



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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Release: Immediately

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### **(Apartment Fire Caused by Discarded Cigarette)**

At 12:05 pm today Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue was called to a reported apartment fire at the Willamette Terrace Apartments at 1709 Blankenship Road in West Linn. When firefighters from the Willamette Fire Station arrived they found heavy smoke coming from the attic eaves and vents, and flames above the patio door of a third floor apartment (#7). Crews immediately pulled hose lines up the exterior stairwell to the third floor and entered the unit to battle the fire. Ascertaining that the bulk of the fire was in the attic above apartment #7, firefighters quickly began removing portions of the unit's ceiling to locate and extinguish the fire above. The fire was extinguished in approximately 30 minutes. Karen Eubanks, Public Information Officer, states, "Quick actions by the firefighters contained the fire, minimizing damage to the building and personal items in the apartment units below."

The building in which the fire occurred contained eight units with a total of 23 tenants. The two apartment units directly below the attic fire (#7 and #8) sustained minimal fire damage, and moderate smoke and water damage. Residing in apartment #7 was a mom with two children who were not home at the time of the fire. Residing in apartment #8 was a mom with three children who evacuated before firefighters arrived when she noticed flames on the back deck of the apartment next door. The American Red Cross was called to the scene to assist the families from apartments #7 and 8. Officials hope that the remaining tenants will be able to remain in their apartment. A damage estimate is pending at this time.

Today's fire is believed to have been started by a discarded cigarette. The tenant in apartment #7 told fire officials that she discarded a cigarette in a plastic pot filled with potting soil on the back deck before going to bed last night. Burn patterns where the pot was located confirm that the fire likely smoldered overnight in the organic material, spread up the building's exterior wood siding, and eventually broke out in the attic space above.

TVF&R has responded to approximately a dozen fires in the past week caused by discarded cigarettes. Many have involved burning bark dust and shrubs. However, several fires have resulted in charred fencing, deck, and exterior siding of a home. TVF&R officials remind individuals that cigarettes should be discarded in a container with water, or at a minimum, in a metal ashtray or container placed away from combustibles.

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