

Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Service

POST INCIDENT ANALYSIS

511 S. Frederick Avenue
Gaithersburg, MD
F10-0089987

August 12th 2010



Submitted by
Assistant Chief Scott Goldstein

Table of Contents

Incident Overview.....3
Structure/Site Layout.....4
Dispatch Summary.....7
Communications.....8
Pre-Emergency Planning9
On Scene Operations.....10
 Initial Actions.....10
 Command Team.....11
 Rescue Group.....11
 EMS Group.....12
 Evacuation Group.....12
 US&R.....13
 507 Group.....14
 Safety14

Support Functions15
Accountability15
Evacuated Resident Information16
Tree Information.....16
Structural Damage16
Lessons Learned.....19
 Situational Awareness19
 Communications Staffing.....19
 Communication.....20
 Organize Early20
 Logistics.....21
 Area Command.....21

Summary22
Site Map.....23

INCIDENT OVERVIEW

On August 12th 2010 at 07:13 hours Montgomery County Fire Rescue Services dispatched Engine 728, Tower 708 and National Institutes of Standard and Technology Ambulance 753 for a reported injured child with decreased level of consciousness after being hit by a tree branch at 511 South Frederick Avenue in Gaithersburg. The weather at the time was severe thunderstorms, with air temperatures of 71.6° F, 100% humidity, and winds from the northwest at 20 miles per hour. Damage to structures was consistent with a focused period of gusts of 80 to 90 miles per hour. The National Weather Service reported widespread damage across Gaithersburg, where numerous hardwood trees were uprooted and large limbs throughout town were snapped. Security video at a Gaithersburg restaurant showed a brief two-minute period of extreme wind and wind-blown hail occurring at roughly 0700 hours. Rainfall during the time period from 06:55 to 07:55 totaled 1.03 inches.

The initial 9-1-1 caller advised via a Spanish interpreter that a tree branch fell, hitting a 12 year old female on the head. Due to the unusual nature of the dispatch, the Special Operations Chief (SpecOps Chief) elected to respond from Route 355 and Shady Grove Road on the incident as well. Ambulance 753 failed to respond, so Medic 708-Bravo filled the assignment.

SpecOps Chief arrived first on scene and found a large tree had fallen into the building, splitting the building down the center, with the crown of the tree protruding out of side Alpha. SpecOps Chief gave the following on-scene report: ***"511 South Frederick...On the scene, three story apartment building, large tree into the building... South Frederick command in my buggy."***

Due to the original size-up, as well as the witness statements indicating the probability for multiple people trapped, SpecOps Chief requested the collapse assignment for ***"people trapped on the third story."***

During the event, Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) searched the two apartment buildings at 511A and 511B South Frederick Avenue as well as several crushed vehicles in the parking lot, and evaluated the apartment buildings at both 509 and 517 South Frederick Avenue for trees on the structures. Utilities were controlled and the buildings were assessed for structural integrity. Fire Rescue personnel rescued 7 people, while assessing a total of 18 civilians for potential injuries. One 11 year old patient was transported to the hospital for evaluation.

STRUCTURE/SITE LAYOUT

The apartment building, known as Flowers Apartments, is in the Deer Park section of Gaithersburg and is part of box area 08-38. The building was constructed in 1963 and is divided into two addresses, 511A and 511B, with each section being connected by a common basement and hallway. 511 South Frederick Avenue sits at a 90 degree angle to South Frederick Avenue, so that the side Bravo of the building actually faces the street, as designated during the event. The half of the building closest to the street is known as 511A, and the damaged half of the building, 511B, sits toward the rear of the property.



Flowers Apartments consists of one brick building of ordinary construction, with three-stories above grade and a basement. The apartments are on the first, second and third floors, with four units per floor on the second and third stories in each half of the joint building and three apartments and a laundry room per half on the first floor. This makes for a total of 22 individual apartments and two laundry rooms. The apartments are accessed by interior center stairwells, one each for 511A and 511B.

Building construction is brick and 3 ½ inch block, with 2" x 4" stud and drywall directly behind the block. Floor joists are recessed into pockets in the block. The roof is trussed gable style, added as an addition over a flat tar and gravel roof. The front of the building has 6 decorative balconies, one per floor for the apartments in the Alpha quadrant and the Delta quadrant. These balconies are designed for aesthetics only, and are not accessible from the interior apartments except by crawling through the bathroom window. Doors are metal fire doors set in metal frames, with steel lintels set overhead. Windows throughout the structure are single hung, either set alone or in pairs. Natural gas service enters the building on side Charlie, midway between side Bravo and Delta.



Brick and Block Wall



Floor Joists



Decorative Balconies



Single Hung Windows

The location the tree fell into 511B split the building down the stairwell directly above the front door, with the trunk entering the building on side Charlie and the crown exiting the building on side Alpha. 511A was essentially undamaged.



Side Alpha, looking from the Alpha/Bravo corner. 511A is in the foreground.

DISPATCH SUMMARY

911 call received at:	07:13:17	
Call enters pending:	07:13:29	
Call dispatched:	07:14:25	A753, E728, AT708
1 st Unit statuses enroute:	07:15:50	
1 st Unit On-Scene:	07:18	SpecOps Chief
Call type changed to collapse:	07:21:27	

Collapse Dispatch: 07:22:54

Engines	Aerials	Rescues	EMS	US&R	Command
E708	T731	RS729	M708B	USRT	BC705
E728			A722	RCN731	BC703
			M731	SU729	D8
				SU725	

Additional Units dispatched: 07:27:19—07:37:40

EMS702	EB700	SC700	U100	EMS-QA	C708B
C703G	CT708	PEPCO	WSSC	RideOn	Red Cross
Washington Gas					

Engines	Aerials	EMS	EMS
E731	AT703	M708	A708
		M729	A703

Added to incident: 07:42:05 T725

Additional Units Dispatched: 07:46:32 MAB722 MCSU726

Added to incident: 07:48:40 E703

COMMUNICATIONS

Time	Unit	Radio Transmission
07:18:10	SP700	Special Operations Chief to Montgomery
07:18:15	ECC	Special Operations Chief
07:18:18	SP700	511 South Frederick, two engines, two trucks, four EMS. Two engines, two trucks, four EMS. On the scene, three-story apartment building, large tree into the building. Two engines, two trucks, four EMS—two ALS, two BLS. South Frederick command in my buggy.
07:18:43	ECC	OK, Special Operations Chief. Switch to 7C for operations.
07:19:10	BC705	BC705 to South Frederick, switching over.

SpecOps Chief initially requested “Two engines, two trucks, four EMS—two ALS, two BLS” due to his observations upon arrival. Within minutes, however, it became evident that structural damage to the building warranted a collapse assignment in order to safely remove trapped civilians from the structure, as well as to assess surrounding buildings for damage.

Time	Unit	Radio Transmission
07:19:48	SP700	Special Ops Chief on 7B to Montgomery
07:19:51	ECC	Go ahead Special Ops Chief
07:19:56	SP700	Collapse assignment, add me a collapse assignment, report of people trapped, third story. Companies 29 and 31 at this time. Copy?
07:20:07	ECC	Copy. On the way.
07:21:27	ECC	Assignment type changed from 30-D-2 to RES/CLPS: IP W/ DECLOC to STRUCT COLL.
07:22:54	ECC	Collapse assignment dispatched

Upon arrival on-scene units operated effectively on 7-Charlie. The US&R component was placed on 7-Delta for rescue operations. The EMS group was switched to 7-Echo. The command team utilized the Battalion 705 buggy as the incident command post, thus benefiting from the multiple radio configurations to support operations.

PRE-EMERGENCY PLANNING

The Station 8 map for the 500 block of South Frederick Avenue was last updated November 18, 2008. Map # 08-038 provided a good overview of the layout of the affected building, the address divisions, as well as adjacent buildings.

The initial unit officers were knowledgeable about the specific building involved, and were familiar with the layout of the addresses. This knowledge of the building and the neighboring buildings/complexes assisted in the selection of apparatus placement for laddering the building and assessing the area for potential rescues.

ON SCENE OPERATIONS

Initial Actions

The incident was dispatched as an injured child—decreased level of consciousness with head injury after being hit by a tree branch. SpecOps Chief arrived on scene first at 07:18. The SpecOps Chief report states that “due to the odd nature of the dispatch,” he elected to add himself to the call. SpecOps Chief responded from Shady Grove Rd and Route 355 to the scene, surveying trees down along Route 355 as he drove. When entering the 511 driveway, SpecOps Chief observed a very large tree that had collapsed into a three story apartment building.



There was significant damage to the second and third floors, and several cars were visibly crushed under the crown of the tree as it lay into the parking lot. A group of at least 20 civilians had congregated in front of the building, and a civilian was visible on a third story balcony of 511B. At this point, SpecOps Chief made the initial request for two engines, two trucks, and four EMS units; two ALS and two BLS; and established command. After exiting the vehicle, the SpecOps Chief approached the building and was intercepted by a resident who reported that she

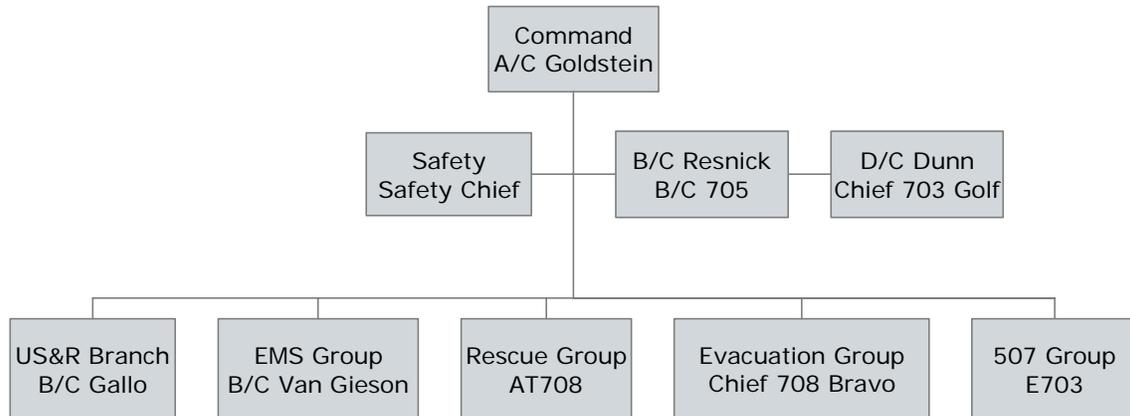
had family members trapped inside the building. As soon as it was evident that rescues would be necessary, the SpecOps Chief called for a consolidated US&R response.

Upon their arrival, Tower 708 positioned on side Alpha. Battalion 705 arrived on scene and was ordered to situate his buggy on side Bravo in order to utilize it for the command post and then to perform a 360 degree assessment of the complex.

As additional units began arriving, they were assigned to the various groups: Rescue, EMS, Evacuation, US&R, 507, and Safety.

Command Team

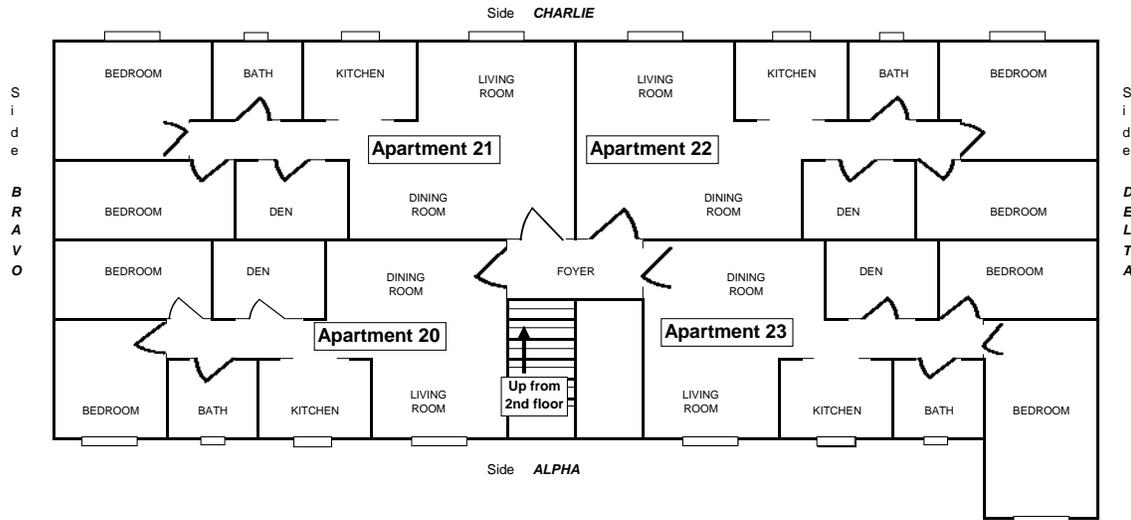
Upon the arrival of the SpecOps Chief the incident command structure was implemented. As additional command staff began arriving, they were assigned roles and responsibilities. The SpecOps Chief retained Incident Command, and he was assisted in this role by Battalion 705 (BC705) and Chief 703 Golf (C703G). Battalion 705 acted as command support, while C703 Golf acted as the US&R Liaison. Assistant Chief Graham filled the Public Information Officer position upon his arrival. The Safety Chief was assigned as the Incident Scene Safety Officer.



Rescue Group

The Rescue Group consisted of Tower 708 and Tower 703. With the officer of Tower 708 in charge, the Rescue Group was instructed to ladder sides Alpha and Charlie of 511B. Tower 708 positioned the apparatus on side Alpha of 511, closer to the 511B section. They worked on side Alpha, and placed a 35 foot ladder to a window on the third floor, quadrant Alpha, to the left of the tree, as well as placing a 28 foot ladder to a third floor window to the right of the tree, quadrant Delta. Tower 703 positioned out of the way and laddered side Charlie of the building. Command also tasked the Rescue Group with extending an aerial and providing an assessment of the number of rescues. The original information from the bystander reported one victim trapped in apartment 22 and one in apartment 23.

Upon assessment, Tower 708 found one occupant on the third floor balcony of 511B stating that there were four people in Quadrant Delta on the third floor. Tower 708 removed two adults and two children by ladder from the third floor apartment (apartment 23). The occupant on the balcony crawled back in through the bathroom window and was removed by ladder. Tower 708's driver raised the aerial above the tree and located two additional occupants in apartment 22. Tower 703 removed the two adult occupants from apartment 22 by ground ladder.



Once all the visible rescues were accomplished, Tower 708 checked several crushed vehicles in the parking lot on side Alpha, and found them all to be empty. They then breached the windows on the first and second story apartment to search for occupants. They too were empty. Tower 703 assisted in controlling the gas to the building, then reported back to the Rescue Group supervisor, where both units then reported to Rehab, while Engine 703's officer was assigned as the Rescue Group supervisor.

EMS Group

The EMS Group was supervised by the EMS Battalion Chief, B/C Van Gieson. It consisted of all of the EMS units operating on the scene, as well as EMS702, MAB722, MCSU726 and two RideOn buses. The EMS units were staged on South Frederick Avenue in front of the entrance to Gaithersburg High School initially, but once occupants started being removed from the building and the first RideOn bus arrived, several EMS units, with Medic 708B in charge, were moved to the front of 511B to assist with patient triage. Eventually, one pediatric patient would be transported to Shady Grove Adventist Hospital for evaluation for scalp lacerations.

Evacuation Group

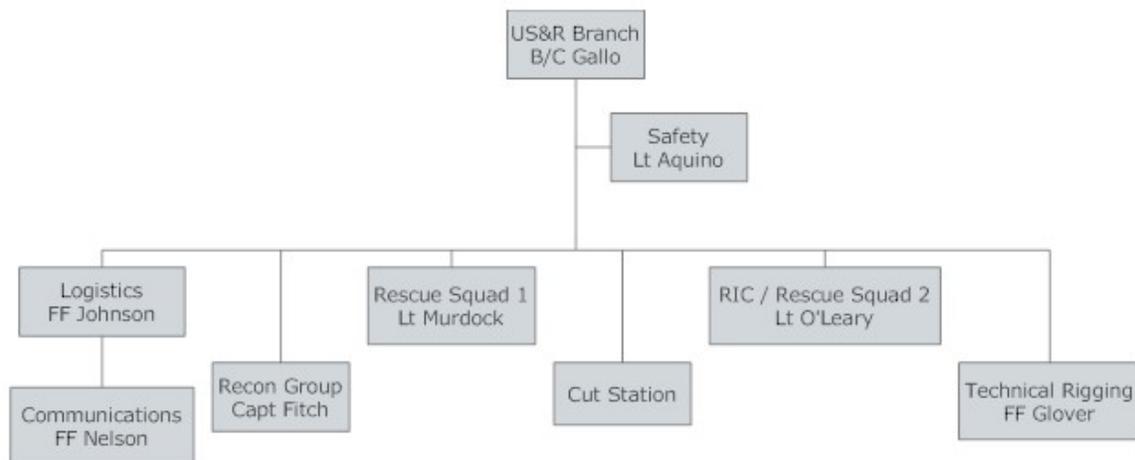
The Evacuation Group was created to assist with coordinating the corralling and assessment of the displaced residents and citizens. Chief 708B took over as group supervisor from Engine 708 once he arrived on scene. After the Rescue Group removed the occupants from the building and the RideOn bus was on scene, the Evacuation Group gathered all the occupants from 511B and documented their names, ages, injuries, apartment number, where they were in the building, and how they were evacuated. In total, 18 residents were triaged

and gathered from 511B onto the RideOn bus—7 adult males, 6 adult females, one pediatric male, and four pediatric females.

Engine 708 was directed to conduct a primary search of 511A South Frederick Avenue and evacuate any remaining residents. They accomplished this task and removed one resident. Residents removed from 511A were also gathered and moved onto the RideOn bus. Upon the arrival of Canteen 708, water, Gatorade, and snacks were provided to the RideOn bus occupants.

US&R

US&R units arriving on scene and were directed to stage their equipment in the parking area for 517. Battalion 703 was the group supervisor, and under his direction were all the US&R units. Medic 708 was later added to the US&R Group. Chief 703G acted as the US&R Liaison, conveying messages and orders to and from the Incident Commander. The primary goal of the US&R Group was to rapidly set up a base of operations to include a cut-station and gain access to the affected building(s). As all US&R assets arrived on scene, the US&R Group became a Branch, and individual personnel were distributed into several groups.



The US&R Branch was tasked by Command with three objectives:

1. Investigate the tree into the building at 517D South Frederick Avenue.
 - Engine 731 evacuated the building and reported no life-safety hazards, but the building was taped off and turned over to Gaithersburg City officials.

2. Conduct a secondary search of 511B South Frederick Avenue and declare an all-clear.
 - The Recon Group joined with Safety to conduct a bottom-up search of the structure as a follow-up of the Rescue Group's building evacuations. Recon confirmed that all floors, apartments, and utility areas were searched and found to be clear of occupants. In addition, the Recon Group did a secondary search of the vehicles in the parking lot of 511B. Rescue Squad One controlled the utilities for 511B. Once complete, the building was turned over to Gaithersburg City officials.
3. Conduct a secondary search and declare an all-clear of 509A and 509 B South Frederick Avenue where another tree had come down.
 - Rescue Squad Two found damage to a top floor apartment where tree branches had punched through the roof, so that unit was evacuated. The structure was deemed all clear of life-safety issues and was turned over to Gaithersburg City officials.

Upon completion of these assignments, the US&R Branch supervisor reported back to the command post, and Command discontinued the Branch. The Branch supervisor conducted a US&R de-briefing at the base of operations and released all the US&R units.

507 Group

Engine 703 responded to the scene to bring one non-consolidated US&R member. After their arrival, command established the 507 Group to conduct assessments on the group of apartment buildings that were exposure Charlie, addressed as 507A through 507D South Frederick Avenue. Engine 703 found that there was no damage to any part of the structure, so the 507 Group was disbanded and Engine 703 was sent to the EMS Group, before being reassigned to the Rescue Group.

Safety

Early into the event, the Safety Chief arrived on the scene and was assigned as the Incident Scene Safety Officer. The Safety Chief performed a scene assessment and identified the entire section of the building 511B as a hot zone. Once so designated, no entry was authorized except US&R personnel. The Safety Chief identified the area around 511B as the hot zone using red fireline tape, and designated the area around 511A as the warm zone using yellow fireline tape. The Safety Chief also worked with various units to ensure that utilities were controlled to both 511A and 511B.

SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

As the incident continued to grow and resources were added to the call, Incident Command called for Canteen 708, and RideOn. Canteen 708 provided rehab supplies to the evacuated occupants on the RideOn bus that had been positioned on side Bravo of 511B.

Because utilities were potentially compromised and were being controlled/isolated by fire rescue personnel, Command called for Washington Gas, PEPCO, and WSSC.

Due to the damage to the structure and evacuation of surrounding buildings, Command called for the American Red Cross (ARC). The ARC provided assistance to multiple families from several buildings.

While developing contingency plans for building stabilization, the US&R branch requested a crane and tree removal contractor. Command initiated contact with Digging and Rigging but crane resources were cancelled after all rescues had been made. Command requested that Gaithersburg City Police contact the city public works department to secure tree removal equipment and personnel. As with the crane, the tree removal plans were halted once all rescues had been completed.

Montgomery County Police Sixth District and Gaithersburg City Police assisted with crowd and traffic control and Gaithersburg City officials were on scene to take control of the secured buildings after all fire and rescue activities had been completed.

ACCOUNTABILITY

During the event command maintained accountability by division and groups while utilizing a tactical worksheet. While active rescue activities were occurring, one incident-wide Personnel Accountability Report (PAR) was completed via radio and face-to-face communications. This accountability report was completed 31 minutes into the incident. The US&R Branch conducted several internal PARs during their operations as well.

EVACUATED RESIDENT INFORMATION

Apt #	Floor / Quadrant	Age	Gender	How Exited
14	1 st - Charlie	58	M	Exited via interior stairwell
17	2 nd - Bravo	19	M	Exited via interior stairwell
17	2 nd - Bravo	19	M	Forced doors to apartments #18 & #19. Exited via interior stairwell
17	2 nd - Bravo	23	M	Forced doors to apartments #18 & #19. Exited via interior stairwell
17	2 nd - Bravo	50	F	Exited via interior stairwell
18	2 nd - Charlie	7	M	Door forced, exited via interior stairwell
18	2 nd - Charlie	9	F	Door forced, exited via interior stairwell
18	2 nd - Charlie	11	F	Door forced, exited via interior stairwell
18	2 nd - Charlie	31	F	Door forced, exited via interior stairwell
18	2 nd - Charlie	35	M	Entered building after tree fell to assist other residents. Exited via Tower 708 ground ladder
18	2 nd - Charlie	61	F	Door forced, exited via interior stairwell
18	2 nd - Charlie	71	M	Door forced, exited via interior stairwell
19	2 nd - Delta	19	F	Door forced, exited via interior stairwell
19	2 nd - Delta	54	F	Door forced, exited via interior stairwell
22	3 rd - Charlie	25	M	Exited via Tower 708 ground ladder
22	3 rd - Charlie	53	F	Exited via Tower 708 ground ladder
23	3 rd - Delta	3	F	Carried by Fire Fighter via Tower 708 ground ladder
23	3 rd - Delta	16	F	Exited via Tower 708 ground ladder

TREE INFORMATION

After the initial rescues and scene stabilization were completed, a tree removal company and crane were utilized. The tree was identified as an 85 to 90 year old Red or Champion Oak, or *Quercus rubra*, which has a standard weight of 63 pounds per cubic foot. An initial measurement of the tree trunk taken four feet up from the root spread indicated that the tree was 13 feet in circumference. The tree removal company took weight measurements of the sections of tree when lifted by the crane. They began by cutting off and lifting all the limbs of the tree first. Each limb weighed approximately 3,000 pounds. Next the tree crew cut and removed two sections of main trunk from inside the building, each measuring 36 inches in diameter by 25 feet in length. Each one of these sections weighed 12,000 pounds. The final section of main trunk, which the crane lifted from side Charlie of the building, measured 48 inches in diameter by 10 feet in length. This section weighed in at around 8,000 pounds.

STRUCTURAL DAMAGE

The trunk of the tree fell into the building from the Charlie side, just off center with the interior stairwell. The crown of the tree exited the building on side Alpha, with the bifurcation of the limbs splitting, so that some angled up while others crashed into the vehicles in the parking lot. On side Charlie where structural damage was

more severe, the trunk collapsed down through the roof, third floor, and second floor, coming to rest on the floor joists of the second story. On side Alpha, the damage did not extend into the second floor, but the trunk did crush a portion of the load-bearing exterior wall of the third floor.

The tree was observed to have broken through several trusses. At least one truss was missing, and five additional trusses were heavily damaged, leaving a rudimentary trench cut front to back on the building.

The front door, located directly beneath the crown of the tree on side Alpha, was completely inaccessible due to tree branches and debris. All the windows on side Alpha remained plumb and intact, except the third floor stairwell window and the double-wide window in the apartment directly next to the tree trunk on the third floor.



These two windows were broken out and the frames were bent out of shape. The brick and block wall between these two windows was crushed and bowed, and the brick below the double window was folding in towards the apartment. The decorative balconies, which were located in the bumped-out section of the Alpha/Delta corner of the building, had obvious damage and the decks appeared unstable and were partially collapsed.

Side Bravo and the attached Bravo exposure (511A) was uninvolved in the structural damage.

On side Charlie, the windows closest to the midline of the building in the apartments on the second and third floor, as well as the brick surrounding them, were completely missing. From side Charlie, it was clearly evident how far down into the building the damage extended.



Prior to tree removal



After tree removal

Side Delta of the building was found to be completely undamaged. It was reported that there were wires down on the Delta side of the building, but not close enough to be an immediate hazard.

Although there was very little damage to the ground floor apartments, the front door into the building was inaccessible due to tree limbs. Apartments 13, 14, 15, and the laundry room were undamaged, and the walls, doors, and windows all appeared to be plumb.



The second floor was accessible via the central stairwell. The bulk of the damage appeared to be toward the Delta side of the stairwell, with significant damage to the partition wall separating the stairs and apartments 18 and 19, the units in the Charlie and Delta quadrants of the second floor. There was very little damage to apartments 16 and 17, the two units in the Alpha and Bravo quadrants of the second floor. Several doors throughout all the units were forced to search for residents. A lean-to collapse was discovered in apartment 18, involving the ceiling and one of the walls.

Tree parts blocked access to the third floor via the interior stairwell, so access was made by way of ground ladders to the windows. The partition wall in the third floor stairwell that separated the stairs and apartments 22 and 23 on the Delta side of the stairwell was completely destroyed. The tree prevented movement from the Charlie and Delta quadrants back over to the Alpha and Bravo quadrants, so access was made by exiting the building and re-entering via ground ladders. Damage to apartments 20 and 21 was less extensive; however, on the Alpha side of the stairwell there was a steel lintel on the top chord of the wall that was broken and had fallen into the stairwell below.



LESSONS LEARNED

Situational Awareness

Upon arrival on scene the command staff focused on victim rescue and incident stabilization. While doing such, three talk groups were utilized and monitored in the command post. While this was occurring the command team did not have the means to monitor 7-Alpha to maintain situational awareness.

As the storm passed through the county the 9-1-1 call volume increased greatly as other parts of the county were impacted by the storm. This included several full assignment fire dispatches, an in-land swift water rescue event, and multiple system and wire/tree calls. This increased call load created a severe drain on resources and limited the resources available to command.

Recommendation

To the extent possible, incident commanders should maintain situational awareness of county-wide emergency events and resource commitments. This situational awareness must be used when requesting additional resources from an already taxed system.

Communications Staffing

The morning of August 12th was scheduled to be the switch back of radio and telephone operations from the alternate emergency communications center (AECC) to the primary emergency communications center (ECC) after some system upgrades. This was planned to occur at 0700 hours by the on-coming shift reporting to the ECC while the off-going shift held over for a little bit at the

AECC. This equates to double staffing during the switch over. The storm started impacting the northern parts of the county around 0600 hours and the Gaithersburg area at roughly 0700 hours.

As mentioned above the storm, created a huge spike in emergency events and 9-1-1 calls. To manage the workload of 9-1-1 calls and multiple concurrent working events along with the normal radio operations, the ECC Operations Officer directed that 9-1-1 call taking be retained at the AECC with the off-going shift, while all radio operations and dispatch would occur at the ECC with the on-coming shift. This operational decision greatly enhanced processing time and capacity during the storm.

Recommendation

Since this event, ECC has begun completing a daily line-up like all speciality teams complete. This provides for situational awareness as to the work site location of ECC qualified personnel that can be sent to ECC to provide surge capacity relief when needed. This provides ECC a surge capacity plan and should be continued and expanded.

Communication

During the initial minutes of the event several trapped victims were identified by the Rescue group and confirmed by bystanders/family. This information was utilized to develop the incident action plan and the risk/benefit analysis of fire rescue personnel entering the structure.

While technical resources were assembling on-site, crews from the Rescue group removed five victims/residents from the structure via ground ladder. These actions were not acknowledged nor communicated by/to command. If command had knowledge of these rescues, the incident action plan would have been adjusted and the event downsized.

Recommendation

All unit officers and division/group supervisors must ensure critical event information/changes are communicated to command.

Organize Early

The successful management and execution of a complex large-scale event is often the result of breaking the event into manageable parts early. This event is a perfect example. The early arrival of several command officers and strong unit officers allowed for the rapid development of an effective incident management structure. The command team and the group supervisors were able to quickly address multiple incident priorities. This includes rescue, evacuation, safety, US&R, accountability, and scene control.

Recommendation

All personnel, line and command officers as well as unit personnel, must maintain readiness at all times. A major part of readiness is continuing education and training. Training for a major event/disaster is the best means for personnel to be ready to respond when a major event/disaster occurs.

Logistics

A critical element of all operations is logistics. Logistics involves having the right number of properly trained and equipped personnel available to respond when needed. With any special operations event, personnel must bring the specialized equipment to the event upon dispatch. Once the equipment arrives on scene it must be ready for immediate operations. This involves the proper grouping of like equipment into rapidly deployable kits/bags. During this event Support Unit 725 was left at station 25. While this was not critical on this event it may have been. Also, personnel identified the need to have better configured and equipped recon bags for rapid search and assessment of the building.

Recommendation

All special operations teams must provide direction to stations housing speciality apparatus that provide clear direction on when units are to respond.

The US&R team should enhance the design and configuration of the current Recon bag.

Area Command

As mentioned earlier in this analysis, this storm created wide spread damage throughout the county including a focused area of damage in the Old-Towne Gaithersburg area and Deer Park community along Route 355. The other damage in Gaithersburg was primarily limited to property and did not include any injuries. If the other events in Gaithersburg had required fire rescue resources, a large number of fire rescue units with different command structures could have been operating in a very small geographic area.

Recommendation

Had fire rescue been operating simultaneous events in the Gaithersburg area, the development of an Area Command would have been warranted to effectively manage events in very close proximity utilizing similar shared resources.

SUMMARY

All personnel that responded to this event were challenged with an unusual and uncommon rescue in a three story apartment building under extreme weather conditions. The confusion of the incident dispatch, combined with the potential need for specialized rescue and scene stabilization, could have resulted in a disaster, but the quick actions of the initial personnel on-scene managed this dynamic incident. The initial units on-scene provided not only critical information regarding patient welfare and locations, but executed numerous rescues as well.

Once the rescues and evacuation of the damaged structure were accomplished, personnel from both the EMS and Evacuation Group performed detailed assessments of nearly 20 potential patients. Additionally, information was gathered regarding the occupants' original location in the building, and how they were evacuated. At the conclusion, one pediatric patient was transported for evaluation.

Fire crews working alongside US&R personnel engaged in a comprehensive assessment of damage to neighboring buildings. During this segment of the incident, most surrounding structures were found to be undamaged, one had roof damage, and extensive cleanup of tree limbs and branches would prove to be necessary.

All personnel operated very well at an extremely taxing incident during an extremely unpredictable weather situation.

SITE MAP

