

AFD's quick response saves one home, after extinguishing another heavy fire next door

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - Quick early morning response from the Alton Fire Department saved a home within 10 feet of a structure completely engulfed in a raging fire in the 1100 block of Garden Street in Alton today.

The fire call came out at about 6 a.m. to Alton Fire Department. Alton Police Department was also on the scene and Alton Fire Chief Bernie Sebold said the home that caught fire at 1106 Garden St. was unoccupied and the owner wasn't present. Foul play has not been ruled out, so the fire is still under investigation, Sebold said. The saved home was 10 feet away from the burning structure on Garden Street. It suffered no damage because of the quick and efficient work of the Alton Fire Department.

With the home having no occupants when the call came in and occurring at the time of morning when many were not awake, the fire was going strong by the time firemen arrived. Sebold said the fire had to have been unnoticed for "a fairly significant time" and had a "pretty good head start" on his department's arrival.

"When our crews arrived on the scene there was a heavy volume of fire on the second floor," Sebold said. "It was already vented out the south-side window. There was fire coming from the second floor down to the first. They entered in through the left-hand side of the unit. It has the appearance of being a duplex, but it is actually a single-family house.

"The fire crews went in very quickly after their entry inside with a house line. The on-duty battalion chief Tom House noticed fire was now coming out of the roof and no longer safe to be in there. He withdrew them from the inside and the attack of the fire for the rest of the time became an exterior attack."

Sebold said once his fire department went on the defensive with the burning house, nearby 1102 Garden St. became their main concern.

"Once we go on the defensive, our goal is to protect the exposures, which we did," he said. "There isn't even a scorch mark on the other side of the neighboring house. We notified Ameren and have already removed service to the pole so it was safe for us to operate. Building and zoning have also been notified. The house is a total loss."

Sebold said his department does believe the fire origin was on the second floor of the structure.

"After our investigation on scene, we have found no normal cause of the fire being accidental, so we are working with Alton Police Department, investigating the fire. They will be working on interviewing people in the neighborhood."