



Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service

POST INCIDENT ANALYSIS

37 Cherry Bend Court

February 1, 2008



**Submitted by
Battalion Chief Shane Darwick**

Introduction

February 1, 2008 at 1731 hours Montgomery County Fire and Rescue units responded to 37 Cherry Bend Court Germantown, Md. for a townhouse fire. The temperature at the time of the fire was 36 degrees. The skies overcast and the wind was blowing at 8 MPH from the West Northwest.

AT729 arrived on the scene and reported a middle of the row townhouse with heavy smoke and fire showing from the Kitchen window on the first floor extending to the second floor side "C" (Charlie), AT729 established Cherry Bend Command and requested a RID (Rapid Intervention Dispatch) and second alarm. An aggressive attack was commenced by E708. AT729 immediately began to throw ladders and search for victims. Crews quickly searched and reported primary complete and everyone accounted for.

The Fire Investigators interview of the occupants determined the fire to be unintentional. The fire origin was the kitchen. The investigation focused on the cause being a container of cooking grease near the stove top that caught fire. One of the occupants had finished cooking chicken poppers but did not turn off the electric stove all the way. The occupants tried to put the fire out with a fire extinguisher before going next door to call 911.

Red Cross was requested for seven people that had been displaced.

There was estimated to be \$250,000 damage to the structure and \$100,000 to the contents.

Building Structure/Site Layout

The structure is a two story townhouse with a finished basement. This townhouse was built in 1985 and is a Type 5 (wood frame) platform construction. There is approximately 1,344 square feet of living space in this structure.

Personnel did not encounter any problems in gaining access through front door. Occupants were at home at the time of the fire and left the front door unlocked.

The parking lot was full of cars and units had difficulty trying to get close to the structure.

Communications

- The Emergency Communications Center (ECC) dispatcher on 7C (7 Charlie) did a good job.
- There was some confusion on the radio about E753 and their route of travel.
- Fire ground talk groups were adequate and utilized fully. The Second Alarm units and assignments from staging were given on 7D (7 Delta) by BC705B.

On Scene Operations

- Structural integrity, based on fire conditions on arrival, was somewhat compromised. The fire was coming from the rear of the house with auto extension into the second floor and attic.
- Initial command was identified on arrival by AT729. Battalion Chief 705 (BC705) arrived and the transfer of command was done face to face and by radio with the officer of AT729. BC705 then took command and maintained it throughout the incident.
- Size up decisions by command on arrival was to assign E735's crew with a leader line to the rear and determine how many floors there were and if there were any rescues to be made.
- Strategy/action plan was to confine the fire and search for possible victims.
- Crews executed tactics very effectively. An aggressive attack was commenced by E708. AT729's crew immediately began to throw ladders and search for victims. Crews quickly searched and reported primary complete and everyone accounted for. E708's crew extinguished the fire on the first floor and proceeded to the second floor and extinguished fire there.
- Standard Operating Procedures were used; and they were adequate.
- Offensive decisions were made by command to attack the fire from the front door on the first floor. Then send crews to the second floor and open up to check for fire extension in the attic.
- The strategy/action plan was life safety for the occupants and fire fighters through out the incident. Incident stabilization was next by confining the fire on the first and second floor.
- E708's crews executed tactics very effectively positioning attack lines to protect the search and confine the fire.
- The divisions and groups used were appropriate for the type and complexity of the incident. Division 1 was established with E708, E753 AT729 and C708 as Division 1 Supervisor. BC703 was Division 2 supervisor and had E728 and AT708 in the Division. RS729 conducted searches; assured utilities were controlled and were assigned Search Group. Exposure B (Bravo) and D (Delta) were assigned to BC703B with E729, E735 and T703
- Apparatus had difficulty positioning in front (Side A) with a narrow court and many parked cars. AT729 and E708 did happen to get good position and water supply of the building.
- Attack line selection of 1 ¾" for the initial attack was appropriately used and provided quick maneuverability. Ventilation operations using hydraulic ventilation thru the second floor window vented the structure. Mechanical ventilation was also used to supplement the ventilation process.
- Salvage operations were conducted using tarps in the basement.

- Water supply was adequate. There are hydrants in close proximity to Side "A". E735 supplied E708 and E753 supplied E731.

Staging

- The Second alarm staging location was on Great Seneca Highway between Dawson Farm and Grotto Lane.
- Site Access was close to scene and could handle the apparatus from several directions.

Support Functions

- Rehab was established by EMS 703 on Side "A" in the front of #23 Cherry Bend Ct.
- Fire/Rescue personnel were provided with food and drinks by Canteen 733.
- Crews were relieved by fresh crews throughout overhaul.
- 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 established by A729's Crew
- Safety 700 completed a circle check and reported findings to command.
- There were no fire/rescue personnel injured.
- All safety SOPs and regulations were enforced by Command and Safety 700.
- There was a Rapid Intervention Dispatch
- E731's OIC was assigned as RIG Supervisor RS717, T731, M708B crews assembled on side A and staged equipment.

Accountability

- Command ensured actions were taken for accurate personnel accountability by checking with Division Supervisors operating within the structure, what task were being performed and which units were with them..
- The status of units, Divisions/Groups and support personnel were maintained throughout the incident.
- The incident was continuously controlled and monitored by Command and Safety 700.

Investigations

- The fire origin was the kitchen.
- The Fire Investigators interview of the occupants determined the fire to be unintentional.
- The investigation focused on the cause being a container of cooking grease near the stove top that caught fire. One of the occupants had finished cooking chicken poppers but did not turn off the electric stove all the way.
- The occupants tried to put the fire out with a fire extinguisher before going next door to call 911.

Lessons Learned

- First arriving Officer was EMS703 and reported “a lot of smoke showing” and requested the RID. Command should have been established at this time along with a description of the structure.
- Command was established very shortly after the initial report by AT729 and a second alarm was requested. A good practice is when a second alarm is requested to also stage them. B705 was able to stage the second alarm on Great Seneca Highway prior to the arrival of the second alarm units.
- Chief 729 Charlie responded from Silver Spring. This was 1700 hours on a Friday night. Responding Rt495 and Rt270 this time of day is an unsafe practice and the arrival of C729C would have made zero impact on the outcome of the incident. Four Command Officers arrived prior to his arrival.
- E753 was reading an old Station 29 map and got turned around when they saw Mateney Hill Road on the map which is now Dawson Farm Road. This caused a delay of their arrival, water supply and backup line for crews operating in the structure. Units should assure their route of travel prior to leaving the station.
- A citizen moved his car out of the way of incoming apparatus and ran over E735's supply line. The supply line got caught in the wheel well of the car which was easily removed. All personnel need to watch for private vehicles moving in parking areas for their own safety as well as compromising the safety of attack crews by disrupting their water supply.
- Command Post 727 was not needed on the incident. The fire was out quickly and there was no need for it.

Units on Incident

A729	CT733	FM23	T703
AR733	E708	FM51	T731
AT708	E713	FM54	AT729
E753	FM60	AT735	E717
HT703	BC703	E728	M729
BC705	E729	RE709	BC705B
EMS703	SA700	C703B	E731
RS717	C708	E735	RS729
C729C			