



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Storm Smith, Community Liaison, 503-356-4713 (o), 503-441-9324 (PIO pager)

(Child Sparks Aloha Duplex Fire)

A fire in a bedroom of a two-story duplex forced an Aloha family of five from their home and investigators say a small boy playing with a cigarette lighter caused the blaze. Firefighters from Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue were dispatched to a report of a bed on fire in the 6800 block of SW 198th Avenue in Aloha at 9:30 am. When the first company from TVF&R Fire Station #62 arrived, they found light smoke coming from a second story window and the eaves of the building. They entered the townhouse apartment and found light smoke downstairs, but heavy smoke to the floor in the upstairs area. They searched the bedrooms and found a bed burning in a front bedroom and quickly extinguished the flames.

The couple and their three children, two boys both age four and a two-year old girl, escaped unharmed. The couple told investigators they discovered the fire in the bedroom and attempted to extinguish it before smoke and flames drove them out of the apartment. They indicated the boys had been playing together in the bedroom just prior to discovery of the fire. Fire investigators found a cigarette lighter in the boys' bedroom next to the charred bed. The apartment suffered moderate fire damage to the bedroom with extensive smoke damage throughout the second floor and minor water damage to the first floor. Damage estimate is placed at \$10,000.

The Oregon Trail Chapter of the American Red Cross dispatched a disaster assistance team to aid the family which had no renters insurance. Firefighters from TVF&R and Hillsboro Fire and Rescue responded to the incident and Washington County Sheriff's Deputies assisted with the investigation. Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue has these fire safety tips for families with small children:

1. Create a fire escape plan and practice it with your family. Don't forget to include a meeting place outside.
2. Place additional smoke alarms in your children's bedroom and check all alarms monthly to ensure they are working.
3. Emphasize that matches and lighters are tools for adults, not toys for children.
4. Keep all matches and lighters in a safe place out of reach of children.
5. Smokers should use only child-resistant lighters.
6. Give permission to all children to report to parents if another child is misusing matches or a lighter.
7. For maximum protection, choose an apartment that is protected by residential sprinkler systems. If you plan to build a home, consider installing sprinklers.