



Burning down the house: Godfrey Fire Protection District burns vacant house for training

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January 28 2017 12:25 PM



GODFREY - A home located at **2726 West Delmar** in Godfrey was the subject of a training session for the **Godfrey Fire Protection District** on the morning of Saturday, Jan. 28.

The home, which was donated by **Rich Georgewitz** of Godfrey is a one-story residence. **Godfrey Fire Protection District Chief Erik Kambarian** said the home would be used for a series of controlled burns to train some of the newest firefighters as well as a refresher course for some of the veterans.

Previous to the burning, all furniture and carpeting was removed from the home. In its stead were bales of straw and piles of pallets. Kambarian said this was for both safety and environmental concerns.

"We can't have carpet or couches in here when we do this," he said. "Some of the petroleum-based products in them can be hazardous. We use wooden pallets and straw, because they are more predictable. We know what they're going to do. Common household items like mattresses and couches are unpredictable."



Location was also a major factor in choosing a location. This home was surrounded by a now-barren field, with the closest structures being several yards away.

"We could not have asked for a better place to do this," Kambarian said.

Firefighters hoped to get as many as half a dozen burns from it before allowing the structure to be fully involved from the basement upwards. They started with a controlled burn from the front of the house facing West Delmar.

Paperwork was also a major part of the process. Firefighters conducting the training exercises joked there was more hours of paperwork to allow the burning than there was

time to do it. In a release from the Godfrey Fire Protection District sent to Riverbender.com prior to the burning, Kambarian said all applicable burn permits, including a burn permit from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency were acquired.

Due to limited parking and the dangerous nature of live-fire training, the event was not open to the general public.

The Godfrey Fire Protection District does these very sparingly, due to the limited access to vacant properties in safe areas. The training from this exercise will be extremely beneficial to the Godfrey Fire Protection District, especially some of the newer firefighters.

"There is no substitute for live fire training in a residential structure," Kambarian said in the release. "This is an exceptional opportunity for our firefighters to focus on fire behavior and dynamics in a controlled training environment."

