Fire amidst COVID-19 Pandemic Reminds of Importance of Fire Prevention

COVID-19 and stay-at-home details are filling feeds and news channels, but we would like to remind everyone that fire prevention and home safety are still a huge part of our lives. The increase of time at home and addition of school-age children to many parents’ workdays, may make it more important than ever.

A fire broke out before dawn yesterday at a multi-family structure on the 300 block of E. Troutman Pkwy. PFA was dispatched at 4:34 a.m., and arrived four minutes later. As units approached, they saw that the street was blanketed in heavy smoke and immediately upgraded the response. Firefighters found the source of the fire was on a gable/balcony on the second floor. Residents self-evacuated and took shelter in the clubhouse. No residents were injured, but unfortunately one firefighter suffered a hand injury while raising a ladder (not a burn). There were no other structures involved. All eight units within the structure were affected by smoke, but the quick knockdown kept fire damage to the balcony area and minimized property loss. Residents were allowed back inside after the building was thoroughly ventilated and determined to be safe. The last PFA unit cleared the scene at 7:28 a.m.

A member of PFA’s Customer Assistance Response Team, or CART, was dispatched to assist the residents. He worked closely with the occupant of the most affected unit as well as with the facility and building managers. CART team members help people navigate tragic and difficult events by providing support. They can find temporary lodging, start insurance claims, answer questions, and more. They help to keep those involved well informed and aware of any available resources they may need.

Fire investigators determined the cause of the fire to be accidental. It was caused by the improper disposal of smoking materials. A cigarette was disposed of in potting soil which is largely made of combustible organic materials such as moss and bark.

A Bedtime Fire Prevention Checklist:

1. **Clear Exits.** That pile of shoes blocking the door could be a major hazard if you and your family need to quickly exit in the dark. Obstructions of any kind can also make it difficult to open the door. Be sure exits are clear and accessible.

2. **Check Your Storage Areas.** Many fires start in garages, sheds, or crawl spaces. Check areas like these to ensure flammable materials are stored properly. This can include potting soil, paint thinner, soiled rags, and cleaning supplies. Be sure they are stored in a cool and dark place away from heat sources.

3. **Close before You Doze.** Closing a door can help control a fire, contain smoke, and reduce heat. Even standard bedroom doors can delay a fire by 20 minutes. Closing bedroom and room doors before you go to sleep buys firefighters precious minutes as they attack a fire and potentially save areas of your home.