

# Man takes six-year-old to safety after lightning strikes house, starts fire

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**ALTON** - A family in the 200 Block of Madison Ave awoke to the shrill sound of smoke detectors wailing in the early morning hours of March 1, 2017.

**Alton Fire Chief Bernie Sebold** said firefighters were called to the scene just after 4:15 a.m. Wednesday. Upon their arrival, they found the back portion of a rental property engulfed in flames. Sebold said a man awoke to the sound of working smoke detectors and the smell of smoke, but could not find the fire until he looked at the home from the outside. After seeing the flames, the man rushed into the home and rescued a six-year-old occupant, Sebold said.

"When we arrived, we found fire coming from the roof of a one-story addition on the back of the house," Sebold said.

The location of the fire, in a "dead space" between the ceiling and the roof, was unusual, Sebold said. Because of that starting point, firefighters have determined the fire was

started by lightning from strong storms lasting from late Tuesday night until the early hours of Wednesday morning. That evidence was fortified by damage to the electrical system, Sebold said.

Firefighters had extinguished the blaze within 20 minutes of arrival on the scene, but doing overhaul and extinguishing "hidden fires" took firefighters an additional two hours of work. Sebold said firefighters were away from the scene by 6:50 a.m.

No injuries were reported from that fire, but Sebold said as much as \$15,000 in damages were done to the property. A female occupant was at work during the time of the fire, Sebold said.