



NEWS RELEASE

Date: October 1, 2009
Release Date: Immediately
Contact: TVF&R Public Information Officer, 503-441-9324 (pager)

Smoke Alarm Spares Family from Harm during Overnight Duplex Fire

Just after 3am this morning, Mike Gende awoke to the sound of a blaring smoke alarm. Initially confused, Mr. Gende opened his bedroom door to investigate the sound and was startled by smoke. As he made his way to the kitchen, he was met by flames and quickly decided that it was too risky to stay in the home. He was also worried for his brother Dave's family who lives in the adjacent unit. He pounded on their door and evacuated the family of five, including his two nieces and nephew –ages 9, 10, and 11.

The Gendes called 9-1-1 and firefighters from nearby Tigard Fire Station 51 were first to arrive and initiate an aggressive attack on the fire, which had spread into the attic space. Flames could be seen from several areas of the roof as the fire burned intensely. At one point, the center of the roof began to sag and portions of the ceiling collapsed. Firefighters were able to continue their fire attack from inside both sides of the duplex, ultimately extinguishing the fire and sparing adjacent homes from any damage.

Though some of the contents inside the units were saved, considerable water, smoke and fire damage will prevent the Gendes from returning to their homes. Fortunately both Mike and Dave Gendes possess renters' insurance and they will be able to stay in another family home while repairs or reconstruction of the duplex occurs. It's unclear whether the duplex is a total loss, and a fire investigator remains on scene examining evidence. Initial burn patterns indicate that the fire likely started in the exterior wall of the kitchen and spread up to the shared attic space. The fire investigator will continue to examine physical evidence with the hope of determining exactly what caused the fire (see pictures below).

Though Mike Gendes was treated for smoke inhalation at the scene, there were no other injuries as a result of the fire. The single-alarm fire brought nearly twenty fire personnel to the scene.



The exterior wall adjacent the kitchen where it's believed this fire started.



Inside the kitchen, damage is extensive and the roof is completely gone.



The view from inside Mike Gende's home.

