



Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service

POST INCIDENT ANALYSIS Incident #07-0009297

**19568 Fisher Avenue
Poolesville, MD**

January 29th, 2007



**Submitted by
Battalion Chief Kent Mallalieu**

I. Introduction:

a). General Overview:

The 19500 block of Fisher Avenue is in downtown Poolsville and is in the only hydranted box area in Station 14's first due. The townhouses in this block are two story, wood frame, single family dwellings with unfinished attics and ornamental fireplaces/woodstoves on the side Charlie wall. There are five to six units to each row.

On Monday January 29, 2007 at 0350 hours, ECC dispatch a report of fire coming from the roof of the townhouse at 19568 Fisher Avenue. ECC dispatched this as a "rural" assignment complete with tankers. While the units were responding, ECC advised that they now had fire reported in two townhouses prompting me to request a second alarm.

The fire began when residents overloaded the ornamental fireplace/woodstove and heat escaped the flue and chimney igniting wall material in the side Charlie wall. The fire spread to the second floor and attic where it gained enough intensity to extend past a block firewall into the exposure on side bravo. The residents of all the structures self evacuated.

BC3 arrived on the scene and assumed command from E141 over the brief objection of Chief 14 who had arrived moments earlier but had not taken command. Once a patent water supply from hydrants was established the tankers were released. The first and second alarm units quickly contained the fire in both townhouses and operations ran smoothly.

The fire did not spread significantly past the point which it was at upon fire department arrival, although it did drop down fully into the second floor of the original townhouse. The fire fully consumed the attic and three rooms on the second floor of the original townhouse and caused minor flame damage in the attics of exposures bravo and delta. All three structures suffered necessary damage during overhaul.

The fire temporarily displaced four families. No personnel were injured (despite ice caused by the 16 degree temperature that night). "After the Fire" activities were conducted the next shift in the surrounding neighborhood.

b). Unique Circumstances:

While not necessarily unique, the frigid cold of the night presented challenges to command because of its effect on personnel. Crews had to be rotated frequently into "work" periods so they could maintain body heat, rehab had to offer shelter and personnel had to be careful on the ice that soon covered much of the fire ground.

II. Building Structure/Site Layout

- a).** The structure was a two story, wood fame, center of the row townhouse
- b).** Wooden structural members and "zero clearance" chimneys played a role in fire spread.
- c).** There were no topography or fuel concerns.
- d).** Smoke detectors were present but failed to operate
- e).** There was no vehicle access to side Charlie of the townhouse row. There were no other access issues

III. Fire Code History

- a). There were no relevant fire code issues with this structure.

IV. Communications

- a). All relevant information was provided by ECC at the time of dispatch and prior to our arrival as more information was gathered.
- b). Fire ground channels were adequate
- c). Proper communications procedures were followed.
- d). There were some problems communicating with Frederick County units and they were unaware of how to reset one of their EB buttons when it was activated.
- e).
- f). Communications between divisions and groups was effective.
- g). Radio discipline was an issue (as always). I attempted to remedy this when I could by directing assigned units to go through their group supervisors.

V. Pre-emergency Planning

- a). None were present and none were needed. The Altaris screen on the MDC provided a good overhead as well as hydrant locations.

VI. On Scene Operations

- a). Upon arrival the fire had vented through the roof of the dispatched address and was consuming the second floor Charlie side wall. At 10 minutes, more of the roof had been lost and the fire had driven the initial attack crew (E141) from the second floor. At 20 minutes the fire had been knocked and there had been no substantial degradation of structural integrity since the first few minutes of operations.
- b). Command was identified and maintained throughout the incident. BC3 was the last unit to leave the scene.
- c). The location of the command post (the BC3 vehicle) was announced when command was established. The location on side alpha was easy and intuitive. The BC3 buggy does not have a flashing green strobe.
- d). Size up decisions by command were adequate to handle the incident.
- e). Additional resources were requested by BC3 while responding to the incident due to new information from ECC that two units were burning. These resources were adequate to mitigate the incident.
- f). Because there were no rescues to be made, the strategy was exposure protection and fire containment.
- g). Tactics were executed appropriately.

VI. On Scene Operations - continued

- h). No training needs (other than radio EB procedures) were identified.
- i). Standard Operating Procedures were adequate for the initial actions of the first arriving companies. After that command developed and implemented its own action plan.
- j). The initial attack, begun prior to command arriving, was offensive. When the initial attack crew was driven out, command made the decision to go defensive with a blitz line on side Charlie due to a rapidly growing volume of fire. Command confirmed that all interior crews were out and stated that a defensive attack was beginning. After the fire was darkened from the exterior, an offensive attack was resumed.
- k). Risk analysis was based on the fact that we had no lives at stake but significant personal property was threatened. The resulting operations, and the risks our personnel were exposed to, were based on that analysis.
- l). Divisions and groups were appropriate for the incident. They were: Division 2, Side Charlie, Exposure Bravo, Exposure Delta, RIG, Safety, Staging, and Rehab.
- m). Apparatus positioning was acceptable although E141 did block one of two main entrances to the parking area for this row of townhouses. As mentioned earlier, there was no vehicular access to the rear.
- n). Attack line selection was questionably adequate for what the officer on E141 could see at the time of arrival. He selected an 1 ¾ inch line. A 2 inch line might have kept him from being driven out.
- o). Ventilation was conducted horizontally by the fire department and had occurred vertically prior to our arrival.
- p). Salvage was attempted by covering undamaged property in all three affected occupancies as soon as the bulk of the fire was knocked and prior to the wettings conducted for overhaul.
- q). Vehicle mounted flood lights provided adequate exterior light for safe fireground operations. Interior lighting was provide from the trucks and squads.
- r). Some mutual aid companies were quite good, others struggled with our radios and appeared tactically challenged.
- s). The water supply was more than adequate.

VII. Staging

- a). The location was adequate
- b). Access to the staging area was not an issue.

VIII. Support Functions

- a).** Rehab was established and utilized
- b).** A canteen provided food and beverages
- c).** If I remember correctly, we had a bus due to the frigid temperature. Personnel did not suffer from exposure.
- d).** As mentioned earlier, crews were rotated frequently so that everyone was working enough to stay warm.
- e).** There were no equipment or apparatus failures.
- f).** Communications with outside agencies was good and their roles were accomplished in a timely fashion. The longest wait was for the Red Cross.

IX. Safety Group

- a).** Medic 149 and the driver of TW14 had the initial standby assignment and they carried it out.
- b).** There were no civilian or fire department injuries
- c).** To my knowledge, all safety policies and SOPs were followed. The Safety Officer (Keyser) did not bring any concerns to the attention of command that were not addressed.
- d).** The Safety Dispatch units were used as a Rapid Intervention Group.
- e).** I have no safety recommendations at this time.

X. Accountability

- a).** Accountability was maintained on a Clemens accountability board.
- b).** Unit status and whereabouts were maintained.
- c).** Personnel provided appropriate feedback
- d).** The incident was continuously controlled and monitored

XI. Investigations

- a)** Fire origin was determined to be in the flue space of an ornamental fireplace that was being used to help heat the home.
- b)** Wooden structural framing allowed the fire to spread.

XII. Lessons Learned

- a)** No specific training needs were identified
- b)** No recommendations for improvement come to mind.

XIII. Overall Analysis of Incident

The incident went well. There were several small issues that were addressed with the individual companies involved but overall the incident went quite well. Personnel had to contend with a significant fire that was spreading quickly on a bitter cold night. They contained the fire to where it was upon arrival, acted as a coordinated group, and did so without getting hurt.

Critique

Not necessary for this incident