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PFA investigators: Fatal Fort Collins condo fire accidental

A Poudre Fire Authority investigation found that a fatal Oct. 21 fire in a Fort Collins condominium was accidental.

Investigators, following a time-intensive and scientific process, determined the fire started in the kitchen, where a pot of cooking oil caught fire.

One man, identified this week by the Larimer County Coroner's Office, died in the fire. He was the sole occupant of the home at the time of the fire and was found in a bedroom. One other person lived in the unit at the Cammere Condominiums Apartments, 2115 W. Plum St. PFA doesn't identify people involved in emergency incidents out of respect for their privacy.

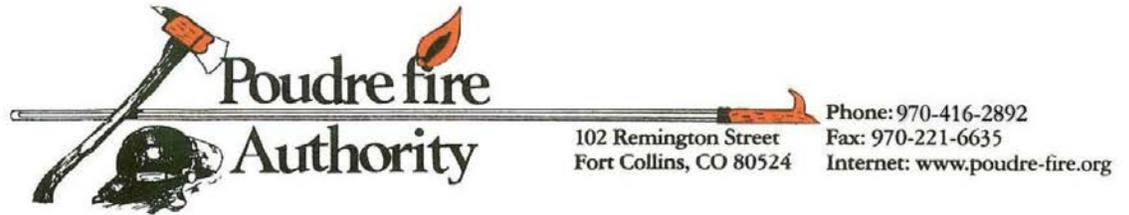
"Our hearts go out to the man's family and friends during this difficult time. A loss such as this, or any other, is unfathomable," spokeswoman Madeline Noblett said. "Tragic events such as these serve as reminders of the ways people can prepare for emergencies and live as fire-safe as possible."

While it was difficult for investigators to determine exactly what transpired early that morning, it is clear that cooking fires remain among the most common fires to which PFA firefighters respond. These fires are preventable if people are mindful of the following general safety tips from the National Fire Protection Association:

- Keep anything that can burn – think oven mitts, wooden utensils, towels or curtains – away from the stovetop.
- Check your baking, simmering, roasting or boiling food often. Use a timer, and never leave home while something is cooking. If you leave, turn off the stovetop or oven.
- If you are sleepy or have consumed alcohol, don't use the oven, stovetop or microwave (people are commonly burned when removing hot dishes from microwaves).
- If you have a grease fire, don't try to extinguish it with water. Smother the flames by sliding a lid over the pan and turning off the burner. Leave the pan covered until it completely cools.
- For an oven fire, turn the heat off and keep the door closed.
- Never put frozen food in hot oil, as it can react violently. This is particularly important to note as Thanksgiving approaches and people make plans to fry turkeys.

Crews were dispatched to the Cammire complex at 1:58 a.m. following multiple 911 calls reporting an apartment on fire. PFA

firefighters quickly fought the fire and had it under control at 2:13 a.m. There was smoke and fire damage throughout the unit.



As with any fire, PFA reminds people of these important fire-safety behaviors:

- If you smell smoke, see fire, or hear smoke alarms go off, get out and stay out. Don't attempt to go back inside to retrieve anything. Every second counts. Fire, fueled by things like modern, petroleum-based carpets, furniture, grows rapidly.
- Once outside, go to a neighbor's house or ask a bystander to call 911.
- If you are caught inside during a fire, crawl low and go. Smoke inhalation kills more people than fire does.
- People already outside a building shouldn't attempt to break a window or open doors for pets or people who may be inside. Fire-behavior research shows that introducing oxygen into a space can quickly intensify a fire, potentially making an already dangerous situation more dangerous for residents and firefighters alike.
- Check your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms often. Change the batteries annually. These devices save lives every day.

Response to this emergency was done through significant team effort among PFA firefighters, UCHealth EMS personnel and Fort Collins Police Services officers.

PFA's Customer Assistance Response Team, or CART, also responded to the scene. CART team members help people displaced by fire to navigate tragic events such as these by providing support that can include finding temporary places to stay, starting insurance claims and more.

"Our community has experienced multiple tragedies in recent weeks and days," Poudre Fire Authority Chief Tom DeMint said at the time. "These events have a ripple-effect that's wide-reaching. Keep each other close. Don't be afraid to ask for help. And know that we can get through this together."

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