

# **Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service**

## **Post Incident Analysis**

**11629 Drumcastle Terr. Germantown,  
Maryland 20876**

**Incident # 07-0005088**

**January 16, 2007**



**Submitted by Battalion Chief Shane Darwick**

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## POST INCIDENT ANALYSIS

### Introduction

Tuesday January 16, 2007 - At 13:41 hours Montgomery County Fire & Rescue units were dispatched to 11629 Drumcastle Terr., Germantown, Md. for a working basement fire in a two story townhouse middle of the row. Units arrived on the scene to find fire showing from the basement window side A. Heavy black and brown smoke coming from the front door. The wind was blowing at about 20 MPH from the North and temperatures in the low 40s. One occupant was taking a nap on the second floor when the fire broke out; he was alerted by a smoke detector. He then left the structure and called 911. Five occupants were displaced from this fire and Red Cross was called to assist them. There were no injuries reported by civilians or firefighters. There was \$200,000 dollars damage to the structure and \$50,000 damage to contents. The cause was determined by the FM's to be an overloaded surge protector that was attached by a light gauge extension cord plugged into an electrical socket in a storage area.

### Building Structure/Site Layout

The structure is a two story townhouse with a finished basement. This townhouse is a Type 5 wood frame platform construction with a split center stairwell. You must travel ten feet into front door to reach the stairs. Floor joist are engineered wooden I beams which failed on the first floor directly over the fire. Personnel were notified of this and Safety 1 roped off area assigned a firefighter to monitor the first floor side A quadrant D. Personnel and apparatus did not encounter any problems in gaining access through front door. Homeowner was at home and left front door open. However, the basement door was forced by RS291 there was a bed in front of the door that crews had to move out of the way. Due to time of day the parking lot was open to apparatus.

### Communications

- a. The Montgomery County dispatcher on 7C (7 Charlie) did verbally provide on scene information at the time the first due units arrival requesting the RID and 2<sup>nd</sup> alarm.
- b. Fire ground channels where adequate and utilized fully. The second alarm units and assignments from staging were given on 7D (7 Delta). Chief 200 (A/C Rothenhoefer) assisted with monitoring this channel.
- c. Basement Division assigned to Battalion Chief 3 communicated effectively with Command to coordinate the fire attack with Division 1.
- d. Command assured E291 and all units on Division 1 were in position when the order was given to Basement Division to make the attack from the rear with E281's crew.

- e. Initial reports from E291 were not clear on the plan of attack and numerous attempts to reach E291 was not getting through due to radio traffic.

### On Scene Operations

- a. Structural integrity of the townhouse based on fire conditions on arrival, was somewhat compromised on the first floor. The floor joist on the first floor side A quadrant D was burning.
- b. Command was identified on arrival by BC5 and maintained throughout the incident.
- c. Size up decisions by command on arrival was to determine location of fire. Then determine if there were any rescues to be made. And next determine if there was an outside entrance into basement for possible fire attack.
- e. The Rapid Intervention Dispatch and the second alarm were added. Battalion Chief 3 prompted E291 prior to arrival if this was a middle of the row townhouse. Will he need a second alarm. Once this was done E291's OIC requested the second alarm.
- f. Strategy/action plan was life safety. The occupant of the house came to Command Post and reported everyone was out. RS291 and AT29 confirmed primary was complete. E171 was assigned to do the secondary search and they reported an all clear. Property conservation was the next priority having units in position to extinguish the fire and coordinate the attack.
- g. Crews executed tactics very effectively.
- h. Additional training needs were identified and communicated in HOT wash. Communication between units had to be done verbally because of radio traffic. This seems to be an on going problem. Discussion on fire attack in light weight construction was also addressed. And the topic of risk benefit analysis in light weight construction was also discussed.
- i. Standard Operating Procedures were used; they were adequate but, could have been more effective with E291 identifying plan on the radio and coordinating the attack with companies on side C. Then command could have assigned E351 to the rear to back up E281. We have a basement fire appendix to our SOP and we should follow it with initial assignment of apparatus and crews. The SOP was followed with a bumpy start but strong command and coordination of the crews put the fire out.
- j. On this fire, offensive decisions were made by command to attack the basement fire and then send crews in to open up to check for fire extension.
- k. The risk analysis was to evacuate the townhouse and apply streams from the basement with wind at thier back with little or no risk to personnel.

- l. The divisions and groups used where appropriate to the type and complexity of the incident.
- m. Apparatus was properly positioned with good water supply and access to side A, side D and side C of the building.
- n. Attack line selection of the 300 foot attack line off E281 in the rear was the initial attack line. This was good thinking on behalf of the officer of E281 and positioning of AT29 was very good on side A.
- o. Ventilation operations went well. The Truck Company's waited until hand lines were in place before opening up. Natural ventilation of windows and doors along with E281's crew using hydraulic ventilation through front window of basement after fire was knocked vented structure without using fans.
- p. Salvage operations were turned over to the homeowner's insurance company on the scene.
- r. No Mutual Aid companies were utilized in this operation.
- s. Water supply was adequate. There are hydrants in close proximity to Sides A, C&D. Units on hydrants used heavy water hookups fully utilizing water supply.

#### Staging

- a. The second alarm staging location was Oxbridge Road and Brandermill Rd.
- b. Site Access was close to scene and could handle the apparatus from several directions.

#### Support Functions

- a. A Rehab group was established on Side A in the parking lot.
- b. Fire/Rescue personnel were provided with food and drinks by canteen 8.
- c. Crews were relieved by fresh crews on a regular and frequent basis.
- e. There were no equipment or apparatus failures.
- f. Functions with outside agencies were properly coordinated (i.e., Power Company,)

#### Safety Group

- a. Standby team was established by Medic 299.
- b. There were no fire/rescue personnel injured.
- c. All safety SOPs and regulations were enforced.
- d. There was a Rapid Intervention Dispatch with Engine 81's OIC as RIG Supervisor this was established on Side A in the parking lot.

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Accountability

- a. 20 minutes into the incident actions were taken to ensure accurate personnel accountability.
- b. The status of units, Divisions/Groups and support personnel were maintained.
- c. Personnel provide adequate feedback in the Hot Wash on scene and through the Post Incident Data Fact Gathering.
- d. The incident was continuously controlled and monitored by Safety One.

Investigations

- a. The Origin and Cause of fire was determined by the FM's
- b. The main factor contributing to fire spread was determined to be an overloaded surge protector that was attached by a light gauge extension cord plugged into an electrical socket in a storage area.

Lessons Learned

- Command transfer was done face to face with RS291. E291 communicated with RS291 the plan of attack but not Command because of radio traffic. If E291 would have been able to reach Command via radio this would have eased some of the communication problems.
- On arrival Command was not sure if the fire was on the first floor or basement. Command requested E291 to verify and no answer got back to Command. Once confirmed Command was able to coordinate the attack.
- E351 was assigned fourth due and arrived second right behind E291 and told Command they had committed to 2<sup>nd</sup> due before they realized it and requested assignment. Command told them to back up E291 and assist with there hose. Command knew E81 was a distance away prior to their dispatch so Command assigned E81 RIT. Command should have had E351 regroup and take there assigned position as 4<sup>th</sup> due RIT.
- Standard Operating Procedures were used; they were adequate but, could have been more effective with the basement fire SOP to assist with initial assignment of crews. Protecting the stairwell involved going ten feet in front door over fire to protect stairwell for the search. E291 requested more hose to reach the stairs. Command hears the request and asked E351 to give them the hose they needed. E291 should not have tried to go over the fire to protect the stairwell with a weakened structure below them.
- Late into the incident, actions were taken to ensure accurate personnel accountability. This is an ongoing problem with the collection of PAT tags that was done but not as soon as we could have.
- There was a Rapid Intervention Dispatch with E81's OIC as RIG Supervisor but Command should have realized the RIG should have been split or assigned a RIG to side C.

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Overall Analysis of Incident

This was a windy cold winter day with temperatures in the low 40s. Units arrived on scene with heavy smoke and fire showing. This fire went well with the establishment of the water supply; Aerial Tower placement and call for early resources. Coordinated fire attack by command and crews contributed to the successful outcome of this incident.

Units on Incident

<u>Dispatch</u>	<u>RIG</u>	<u>2<sup>ND</sup> ALARM</u>
RS291	RS17	CP1
M299	E81	E131
E291	AT35	M298
BC5		EW9
BC3		E241
AT29		E311
E171		M298
E281		T31
E351		A179
C200		CT8
C3X3		T3
EMS3		AR33
AT8		
FM22		
SAFETY 1		
FM57		
FM59		
C8		