

Edwardsville Fire Chief Emphasizes Importance of Escape Routes After Weekend House Blaze

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EDWARDSVILLE – A weekend house fire in which two people and three pets escaped without serious injuries is being hailed as evidence of the importance of adequate exits and window egress.

A two-story home that had been converted into two apartments at 1318 Eberhart Avenue caught fire late afternoon on Saturday, April 8. The Edwardsville Fire Department was notified of the blaze just before 5 p.m., Fire Chief James Whiteford said. When firefighters arrived, a fire that is believed to have started on the back porch had made its way to the second floor.

The occupants of both the first- and second-floor apartments were in the building at the time of the fire. The fire had blocked the stairway exit for the second-floor resident, who fled with her three dogs through a window and onto the roof, Whiteford said. Prior to the Fire Department's arrival, a neighbor used a ladder to begin taking the dogs to safety; their owner refused to leave the roof until the dogs were safe. Firefighters were then able to bring the woman safely off the roof.

"This fire really highlights the importance of having two ways to exit a building," Whiteford said. "There is little doubt that in this case the second-floor window prevented serious injury or death." The first-floor resident also was blocked by the fire from exiting through the back of the home but was able to escape through a front door, Whiteford said. Both occupants were treated on scene for smoke inhalation. No firefighters were injured during the incident. Having properly sized egress windows in sleeping areas is a requirement of the International Fire Code, which is followed and enforced by the City of Edwardsville and the State of Illinois.

The issue of egress took on added importance after a 2012 apartment fire that led to the deaths of two college students in Edwardsville. It was after that fire that the City initiated its mandatory Rental Registration and Inspection Program, which prioritizes life safety requirements such as egress, properly installed and operating smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

You can learn about the program and access life safety resources here:

cityofedwardsville.com/266/Rental-RegistrationInspection

The cause of the fire on Eberhart Avenue is still under investigation, but Whiteford said discarded smoking materials may have been a factor. The Edwardsville Fire Department was assisted by the Collinsville Fire Department, Glen Carbon Fire Protection District, Wood River Fire Department and Highland Ambulance Service.