

# **Second Alarm Fire**

## **106 Croydon Court June 26, 2007**

### **Introduction**

At 1333 hours on June 26, 2007 PSCC dispatched a box alarm for a report of a working fire in the apartment, Incident #07-0062309. The Duty Operations Chief requested a second alarm while enroute. Responding units found a three story garden style apartment building with fire in the basement apartment. Five civilians were transported to local hospitals. The fire was extinguished without any complications and the Second Alarm units were returned without being engaged. The last units left the scene at 1616 hours.

### **Order of Dispatch**

Box Alarm: 1333 hrs. – E11, E161, E191, E21, E541, AT19, T2, RS28, A169

RID: 1335 hrs. – PGCT34, RS18, M129

Second Alarm: 1336 hrs – E51, E121, PGCE441, E181, T12, AT18, M21

### **Weather**

Temperature at time of dispatch was 73 degrees. Winds were calm, skies were clear. Weather was not a factor in fire operations.

### **Building, Access and Topography**

The building was four stories with basement level garden style apartment building of brick construction approximately 45 years old. The section involved consisted of 17 apartments. Pavement and open areas accommodated fire department operations on all sides, Side B was an adjoining apartment building separated by a fire wall. Side Charley was assessable via Schuyler Avenue. The building had a flat tar and gravel roof with a small cockloft. Construction type and the location of the origin of the fire limited fire spread and allowed ease in locating and controlling the fire. Smoke spread easily throughout the building via common enclosed public stairway and utility shafts which figured in trapping so many residents.

The building was equipped with an internal unmonitored fire alarm system and smoke detectors in each apartment. There was no automatic sprinkler or standpipe system. The smoke detectors were activated as expected however the internal fire alarm system was not sounding. Building plans or preplans were not accessed by Command. The building was ultimately assessed to be unsafe and posted as inhabitable by FM16.

### **Fire Suppression Logistics'**

PSCC advised Battalion Chief 1 while enroute that there were reports of persons jumping from the building and the Rapid Intervention Dispatch was being sent and the Second

Alarm was being set up. Duty Operations Chief 200 at this time asked that the Second Alarm be transmitted. Engine 11 arrived on scene with fire showing from the basement and fire also apparent on the top floor. Battalion Chief 1 arrived shortly thereafter and assumed command on Side A. Several civilians were observed on the exterior of the building as being injured however all interior searches proved negative, the civilians having had self evacuated prior to our arrival. Three had in fact jumped from the buildings windows but not from a great height and the injuries and complaints were assessed as non life threatening. Command requested a total of five (5) EMS units to handle the patients under the direction of EMS 1. Five casualties were transported to area hospitals.

The fire originated in the basement apartment from food cooking on the stove which was left unattended. An interior attack was initiated by Engine 11 and Truck 2 and the fire was quickly controlled and contained to the apartment of origin. Smoke damage was heavy to the remainder of the building. It was determined that the fire apartment hallway door had been left open by the occupant as he fled. This immediately filled the stairway with heavy smoke trapping other occupants in their apartments and an open window at the top of this common stairway had been venting the smoke giving the appearance of fire spread to that area. Water supply was not a problem, hydrants were available and water flow requirements were not severe. The fire was extinguished with pre connected hose lines. Truck Companies were able to position near the building and multiple ground ladders were thrown to provide for fire suppression and secondary egress.

Adequate ventilation was achieved horizontally through building openings naturally and assisted with PPV. No roof operations were necessary. Utilities were controlled by Rescue Squad 28

### **Organization**

Units maintained SOP discipline with the exception of the first alarm trucks switching positions on arrival which did not complicate the incident. Divisions and Groups included Basement, (Floor) One, Side C, EMS, Safety, Staging, Vent, Rehab and Investigations. Command was assisted by the DOC and Schedulers. The Operations Chief was on the scene. Approximately 72 fire department personnel were on the scene.

### **Communications**

The incident was dispatched on 7-Alpha. Fire ground operations were conducted on 7-Charley. Additional channels were utilized by Staging and Ventilation Groups. Communications were adequate; PSCC personnel were professional, helpful and efficient.

### **Safety and Welfare**

Six occupants were treated and five required hospital transport. There were no firefighter injuries. Safety Officer was Safety 1. A PAR was performed once then discontinued due to fire control.

### **Investigation**

Investigation Division consisted of FM 55 and 59. The fire was determined to have been accidental and started on the stove by unattended cooking food in the basement apartment. Damage was estimated at \$100,000 to the building and \$45,000 to the contents.

### **Overall Analysis of Operations**

This was actually a room and contents kitchen fire complicated by an open stairway door which trapped occupants in the building. Given the complexities of the initial report and number of victims this incident was quickly and efficiently controlled.

### **Lessons Learned**

1. Companies should make every effort to take pre planned positions. Changing assignments, especially upon arrival, confuses and complicates operations and the decision process for other unit officers and Command. Officers opting to deviate must insure that their intent is clearly understood by those affected.
2. When confronted on arrival with a complicated fireground situation, Command must rapidly assign Division and Group leaders to maintain order to insure that that critical priorities be addressed appropriately.