



MONTGOMERY COUNTY FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE
POST-INCIDENT ANALYSIS



11801 Danville Drive

Incident 16-0126017

Box 23-04

October 9, 2016

Battalion Chief Michael Leigh



Summary

On October 9, 2016 at 2321 hours, units were dispatched for a house fire at 11801 Danville Drive in Rockville, Maryland. The Rapid Intervention Dispatch (RID) was dispatched while units were responding due to the information gathered from additional 911 calls. On arrival, Company 23 found a large single-family home with heavy fire showing. Battalion 702 arrived one minute later and assumed Command. A Task Force was requested due to the volume of fire and size of the structure. While Command was still formulating strategy for the incident, a police officer came to the command post and advised that a neighbor believed the family (two adults, an adult nanny, and two infants) were still inside the house. A second alarm and additional ALS transport units were requested. Searches were attempted while the Emergency Communications Center (ECC) worked to determine the location of the family. Several minutes later, the family was found at a neighbor's house. All fire rescue personnel were then ordered out of the structure, and the incident became exterior offensive. Two firefighters received moderate injuries during the initial attack and search. The fire was deemed electrical in origin with a loss of over \$1.5 million.

Premise Information

11801 Danville Drive is a 6,100 square-foot, four floor single-family home with a large wrap around porch and 3-bay garage.

Timeline

This report will follow a minutes-by-minutes timeline to illustrate the speed of changes during this incident.

Initial 911 calls reported a house fire with visible flames, cars in the driveway and no lights on in the house. An additional 911 call reported that five people lived at the home, but caller did not know where family was and fire was spreading from the first to the second floor.

2324 hours

Company 23 units arrived to find heavy fire visible from the first and second floors with Paramedic Engine 723 reporting the house was "fully involved" and establishing Command. Paramedic Engine 723 then clarified the report to say they had heavy fire on Sides Alpha and Bravo. Battalion 702 arrived and assumed Command from Paramedic Engine 723 immediately after the report and established a stationary command post diagonally from the house with Sides Alpha and Bravo visible. Heavy fire was visible from all of Side Bravo on both floors including the garage area with cars inside, and from most of Side Alpha.



2326 hours

A Montgomery County Police officer arrived at the command post and reported that a neighbor believed the occupants to be trapped in the home. He reported a total of five occupants: three adults and two infants. Specifically, he was able to report an approximate location of the infants' bedroom. Aerial Tower 723 was then tasked with doing a rapid search of the second floor, Quadrant Delta as the reported bedroom location. At this point that area was not on fire, however it appeared that it could only be reached by ground ladder, and fire was encroaching on the area quickly. Aerial Tower 751 was also tasked with searching the area in Quadrant Delta via ground ladder. Attack lines were directed to protect the search by knocking approaching fire and they were quickly engaged.

2329 hours

The second alarm was requested due to the increased risk of Mayday with the high-risk search and possible multiple rescues. Four ALS transport units were also requested. An EMS Group was built out with Chief 741 Bravo identifying six ALS providers available on paramedic engine companies.

2336 hours

A report from Sides Charlie and Delta was made to complete circle check information.



2338 hours

Aerial Tower 751 reported that their search could reach only a second-floor window into an atrium, and Aerial Tower 723 reported they could only reach the master bathroom, the remainder of the structure was untenable.

Both crews retreated to ladders, Aerial Tower 723 was forced to do a rapid bailout on a ground ladder resulting in one firefighter injury.

Aerial Tower 751 then advised Command that they would attempt to find another route of entry on Side Delta.

The Emergency Communications Center notified Command that they were able to contact the second caller (a neighbor) who advised the occupants were with them in their home, but one occupant may be at a different neighbor's house.

EMS 703 and Montgomery County Police were sent to both locations to verify the status of occupants.

Large diameter attack lines continued to be placed in service with significant progress toward fire knock, and a rapid search of first floor was started.

2340 hours

Paramedic Engine 721 advised Command of a collapse of the second floor into the garage.

EMS 703 reported he was with the occupants, all were out of the structure.

Command ordered all interior operations stopped, an evacuation of the structure, and announced that all occupants were accounted for.

Command announced "exterior operations only".

Collapse zones were established by Safety 700.

2342 hours

Exterior operations continued with a Personnel Accountability Report conducted unit by unit. This took just over three minutes to complete, during which time significant progress was made towards fire extinguishment and the fire was well controlled. A second firefighter was injured during hose line operations.

The additional ALS units were returned to service, and the balance of the second alarm that had staged was also released.



0040 hours

Aerial Tower 723 was repositioned to allow the tower to reach the second floor above the garage area.

Overhaul was limited until an assessment of cause and origin by the Fire and Explosives Investigation Section could be conducted. The cause was determined to be a faulty light fixture in the ceiling of the wrap-around porch near the garage.

Overhaul was completed, and the last units returned to service around 0145 hours.



Side Alpha

Conclusions

While a single family home, this structure was very large – almost twice the size of many homes. However, it is representative of many large homes in Montgomery



County, and should serve as a reminder that structures must be addressed by their individual issues, rather than classification.

This incident also provides many areas for improvement:

- Initial apparatus stopped short at Side Alpha rather than proceeding around the corner to Side Bravo. While this provided Battalion Chief 702 with an unobstructed view, it required all attack lines to be stretched long distances to the garage area, and complicated the relocation of Aerial Tower 723 later in the incident.
- No initial circle check was completed. It took almost eight minutes to get a report from Side Charlie. The volume of fire on Sides Alpha and Bravo, as well as the reports of people trapped, quickly led to tunnel vision and a lack of situational awareness not only for units operating at the structure, but most importantly for Command. It was later determined that the family had escaped from a second exit on Side Charlie, not a normal sliding door. It is possible that if they had not been able to escape completely, they may have been found in this exit way. It was not searched at any point.
- There was no formal Initial On Scene Report (IOSR) by the first arriving unit. Battalion 702 did not catch this, and critical information was missed. This is likely due to the proximity of the arriving command officer, and the rapidity of assuming command before the initial unit officer could complete their normal checklist.
- Objectives and Strategy were never communicated beyond some face-to-face directions at the command post. This left individual unit officers to “fight the fire” while Command focused mainly on the rescue situation. While largely effective, it still left officers uncertain of the objectives.
- Groups were never organized by function. While “Fire Attack” was used, it was only in the most general sense, without any geographic area communicated outside of the command post. Searches were performed by single unit resources.
- Seventeen minutes passed from time of dispatch until the Emergency Communications Center notified Command that the occupants were at the home of a neighbor. This lack of information led to an unnecessarily high-risk search operation. While the information about the occupants was not known by anyone in fire rescue, it is a good reminder that it is a priority for all personnel (including the Emergency Communications Center) to broadcast information about occupant status as soon as possible.



This incident also demonstrated many strengths of the organization and our personnel:

- Size-up and quick risk/benefit decisions were made based on the information presented. Recognizing this information was second-hand, concurrent efforts were also made to confirm an “all-out” occupant status.
- As soon as it was clear that the risk/benefit status had changed, the operation immediately changed from offensive, high-risk to a low-risk, exterior offensive one.
- Additional resources were quickly called for with anticipation of rescue or Mayday operations.
- Personnel on the initial alarm acted with the utmost professionalism and abilities in their response and actions. When informed of the possibility of trapped occupants, they did not hesitate to engage in a high-risk search operation.

