



**NEWS RELEASE**

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A working smoke alarm likely saved the life of a Somerset woman early Sunday morning (1/31/10). The fire at 16602 Somerset Drive was reported at 1:04 A.M. Six minutes later, the first arriving TVF&R crew reported flames twenty feet high coming from the back of the home.

Neighbor Victor Risk described the terror of waking to find the home next to his engulfed in flames. His immediate concern was Jo Rail, age 64, who lives in the home alone. Once outside, he immediately began calling out for Rail. "I was never so glad to hear a person's voice in my entire life," Risk said. Rail, awakened by a smoke alarm, had managed to flee her home unharmed.

Fire crews pulled hose lines to the back of the house where the fire had already burned through the roof. An aggressive fire attack ensued even as portions of the roof structure and deck started to collapse. Approximately 20 firefighters from TVF&R and Hillsboro Fire worked to extinguish the blaze.

Firefighters entered the home to conduct a search and initiate an interior fire attack. They encountered dense smoke all the way to the floor and significant heat. These conditions were testament to the lifesaving value of Rail's smoke alarm.

The fire was controlled within 20 minutes. There were no injuries, but two cats perished in the blaze.

Damage to the home is estimated at \$175,000. Neighbors and a TVF&R chaplain are supporting Rail.

After interviewing the resident and a thorough examination of physical evidence, a TVF&R investigator has determined that the fire was caused by misuse of an artificial fire log product. The investigator has concluded that the resident placed the artificial log in the home's fireplace, closed the damper to the chimney, ignited the log and then shut the glass doors that cover the fireplace. Because the damper and the glass doors were closed, the hot gasses inside the fireplace were forced to escape into cracks in the mortar which led to a fire in the home's wall cavity.

TVF&R reminds the public to always read and follow the instructions on artificial fire log products.

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