

>>firewatch

INSTITUTIONAL

Smoking with oxygen kills one
NORTH CAROLINA—An occupant of an elder-care facility died and several others suffered injuries from smoke inhalation during a fire that started when smoking materials ignited the victim's clothing while he was using medical oxygen equipment. Accounts differ as to whether the facility was a nursing home or a residential care facility.

The single-story, wood-frame building, which was 150 feet (46 meters) long and 60 feet (18 meters) wide, had brick exterior walls and an asphalt-shingled roof. The full-coverage fire detection system sent an alarm to the fire department. The building had no fire sprinklers.

The victim died as a result of a heart attack brought on by the fire. Damage to the building, valued at \$1 million, was estimated at \$250,000. Its contents sustained damages estimated at \$75,000.

MERCANTILE

Incendiary fire at department store causes \$2 million loss
WASHINGTON—Someone using an open-flame device intentionally set fire to a rack of women's clothing in a large department and grocery store before leaving the premises. Employees used portable fire extinguishers to control the blaze until the store was safely evacuated.

The one-story, steel-frame big box store covered an area of approximately 220,350 square feet (20,471 square meters) and had a steel-truss roof, concrete block walls, and a high ceiling. A central station alarm company monitored the store's fire detection system, which used beam detectors. The store also had a wet-pipe sprinkler system.

The fire in the display was set at approximately 9:00 p.m. A manager alerted to the fire went to the apparel department where he found someone using a fire extinguisher

on the blaze. He told the individual to evacuate the premises and began using fire extinguishers himself. Later, he told investigators that the fire kept flaring up after appearing to be contained, so he kept using extinguishers on it until he was sure everyone was out of the building. In all, the building occupants used four extinguishers to control the blaze.

The fire alarm activated when smoke reached the ceiling, and the alarm company alerted the fire department. Firefighters used a water/foam extinguisher to put it out. The fire was never hot enough to activate the sprinklers.

Although the fire did not spread beyond the display rack, smoke caused an estimated \$2 million in damage to the store's contents. There was no structural damage, and no one was injured. Investigators confirmed the sequence of events, but could not identify or locate the person who started the fire. ❖

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