the above. And that's why he didn't have a place to live so that's why I kind of set that up for him.

Q: Any problems with inspections recently?

A: Nope. No, there was a guy from your housing inspector. He came through and after he came through he [Arthur Haston] pulled the batteries out of his smoke detectors the night before so they weren't in there when he came back. So then I had to put all that back together.

Q: Bruce [referring to Deputy State Fire Marshal Bruce McLaughlin] How many smoke detectors did Art have in his apartment?

A: Well there was at least one and then the carbon monoxide - you know, that littler one.

Q: [Bruce McLaughlin] How many rooms in Art's space?

A: Well there's a bathroom, a bedroom, and like a kitchen/living room area. Not real big. It used to be a bedroom and a bathroom for Steve's apartment but we just closed that off.

Q: [Bruce McLaughlin]: I thought you said there was no kitchen in Art's?

A: No, he didn't have it. I didn't put a kitchen in there. He had a refrigerator for a while but then that got busted somehow.

Q: [Bruce McLaughlin] So Art had a bedroom and a bathroom?

A: And like a living room or I don't know what you call it. I haven't been in that apartment for a few years since the last inspection.

Q: [Bruce McLaughlin] The last inspection he had one battery powered smoke detector and one battery powered carbon monoxide detector?

A: I can't remember if they were 110 volt or battery powered. I think they were battery because he had pulled the batteries out of them. And I think that he did that all the time.

Q: I just want to clarify a couple of things. You were calling all of the residents because your step-son had called because he had no heat? And then you called the others to ask them about heat? Is that accurate?

A: Yeah. The guy in the front said it was blowing cold and then Mike [Ollie] came home and said his was fine and so he went down the basement and the furnace was running.

Q: Mike is who?

A: Mike is the guy who lives below. He's the tenant that lives downstairs.

Q: The black guy who lives downstairs?

A: Yeah.

Q: So he was okay with heat?

A: He was okay with heat and he went down the basement and Terry, his heat started running. And then Mike said that ducts and everything was warm in the basement - the furnace was running. And then, but he said the one pipe going to your place [referring to occupant Steven Sauvageau] didn't seem to have heat going up into Art's [Arthur Haston]. So I don't know, Jerry had it and the basement had it, so I didn't come over. I said well I'll come over tomorrow and check the thermostat or something.

A: I didn't have any heat. [Steven Sauvageau speaking]

Q: Did you do any work on the furnace last night or today?

A: I haven't, no.

Q: Did anyone else do any work on the furnace?

A: No, no. Is the furnace on fire?

Q: I haven't even looked at the furnace, I just want to make sure of facts.

Q: You said Mike [Ollie] went down there? [Bruce McLaughlin]

A: Mike went down to look because he's got a key to the basement. And then he said that the furnace was running. I just thought maybe the thermostat - Adrian [Larson] has the thermostat, the one for the whole building. I thought maybe Adrian bumped the thermostat or something happened.

Q: Do each of these units have their own gas supply and meter or do you just split the gas amongst everyone? How do you handle that?

A: Everybody has their own electric. There's one gas meter and the only thing that controls it is the furnace. Everything else is electric, all the water heaters are electric, all the stoves are electric.

Q: As far as the building temperature, how is that regulated? Is there just one master controller?

A: It's in Adrian's apartment. And I never had any trouble with it.

Q: And did you talk to Adrian about the heat?

A: No one communicated with Adrian about the heat thing.

Q: When was the last time you or your wife talked to Art? [Arthur Haston]

A: They didn't have a good relationship.

Q: Mom and son?

A: Because of his life. I mean I don't know how to - I don't want to put blame on him. Some of the people he used to bring around here were just absolutely pieces of dog shit. They were drug addicts. I mean literally crazy people.

Q: Do you know what kind of drugs he [Arthur Haston] used to use?

A: I think he was a meth head but I'm not sure. But he had gone down to that drug treatment center across from that old hospital down on University Avenue other there. I don't know, there used to be a hospital, Midway Hospital or something, it's across the street from there. A drug treatment center. And he had been there, I don't know, three or four times. Like I say, when he did the apartment inspection two or three years ago, I really have never been in that apartment that much.

Q: So the door issue. Why would you take the door out of that? [Adrian Neis speaking]

A: Well just because I considered it a two bedroom apartment that was cordoned-off so that the people would have privacy.

Q: Right, we had that discussion back in 2013. As a condition, that was to stay open. You could have a door there but it couldn't be a fire door and they'd have ready access to the units. [Adrian Neis speaking]

A: Yeah. Well the one piece of plywood - I can't remember but I thought I had hinges on it. And then I would just put a screw in it so that it would keep the insulation in between.

Q: But that was supposed to stay open so he had free access to both. [Adrian Neis speaking]

A: Yeah, well Steven [Sauvageau] and him [Arthur Haston] didn't get along so good. Nobody got along very good with Art. In the last couple of year I think he flooded Mike's apartment three or four times.

Q: But it was their apartment together, as discussed. They were to share. [Adrian Neis speaking]

A: Well Steve, I was talking about Mike below him. There's even some ceiling tiles laying there where Art would flood Mike's apartment and wreck the ceiling and then we'd have to fix that.

Q: So the last inspection, the inspector said the door had been taken down and then it was put back up again in between. [Adrian Neis speaking]

A: Yeah, I mean I think I had hinges on that piece of plywood. So I'd put a screw in there just to, you know.

Q: Why would you take it down for the inspection? [Adrian Neis speaking]

A: Well, so they could come through and see that it was one unit but separated because, I don't know, for privacy. That's all I ever did it for. And then he had a fire escape [referring to the back half of the apartment occupied by Arthur Haston] and Steve had a fire escape. But then he was having this trouble with somebody breaking into his apartment. I don't know if the door still shows that, now that it's kicked in. But somebody was getting into his apartment I don't know, about a month ago. Mike [asking Mike Ollie], when was that wallet behind your car?

A: Was it two weeks ago? Maybe three weeks. [Mike Ollie speaking]

A: Somebody broke in and stole his [referring to Arthur Haston] wallet. Said he had a thousand bucks in his wallet, said his Dad had just given him some money. But these people that he had hanging around, I mean Mike was experienced with that. They would just - drug addicts, criminals, crazy people. [Micheal Mortimer speaking again]

Q: Just to be clear, in 2013, that was supposed to be one unit. [Adrian Neis speaking]

A: Yep.

Q: You talked about putting a fire separation in and we said you need to do a permit and all that if you were going to do that and make that another unit. [Adrian Neis speaking]

A: Okay, alright. Well, I didn't.

Q: You didn't. [Adrian Neis speaking]

A: Yeah.

Q: And so you were supposed to keep that open and then the last two inspections, that door was taken off - that extra layer of plywood. There was two layers of plywood. [Adrian Neis speaking]

A: Well there was a piece of plywood on the inside and then there was a door.

Q: And one of those would get taken off. [Adrian Neis speaking]

A: Yeah, yeah. I always just considered it just one apartment with a sounder in between.

Witness Statement

Sauvageau	Steven	D
Last Name	First Name	Middle Name
Occupant		
Type	Employer	
Interviewed Date	Interviewed By	Interviewed By Other
1762 Englewood Ave #3		
Street 1	Street 2	
Saint Paul	Minnesota	55104
City	State	PostalCode
White	10/20/1953	
Race	Date of Birth	Driver's Liscense Number

Q: You were a Saint Paul Firefighter for how long?

A: 20 years.

Q: And you retired what year?

A: 2012.

Q: Can you tell me how you first became aware of a fire this afternoon?

A: I was sitting at my table and I saw some smoke. There's a door between my apartment and the next door apartment - and I saw some smoke coming from around the door so I went downstairs and went around back and up the stairs to knock on the door to see if I could get the guy out of there.

Q: Did you hear any alarms sounding at that time?

A: No.

Q: Was it the sight of smoke or was it the odor of smoke that made you first aware that there was a fire?

A: Sight of smoke.

Q: Had you heard anyone moving around in there?

A: I did hear someone in there.

Q: What did you hear?

A: Some yelling.

Q: What were they saying?

A: Unintelligible. Just noise - yelling.

Q: And then what happened? Was it just a sheetrock wall between you and him or was it a nailed shut door that splits off the units?

A: Yeah, it's a nailed shut door.

Q: So you then exited the house, ran around to the back and went upstairs to the rear deck?

A: Yes.

Q: And when you got up there, what did you see?

A: I saw smoke coming out from around the door that leads onto the deck.

Q: And then what?

A: And then I saw smoke coming out from around the window and the eaves.

Q: The eaves above the door?

A: Above the door - yeah.

Q: At that point did you hear additional yelling?

A: No, then I didn't hear anymore yelling.

Q: Any movement at that point?

A: No.

Q: Did you see any fire at that point?

A: No, I just saw smoke at that point.

Q: Where was the smoke heaviest as we're facing the back of the house?

A: More to the left.

Q: Was the back door shut?

A: It was bolted shut, I tried kicking it in.

Q: In addition to the keylock, he had an additional lock up higher.

A: No, just the keylock.

Q: Did you see anything unusual like boards tilted up against the door for security reasons?

A: I didn't notice anything like that from the outside.

Q: Any issues with the heat or any smell of gas in the house? Any issues with electrical in the past few days?

A: No, not that I know of. The landlord called me yesterday and asked if I had proper heat in my apartment, the front apartment.

Q: And what apartment do you live in?

A: Upstairs, front.

Q: And he [Arthur Haston] lives in the back one?

A: The little back one. There's a door between my apartment and the back apartment but it's not a useable door.

Q: Anything going on prior to the fire in your unit with electric or anything?

A: No.

Q: Did you call 911?

A: I called 911. While I was kicking in the door I was calling 911. When I didn't hear any moving anymore there's that back window there I broke that out.

Q: Which one, the one to the east of the back door?

A: The one right there, yeah. To see if I could get in and get him out of there.

Q: Did you see anything at that point?

A: No, just heavy smoke - I couldn't see anything. Then I started feeling the heat. Right about then is when - the first rig was real quick, like only two or three minutes.

Q: Did you tell them that he was in there?

A: Yeah, I told them right away. And I told the dispatcher I knew someone was in there when I talked to them on the phone as I was trying to kick in the door. I couldn't get it open, I don't know if he had it barricaded from the inside or not.

Q: Do you know anything about that individual; did he have any disabilities, any drug or alcohol issues that would affect his ability to escape?

A: No, not that I know of.

Q: When's the last time you saw him?

A: I haven't seen him for maybe a month. I don't know him well. I just see him here and there.

Q: Does he have a vehicle back here?

A: That's his truck right there. [referring to a pickup truck parked along Wheeler on the east side of the house]

Q: Yesterday, did you have any issues in your apartment with heat?

A: The landlord called me and asked if my heat was working properly. And I wasn't getting any heat.

Q: You weren't getting any heat?

A: No.

Q: Okay, and you told the landlord that at that time?

A: He was going to come over today and check out the furnace.

Q: Did he come over last night?

A: No, not that I'm aware of.

Q: Have you ever been in the basement? [Asked by Deputy State Fire Marshal Bruce McLaughlin]

A: I've been on the stairs but I've never been through it.

Witness Statement Comments

Witness Statement (3 of 7)

Witness Statement

Larson	Adrian	T
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Last Name	First Name	Middle Name
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Occupant	
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Type	Employer
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Interviewed Date	Interviewed By	Interviewed By Other
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1762 Englewood #2	
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Street 1	Street 2
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Saint Paul	Minnesota	55104
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City	State	PostalCode
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White	01/11/1974	
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Race	Date of Birth	Driver's Liscense Number
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Q: Did you hear or see anything during the initial discovery of the fire?
A: I work at night and sleep in the day. I didn't see or hear anything.

Witness Statement Comments

Witness Statement

Ollie	Michael	L
Last Name	First Name	Middle Name
Occupant		
Type	Employer	
Interviewed Date	Interviewed By	Interviewed By Other
1762 Englewood #4		
Street 1	Street 2	
Saint Paul	Minnesota	55104
City	State	PostalCode
Black or African American	08/20/1965	
Race	Date of Birth	Driver's Liscense Number

Q: Did you see or hear anything before the fire department arrived?

A: No, I was at work.

Q: Am I missing anyone else to interview from your building?

A: There's one more guy but he left.

Q: What apartment was he in?

A: He's in #1.

Q: Do you know his name?

A: Terry Konz.

Q: Did you hear anything unusual last night?

A: I didn't hear anything last night.

Q: Did you have to do anything yesterday on the furnace?

A: No.

Q: Did you have to take the face off of it?

A: No. All I did was check the heat content on the vents.

Q: You weren't getting any heat in your unit?

A: I was getting heat in my unit.

Q: You went down at his request [Michael Mortimer] to check on it? It was running?

A: Yes. It was running.

Q: Was the face on the furnace or did you take it off?

A: I didn't notice.

Q: Did you go down there with any tools?

A: No, because all I did was touch the vent to see if it was flowing and I touched all the vents and I told him it was flowing but not at the same velocity as it used to. I called Steve and Steve said it's not coming out like it used to. So yeah, that was my extent.

Q: Are you aware if anyone else did work on it?

A: No. I was the last person last night to be down there and it was up and running fine - no problems.

Witness Statement Comments

Witness Statement (5 of 7)

Witness Statement

District Chief #1 Arthur Rodriquez		
Last Name	First Name	Middle Name
Fire Department		
Type	Employer	
Interviewed Date	Interviewed By	Interviewed By Other
Street 1	Street 2	
Saint Paul	Minnesota	
City	State	PostalCode
White		
Race	Date of Birth	Driver's Liscense Number

Q: What did you see when you arrived?

A: Well, heavy black smoke off Charlie. The guys working, trying to get inside. Probably about two minutes after that, is when they had the victim. And then they were removing the patient I believe they said they were going to Alpha but then I think it came back that Squad #2 was going to the Charlie Side.

Q: So Squad #2 were the ones that located him and brought him out?

A: Engine #20 is the one that located him, talking to Baker. Baker will have more information for you. They couldn't, because he was up against the door, they couldn't get in, so they had to fold the door away to somehow pull it back. But they did do a quick hit from the outside and then went in. And grabbed him and he came back and said they had a victim and then Squad #2 came back that they were pulling him off the Charlie side. But somewhere in there there was Alpha side to Charlie but all-in-all they were ready for him.

Witness Statement Comments

Witness Statement

Engine #20 Darek Baker OOT Captain		
Last Name	First Name	Middle Name
Fire Department		
Type	Employer	
Interviewed Date	Interviewed By	Interviewed By Other
Street 1	Street 2	
Saint Paul	Minnesota	
City	State	PostalCode
Race	Date of Birth	Driver's Liscense Number

Q: So what did you see?

A: We pulled in, initially heavy grey smoke from the Charlie side. Pulled on the side, pulled an initial attack line. The door was locked so we forced entry. We had trouble getting through the door because it sounds like the victim was behind the door.

Q: What door were they behind, the exterior door?

A: The rear exterior door on the second floor.

Q: And does the door lead into his living space?

A: Yes, and then the attic access is from his living space.

Q: Is the attic a living space?

A: No. So we had trouble forcing the door. It was a locked. Forced it and then we end up folding it in and then out to gain access because he was behind it. We couldn't get the door in after numerous attempts. Then we pulled the door out. It sounds like we got the door off the hinges and pulled the door out.

Q: So it was an inward opening door and you had to yank it backwards to open it?

A: Correct. We stepped over him and the Squad pulled him out and then I don't know where the first fire was. I didn't see smoke from anywhere outside the Charlie side. I didn't see flames initially on the second floor. When we got in there and he was spraying to the right, towards the Bravo side, we got in there and there was heavy flames and fire behind the attic door which was locked - there was no latch on that. It was locked at the top with a little flap latch. So I forced that off, then we forced that door and heavy fire was in the attic space.

Q: Could you guys hear him at all when you arrived?

A: No.

Q: How long did it take you to arrive on scene?

A: Fast. I saw it in pending - we were on the way to the grocery store.

A: We were right on University at Prior, we were turning. [FEO Mark Sottile speaking]

Q: Any other weird stuff going on, wires arcing, smell of natural gas?

A: No, and I was looking around. [FEO Mark Sottile speaking]

Q: Any other residents mention if they interacted with the victim or heard him?

A: No. The one guy came out long after the fire was being fought. He came out of the bottom unit on the west side.
[FEO Mark Sottile speaking]

Q: Are all the units occupied?

A: There's five units and the victim and four people came out. [FEO Mark Sottile speaking]

Q: None of them are vacant apartments?

A: No, and I asked those guys when they were on the side walk - is everyone out? and they said yep, they're all right here. [FEO Mark Sottile speaking]

A: And it is hoarder conditions in that apartment - heavy contents.

Q: In the apartment of origin?

A: In the apartment and especially in the attic. the attic is loaded.

Witness Statement Comments

Witness Statement (7 of 7)

Witness Statement

Firefighter Engine #20		
Last Name	First Name	Middle Name
Fire Department		
Type	Employer	
Interviewed Date	Interviewed By	Interviewed By Other
Street 1	Street 2	
Saint Paul	Minnesota	
City	State	PostalCode
Race	Date of Birth	Driver's Liscense Number

Q: Where did you first see fire?

A: The first was right to the right. I hit it before going in - through the window. Yeah so the fire was initially off to the right - more towards Bravo side there.

Q: Did you have any fire showing on the exterior of the building or just smoke?

A: Nothing on exterior, just grey smoke - heavy, heavy smoke.

A: And so that tiny window to the right of the door, that was smashed. [OOT Captain Darek Baker speaking]

Q: And your firefighters didn't break it?

A: Nope. The guy flagging us down - he broke it.

Q: So it wasn't the victim that broke it?

A: Nope. There was a guy telling us that there was a guy in there. I hit it once - a quick hit. Said there was a guy in there so I hit it, went back to the door.

Q: And this is on the Charlie side?

A: Yep, Charlie side.

Witness Statement Comments

Conclusion

Case Conclusion

After examination of the fire scene, observation of fire patterns of both movement and intensity, and interviews conducted, it is my opinion the fire began in the living room area of the apartment. The area of origin was the south side of the couch on the floor, close to the east wall. The first material ignited was common combustible material including upholstered furniture, a pillow and paper. The ignition source was an electric two burner stove. The action that brought these items together was the improper clearance between heat generating equipment and combustible materials. The classification of fire cause is accidental. This concludes my investigation and report.

Signature

Blank, Joseph		
Lead Investigator	Signature	Date Submitted

Document Attachment List

- Photo Log
- IMG_7599
- IMG_7600
- IMG_7601
- IMG_7602
- IMG_7603
- IMG_7604
- IMG_7605
- IMG_7607