



Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service

POST INCIDENT ANALYSIS

**Three Alarm Garden Apartment Fire
19315 Club House Road
Montgomery Village, Maryland**

Incident Date: June 25, 2013



**Submitted by
Battalion Chief Kenneth C. Deibler**

Incident Overview

This Post Incident Analysis (PIA) is based upon the review of the incident audio tape (including the various talk-groups utilized), review of FireApp reports, interviews with personnel that operated on the incident as well as the information that was gained from the collection of standardized PIA Unit Fact Sheets.

On Tuesday, June 25, 2013, at 1919 hours, Montgomery County Fire Rescue Service (MCFRS) units were dispatched for a fire with the report of people trapped in a garden apartment at 19315 Club House Road, Montgomery Village, Maryland. This address is within Fire Station 8's first due response area in Battalion 3.

Weather conditions for the incident at the time of dispatch included typical summertime conditions for the region: hazy, hot and humid with chance of localized thunderstorms. Near the end of the incident several sources reported that a large storm cell was approaching the incident scene. Concentrated efforts were made to quickly clear as many Fire/Rescue resources as possible from the incident.

Units arrived on the scene to find a three-story garden apartment building with heavy fire and smoke conditions showing from the second floor of Side Alpha with obvious extension into the apartment unit above and extension into the attic void space. It was apparent that many occupants of the building were trapped. Occupants were visible on balconies and at windows at various locations throughout the building.

Arriving units and crews quickly went into action to mitigate the situation. Some crews were directed to attack the rapidly advancing fire while other crews performed searches and assisted occupants who were exiting the building. Yet other crews assessed the emergency medical needs of the occupants that were leaving various exit points of the building on their own.



A view from Side Alpha.

There were a total of four injuries to MCFRS personnel and injuries to four occupants of the apartment building during the mitigation of the incident.

The MCFRS injuries included: one firefighter while operating on the interior stairwell and was injured when a section of drywall released from the ceiling and struck him on the head and shoulders. This firefighter was transported to a local hospital for evaluation and treatment and subsequently required significant medical treatment and rehabilitation prior to returning to full duty.

A second firefighter was attempting to place a ground ladder on Side Charlie of the fire building and was struck by falling debris (a portion of window frame) from an upper window that had been taken out by personnel operating within the interior of the structure. This firefighter was transported to a local hospital for evaluation and treatment and subsequently required significant medical treatment and rehabilitation prior to returning to full-duty.

A third firefighter received a very minor injury while assisting with the extensive overhaul efforts. This firefighter received a very small laceration of the hand and received treatment from the Rehab Group and then returned to previously assigned tasks.

A fourth firefighter reported a small amount of debris in one eye while assisting with the extensive overhaul efforts. This firefighter was evaluated by the Rehab Group and then returned to previously assigned tasks.

Four civilians received injuries due to this incident. One adult male received a laceration to his neck while assisting a firefighter to place a ground ladder on Side Charlie. One occupant had injuries consistent with jumping from the building. The other two people had very minor inhalation issues.



Ladder placement on Side Alpha.
Note: Firefighter not wearing Personal Protective Envelope (PPE)

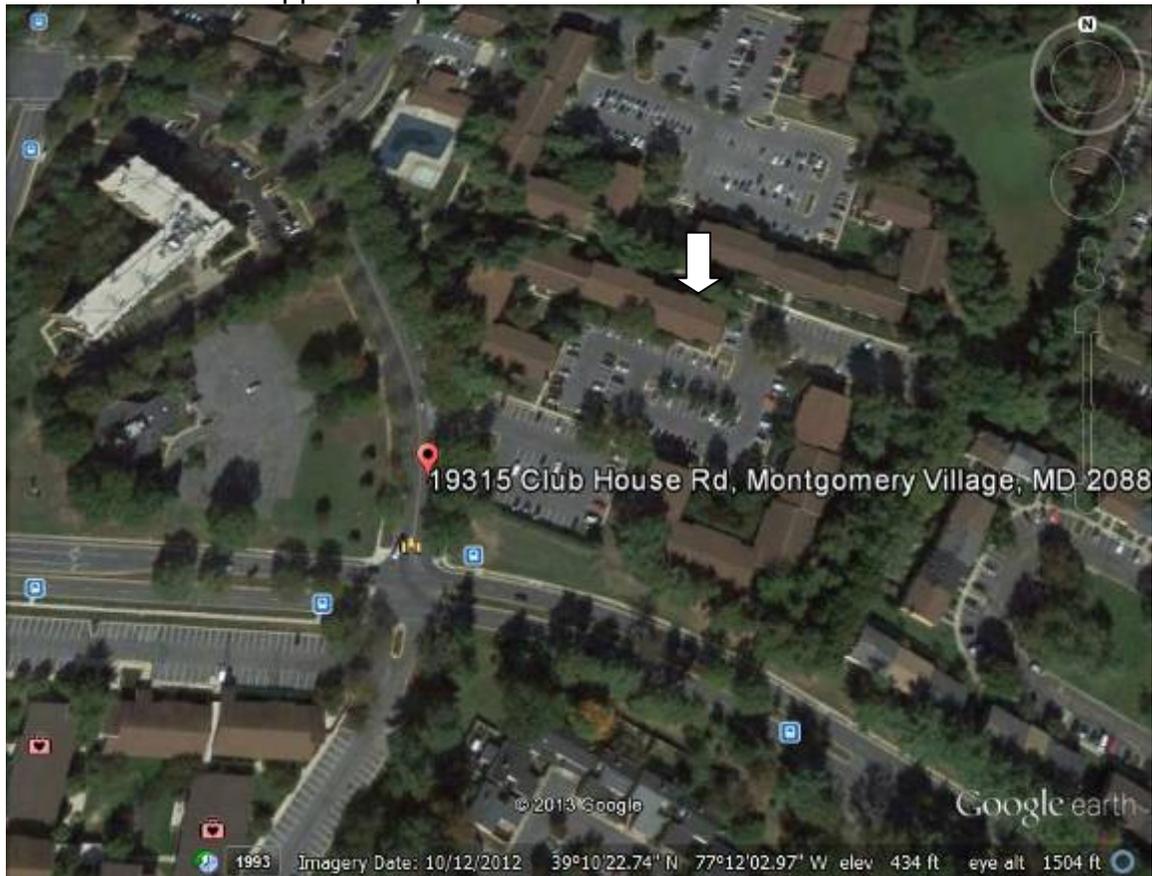
The following two photos show Paramedic Engine 734's crew preparing to remove an adult female occupant from Apartment 304. Engine 753's crew was on the interior assisting her through the window. Engine 753's crew also removed her dog via the interior stairwell. Note crews utilizing two ground ladders to over-come awkward building layout and un-level surface of the lower roof.





Structure/Site Layout

- 19315 Club House Road is a three-story garden apartment building with an open center stairwell. This building is nearly identical to many other addresses within the Thomas Choice Garden Condominium complex.
- There are 12 separate apartment units within this building and overall is approximately 12,000 square feet in size.
- This building is Type III construction. It has a local alarm system but has no fire suppression systems.
- The building was built in 1981. The units were originally rental units and are now condominium units which offer one, two and three bedrooms floor plans.
- Access for fire apparatus placement is limited on all sides of the structure.



Fire Code History

- A review of the Fire Code compliance records for 19315 Club House Road and other applicable addresses within the complex revealed no significant or relevant Fire Code compliance issues.

Communications

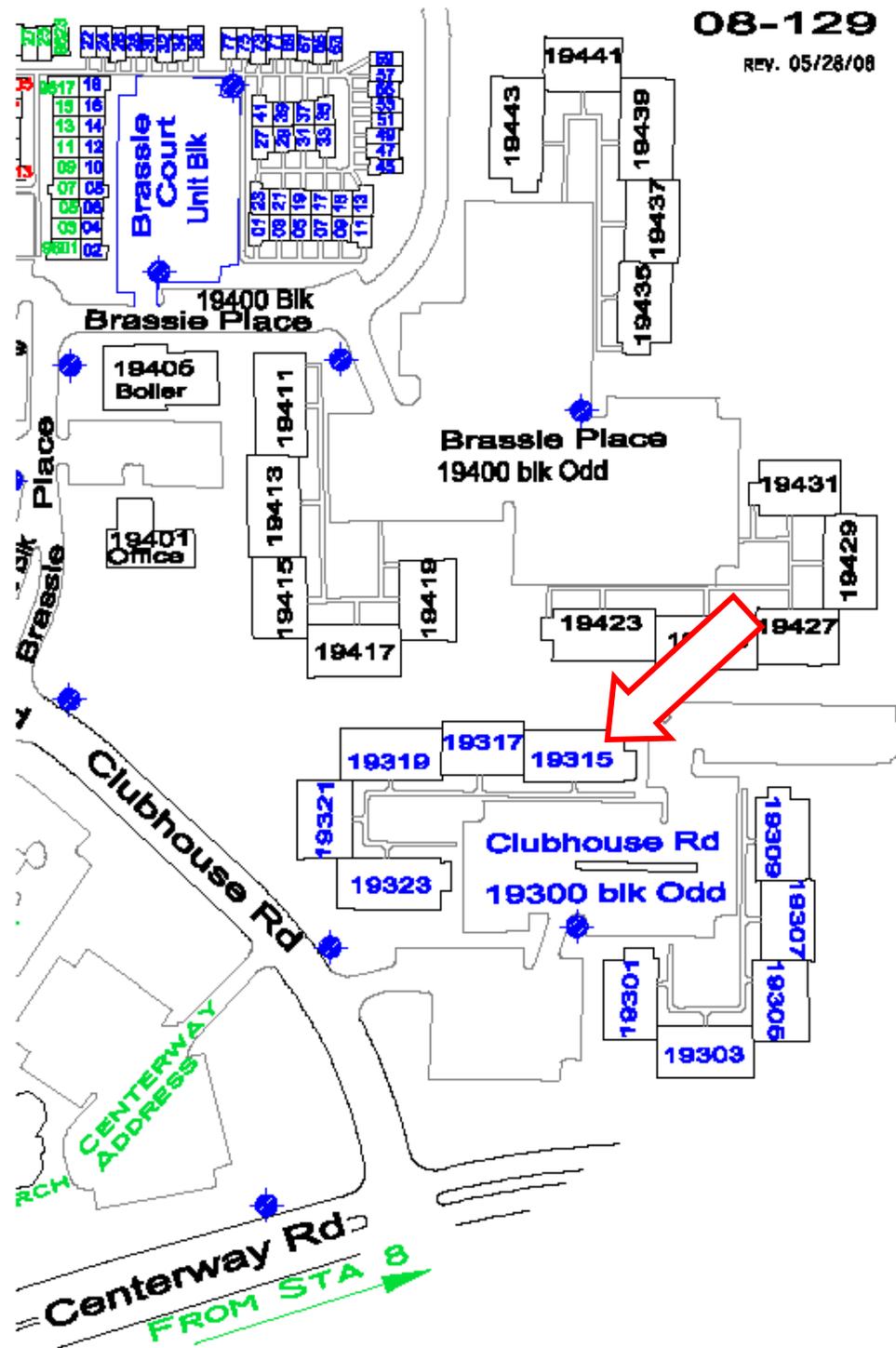
- The incident was dispatched as a fire in Apartment 201.
- The Rapid Intervention Dispatch (RID) was dispatched while the box alarm units were responding.
- As units were en-route to the scene, Montgomery advised Paramedic Engine 708 that a resident was trapped in Apartment 304.
- Paramedic Engine 708 requested the second alarm on their approach to the scene.
- Paramedic Truck 708 provided an accurate on-scene report and established Command in the Attack Mode.
- Battalion Chief 705 assumed Command from Paramedic Truck 708 upon arrival. Level II Command was established on Side Alpha of the structure.
- Command requested additional emergency medical service (EMS) resources to receive and treat any injured occupants as well as any potentially injured firefighters. This consisted of two advanced life support (ALS) units and three basic life support (BLS) units. A third alarm was later requested by Command and these units and crews were utilized to assist with extensive overhaul efforts.
- The incident utilized three talk groups:
 - Talk group 7 Charlie was utilized for incident management, rescue management, and fire control.
 - Talk group 7 Delta was utilized for coordination with the EMS Group consisting of EMS resources including triage, treatment and transport.
 - Talk group 7 Echo was utilized to stage additional resources that arrived on the second and third alarms.
- Communications between Command, Divisions and units were very effective. Radio discipline was not an issue and the radio system was adequate.
- Water supply instructions and other tactical communications were effective and clearly understood.



Paramedic Engine 708 (using RE-6) positioned on Side Alpha.

Pre-Emergency Planning

- There were no specific pre-fire plans available for this address to be used on this incident.
- Site drawings were available to units possessing Fire Station 8's maps. Other units relied on Altaris View or the red MCFRS mapbook.



FS 8's site map of the Club House Road and Brassie Place Complexes.

On Scene Operations

- Paramedic Engine 708 used their initial attack line in an attempt to 'reset the fire' from the exterior on Side Alpha. Paramedic Engine 708 then proceeded to the apartment of origin (Apartment 201) to perform search and rescue and extinguish the fire in this unit.
- Paramedic Truck 708 found the door open to the apartment of origin and pulled it closed in an effort to control fire spread.
- Command sent crews to the third floor to conduct search and rescue efforts, to get control of the considerable fire spread on that level, and to control the fire developing in attic void.
- Command instructed Rescue Squad 729 to concentrate immediate search and rescue efforts on the second floor of the building.
- Command instructed the Emergency Medical Service Duty Officer (EMS700) to assume the EMS Group with Ambulance 708 (After they were relieved by the RIG). The EMS Group was notified that the other EMS resources had been requested.
- Crews from remaining units placed numerous ground ladders and assisted occupants from the structure.



Paramedic Engine 708 (using RE-6) positioned on Side Alpha.

Staging

- Command promptly established the staging site at the intersection of Centerway Road and Club House Road. This provided adequate access and space for units arriving on the request for additional EMS resources, the second alarm and later the third alarm. Talk group 7 Echo was utilized for communications with resources in Staging.

Support Functions

- Rehab was established on Side Alpha of the incident and crews were regularly rotated through Rehab.
- Canteen 708 and Canteen 717 kept firefighters hydrated and refreshed throughout the incident.
- Air Unit 733 operated a filling station for the replenishment of the firefighter's self-contained breathing apparatus
- Operating crews were periodically rotated to ensure their adequate well-being.
- Two Montgomery County Ride-On buses were utilized to shelter evacuated occupants of the fire building.
- MCFRS representatives from Operations and Code Compliance, Red Cross representatives, and building management representatives coordinated efforts to find temporary shelter for the occupants of the 12 units that were displaced from their properties.
- Other functions and tasks were coordinated (i.e. Police, Gas and Power Company).

Safety Group

- Paramedic Engine 708 instructed Ambulance 708 to be the 'Two Out.'
- Command established and then maintained the Rapid Intervention Group throughout the incident.
- Four firefighters were injured during this incident. A description of their injuries was mentioned in the Incident Overview section of this document.
- The Rapid Intervention Group was not deployed or utilized to assist in any fashion with any of the injured firefighters.
- The Incident Scene Safety Officer function was originally assigned to Chief 703 Foxtrot. Safety 700 arrived very late into the incident. Upon the arrival of Safety 700, the function of incident safety was divided to provide an interior Safety Officer and an exterior Safety Officer. Safety 700 was assigned Interior safety Officer with the radio designation of Safety Alpha and Chief 703 Foxtrot was reassigned as Exterior Safety Officer with the radio designation of Safety Bravo.

Accountability

- Units/Crews were assigned to and operated within Divisions and Groups. These Divisions and Groups were constantly tracked using a Tactical Worksheet. Specific personnel could also be tracked to a specific unit using battalion daily line-ups.
- Personnel were also tracked on Rehab Sheets by the crews operating the Rehab station.

Investigations

- A 'cause and origin' investigation was conducted by MCFRS's Fire and Explosive Investigations. The findings of that investigation revealed that the fire began in Apartment 201.
- The cause was listed as accidental. It was determined that the occupant of Apartment 201 was using an electric clothes iron that was left on and unattended while the occupant left the apartment for what was expected to be a brief errand to the store.
- The fire went unnoticed for a considerable amount of time. This allowed the fire to grow to have significant involvement and spread within the structure.

Lessons Learned

- For this incident it was fortunate that most of the Engine Companies were staffed with four-person staffing. The first due Truck Company was also staffed with four-person staffing. This provided more firefighters early on the scene of a building with significant fire involvement with many occupants trapped.
- It was beneficial to the operation of the incident that the Emergency Communication Center dispatched the RID while units were responding on the box assignment. This eliminated a delay in the RID dispatch and ensured that this important resource would arrive early on the scene.
- It was also beneficial that the officer of Paramedic Engine 708 called for the second alarm early. This ensured that additional resources would arrive promptly to assist with the mitigation of this significant incident.
- Although "2-out" was identified, it was not a requirement because of the reports of trapped occupants.
- Command requested the additional EMS resources of two ALS and three BLS units. This ensured that EMS transport units would be on the scene to treat and transport any potentially injured occupants or firefighters.
- Command requested a third alarm to ensure that adequate personnel resources would be available for both relief and for completion of the large overhaul effort.

- Additional EMS resources were requested by the EMS Division that resulted in too many resources being dedicated to the incident.

Resources on the Incident

First Alarm

Paramedic Engine E708	Paramedic Truck 708	Ambulance 708
Paramedic Engine 728	Truck 734	Battalion Chief 705
Paramedic Engine 734	Rescue Squad 729	Battalion Chief 703
Engine 753		
Paramedic Engine 729		

Rapid Intervention Dispatch (RID)

Truck 731
Rescue Squad 717
Medic 708

Second Alarm

Paramedic Engine 731	Tower 703	Ambulance 734
Paramedic Engine 722	Tower 723	Air Unit 733
Paramedic Engine 703		Canteen 708
Paramedic Engine 735		

Request for additional EMS Units

Medic 731, Medic 703, Ambulance 722, Ambulance 741 Bravo and Ambulance 711

Third Alarm

Engine 726	Tower 735	Ambulance 729 Bravo
Paramedic Engine 717	Truck 725	
Engine 740		
Paramedic Engine 725		

Second request for additional EMS Units

Medic 725, Ambulance 728, Ambulance 717 and Ambulance 729

Additional resources and their functions

Operations Chief	Command Support
Duty Chief	Command Support
Chief 703	Division Charlie
Chief 717 Echo	Division 3
EMS 700	EMS Division
Chief 703 Foxtrot	Safety
Safety 700	Safety
Canteen 717	Rehab
Medical Ambulance Bus	Staging
Fire Marshal 756	Fire and Explosive Investigations
Inspector 710	Code Compliance

Conclusion

Risk/Benefit Analysis training was evident the Strategic Planning of this incident. Crews operating on this incident 'risked a lot to save a lot'. Additionally, Paramedic Engine 708 utilized recent training in an effort 'reset the fire' from a position on the exterior prior to advancing into the structure.

Most of the Engine Companies as well as the first arriving Truck Company had four-person staffing. This was obviously beneficial to the rescue and containment efforts during this well-developed and rapidly expanding fire. All crews worked in a very cohesive and complimentary manner to mitigate the incident.



Photo taken after the extinguishment of the fire from Side Alpha.