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## Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service

### POST INCIDENT ANALYSIS

17804 Muncaster Road  
Derwood, MD

December 10, 2007



CIMG0532.AVI

Submitted by  
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## Introduction

December 10, 2007 - At 0348 hours Fire/Rescue units and Montgomery County Police responded to 17804 Muncaster Road, Derwood Md. for a house fire with a report of people trapped. Units arrived on the scene and found a 1,300 square foot “ranch style” dwelling with heavy fire showing from side “A”. An aggressive attack was commenced and crews immediately began to search for the trapped victims. Crews quickly found one elderly victim in the front bedroom and removed her to side “A” of the structure. Once outside it was apparent the victim was deceased. A young male victim was also found in the front bedroom; he too was removed from the house and was transported to Shady Grove Hospital where he was pronounced. The third victim was discovered in the dining room after the suppression effort was completed. She was left in place for investigative purposes.

Investigators interviewed the survivor and he stated the following: He was asleep in a basement bedroom and was awakened by the sound of the smoke alarm in the living room. He opened the door of the bedroom and was met by a large volume of smoke. He exited the basement by way of the interior stairway to the first floor. He advised that the living room and dining room were on fire. He exited the house by way of the open sliding glass door on side “C” of the house and went to the neighbor’s house for help. The survivor was moved to a police car where he was comforted by a neighbor. He was later transported to Shady Grove Hospital for treatment and observation.

Numerous investigators responded to the scene, including agents from the ATF, Detectives from Montgomery County Homicide/Sex and Crime Scene Technicians from Montgomery County Forensic Services Section.

A cause and origin examination was conducted. The investigators believe the fire most probably originated in the living room the cause has not been determined. The investigation will continue and will focus on several possible causes; one being electrical and the other being the use of candles.

The wind was blowing at 5 MPH from the North and the temperature was 34 degrees. Light rain and heavy fog made driving to the scene a challenge for all.

There was \$300,000 dollars damage to the structure and \$200,000 damage to contents.

## Structure/Site Layout

- The structure is a one story rancher with basement and carport.
- Construction is a Type 5 wood frame structure.

### Communications

- The Montgomery County dispatcher on 7 Charlie (7C) overall did a good job.
- The dispatchers had information before units arrived on scene that more than one person may have been trapped and reported possibly one trapped and it wasn't until E728 arrived on scene and confirmed that as many as three people were trapped.
- Fire ground talk groups were adequate and utilized fully. The Task Force units and assignments from staging were given on 7 Delta (7D).

### On Scene Operations

- Structural integrity of the house, based on fire conditions on arrival, was somewhat compromised. The fire was coming from the front of the house with extension to the carport and attic. A portion of the roof structure did fall in to the center of the structure.
- Initial command was identified on arrival by Battalion Chief 705 (BC705) and maintained throughout the incident.
- The objective of command on arrival were to attack the fire from the outside to prevent further extension and then go in with crews to make rescues.
- The Rapid Intervention Dispatch and Task Force were added by BC705 just prior to arrival, having the Task Force stage at Fire Station 28.
- The strategy/action plan was life safety; incident stabilization, property conservation and evidence preservation.
- Crews executed tactics very effectively positioning attack lines to protect the search.
- Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) were used; The SOP was followed with strong command and coordination. The crews removed the victims and put the fire out.
- Defensive transitioning to an offensive strategy was made by command to attack the bulk of the fire from the exterior and then send crews in with attack lines to protect the search and rescue victims.
- The risk analysis was to apply streams from the exterior with little or no risk to personnel.
- The divisions and groups used were appropriate for the type and complexity of the incident. Division 1 was established with E728, E708 AT708 and BC703 as Division 1 Supervisor. Division "C" was established with T703 E753 and C703B as Division C Supervisor. RS703 conducted search of first floor and Basement and assured utilities were controlled. There were not enough crews on hand to form a Search and Rescue Group. A Medical Group was formed with M703, M708, M708B, A728 and BC708B as Medical Group

Supervisor. Rapid Intervention Group was established with RS717, T40 and EW717 and the officer of EW717 as RIG Supervisor.

- Apparatus was properly positioned in front (Side A) with good water supply with no apparatus access to side B, side D or side C of the building.
- Attack line selections of 1 ¾ and 2” for the initial attack were appropriate which included a Blitz Fire placed into position but not used. Good thinking on behalf of all crew members.
- Ventilation operations using natural ventilation of windows and doors vented structure along with the fire burning through the roof. Mechanical ventilation was not necessary.
- Salvage operations were conducted using tarps in basement.
- E753 from National Institute of Standards and Technology provided Mutual Aid and was utilized in this operation to supply E703 from a hydrant.
- Water supply was adequate. There is a hydrant in close proximity to Side “A”, E708 supplied E728. E753 supplied E703 from Muncaster Mill and Muncaster Rd. which is about a 1200’ lay. EW717 laid into the scene from the opposite direction but no one supplied it. Units on hydrants used heavy water hookups fully utilizing water supply.

### Staging

- The Task Force staging location was Fire Station 28.
- Site Access was close to scene and could handle the apparatus from several directions.

### Support Functions

- Rehab was established on Side “A” in the front yard by E740.
- Fire/Rescue personnel were provided with food and drinks by Canteen 733.
- Crews were relieved by fresh crews at shift change.
- There were no equipment or apparatus failures.
- Functions with outside agencies were properly coordinated (i.e. Police, Gas and Power Company,)

### Safety Group

- Standby team was not established do to the possibility of as many as three trapped.
- There was one fire/rescue personnel injured. A firefighter twisted his ankle while packing hose.
- All safety SOPs and regulations were enforced by Safety 700.

- There was a Rapid Intervention Dispatch with EW717's OIC as RIG Supervisor
- RIG was established on Side A in the front yard.

#### Accountability

- ECC notified Command we were 15 minutes into the incident and Command ensured actions were taken for accurate personnel accountability by checking with Division 1 operating within the structure what tasks were being performed and which units were with him..
- The status of units, Divisions/Groups and support personnel were maintained throughout the incident.
- CISM team was on scene and provided adequate debriefing of the personnel on scene.
- The incident was continuously controlled and monitored by Command and Safety 700.

#### Investigations

- The cause of fire was not determined by the Investigations Group but the investigation will continue and will focus on several possible causes; one being electrical and the other being the use of candles. and the origin was determined to be in the living room.
- FM 3 was the Investigations Group Supervisor and had two divisions, Investigations and Code Enforcement under his command.
- The investigators believe the fire probably originated in the living room the cause has not been determined. The investigation will continue and will focus on several possible causes; one being electrical and the other being the use of candles.

#### Lessons Learned

- A good on scene report from the OIC of E728 allowed command to call for additional resources early.
- When positioning apparatus consider impact on incoming apparatus. Later arriving units had trouble getting close to the scene.
- Although a solid water supply was established apparatus should not pass up a supply line laid from a hydrant into the scene without at least assuring it is to be supplied. E740 was on the Task Force which was to stage at Fire Station 28 and came from the opposite direction and was not able to get through to Staging. Passed EW717 line and reported to command and requested an assignment.

- A Command Aid would have assisted in better resource status and accountability of on scene personnel.
- Dispatchers should give all information available before units arrive on scene that more than one person may be trapped even if not confirmed. Search crews can start to formulate their risk benefit analysis prior to arrival. AT708’s officer made the decision to have the crew of AT708’s crew make entry through the front window right of the front door to Vent Enter Search (VES) and found the child based on this information.
- E728 and A728 had seven firefighters which assisted in making an aggressive attack on the fire.
- The Public Information Officer is part of command staff and all activities and press releases must be approved by the Incident Commander.
- Command Post 727 was requested and came late into the incident. Command understands that this unit is not normally used on single family dwelling incidents felt it was needed for a prolonged investigation. Once on the scene the driver set up Command Post 727 and left the scene. The operation of technological equipment i.e. computers and fax machines were limited without assistance. The Command Post was used as a field office by the FM’s for getting written statements from personnel. The Command Post was not intended to be used this way and was contaminated by the PPE of firefighters on the scene.
- Demobilization included shift change as the fire scene became an investigation BC705B relieved BC705A as Incident Commander, Safety 700 was retained because of a partial collapse of the attic space and a few flare ups occurred within the weakened structure. An FM Group was divided into two divisions (Code Enforcement and Investigations), Fire Suppression Group and Rehab which included an EMS unit.

### Units on Incident

A728	AR733	AT708	AT723	BC703	BC703B
BC705	C703	C708	C708B	C717E	CP727
CT733	DC700	E703	E708	E725B	E728
E740	E753	EMS703	EW717	FM19	FM24
FM3	FM43	FM51	FM53	FM60	FM67
K717E	M703	M708	M708B	RS703	RS717
SA700	T703	T740	U121	U131	U2



