



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **Fire Sprinklers Avert Catastrophe at Assisted Care Facility Fire, Fire Caused by Fireworks**

Fire sprinklers kept a fire in the attic of a large assisted care facility in-check on July 4<sup>th</sup>, allowing firefighters from Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue to extinguish the fire and care for more than 80 residents who had to be evacuated from the building.

“Given what we know about attic fires, there is little doubt that the sprinkler system likely prevented a catastrophe,” says TVF&R Fire Marshal Steve Forster, “and with 80 residents, many of whom need wheelchairs to get around, that fire could have been a tragedy. That sprinkler system saved the day, giving our firefighters a critical hand in stopping that fire before it became much bigger.”

“This incident highlights the great life saving work of another local agency that often gets little or no credit - the Building Department,” Forster says, “our region’s Building Officials ensure that critical life safety systems, like the fire sprinklers at Park Place, are designed properly and will work effectively. They are the unsung heroes of this incident.”

An employee at the Park Place Assisted Living Community, located at 8665 SW Hemlock Street in unincorporated Washington County, called 911 on July 4<sup>th</sup> at 10:01 p.m. reporting that the building’s roof was on fire. The first arriving fire units observed multiple fireworks detonating in the neighborhood and residents being evacuated from the building. As firefighters used ladders to access the two story building’s roof and began to work to get to the seat of the fire, it became clear that more resources were needed at the scene. A second alarm was called at 10:24 p.m. and, soon after that, the decision was made to activate TVF&R’s Incident Management Team (IMT).

“The staff at Park Place did a great job of evacuating their residents,” says TVF&R Battalion Chief Dan Griffin, “when we arrived, they had already moved all of the building’s second floor occupants to a staging area outside.”

As firefighters extinguished the fire in the building’s attic, other firefighters worked with Park Place staff to ensure that the residents of the assisted living facility were cared for. Together with the facility’s staff, the TVF&R IMT coordinated the evacuation and placement of the residents in other assisted living facilities. The process of coordinating the relocation of the eighty residents who needed medical equipment and medications was complicated but, because of the resources available on-scene, occurred smoothly. Many of the residents use wheel-chairs and require special medical treatment. A large number of ambulances and vans from Metro West Ambulance and two buses from TriMet were used to transport the residents to other facilities.

After a thorough examination of the fire scene, a Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue Investigator has determined that the most probable cause of the fire was the result of firework debris which ignited dryer lint on the roof that had accumulated below an exhaust fan.

A total of 17 fire apparatus from Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue and Portland Fire and Rescue responded to the incident. Approximately 75 fire personnel were on scene.

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