

Deputy Chief Issues Details Of Heavy St. Paul Episcopal Church Fire, Parish Members Determined To Recover

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - Alton Deputy Fire Chief Brad Sweetman detailed more of the outcome of Tuesday's St. Paul Episcopal Church fire in an interview today.

Sweetman said there was smoke damage throughout the church from the serious fire.

The fire began in the east wing of the church which is the business office area," he said.

"The origin of the fire remains undetermined at this time and is under investigation," Deputy Chief Sweetman said. "The state fire marshal was called in. We call the state fire marshal in on any major loss type of fire, especially a church. The east wing of the church suffered major fire damage."

Sweetman said the firefighters had to get in and figure out the layout of the building during the battle with the blaze.

"All the firefighters did a great job and worked together well," Sweetman said. "Just being able to get in and get those lines between the involved area and sanctuary saved that sanctuary."

The Episcopal Parish of Alton is an historic 179 year-old parish located north of the St. Louis metropolitan area along the Mississippi River in Illinois.

The deputy chief said he only remembered one other serious church fire he had battled and that was Calvary Baptist Church in the early morning of October 6, 2011. The church suffered almost \$2 million in damage. A man was sentenced in that case arson charge.

St. Paul Episcopal Church issued this statement on Facebook: "The fire at St Paul's today was mostly contained in the part of the parish building containing the offices, where the fire was fierce. As you can see, the outside of the building is OK. The roof also seems to be alright. Parts of the floor and rafters of the second story collapsed into the first floor.

"Church Insurance called the company that will clean everything up, and they arrived in short order to secure the windows knocked out during the fire. The fire department brought in fans to blow smoke out of the nave. At least seven fire companies arrived to fight the fire! Alton Police Department was also extremely helpful to all of us. We are profoundly thankful for their dedication and assistance!

"Thank you for your prayers and good wishes. St. Paul's has weathered many storms during its 184-year history and come back stronger with God's help. We will do so again!"

In addition to the Alton Fire Department, Godfrey, East Alton, Blackjack, MO., Fire Protection District, and Florissant Valley, MO., Fire Protection District personnel fought the fire. Wood River Fire Department managed Alton's Station 1, and Edwardsville manned Station 2. Lifestar and Alton Memorial Ambulance were also at the scene with Alton Police.

"All the firefighters did a great job and worked together well," Sweetman said. "Just being able to get in and get hose lines between the involved area and sanctuary saved that sanctuary."

"We also called two off-duty shifts of our personnel back to duty because of the fire," he added.



[Chris Rhodes also contributed to this story.](#)