

Quick firefighting saves apartments in Alton complex

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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The Alton Fire Department continually trains on firefighting techniques and approach.

On Thursday, the elaborate training of the firefighters paid dividends as they quickly extinguished what could have been a disaster at the Pine Meadow Court apartment complex. The apartments are in the 1100 block of Washington Avenue in Alton.

Alton Police were also on the scene assisting with residents and directing traffic and the East Alton Fire Department also responded to assist the Alton firefighters.

“All chiefs take pride in their men and what they do,” Alton Fire Chief Bernie Sebold said. “I train and train with the guys to make sure we have those positive results. Their training and fire attack is the reason we are successful in limiting the loss in fires like this. I am very proud of my men and they do a very good job.”

Sebold said fortunately the firefighters were able to limit damage.

“We limited damage from the fire itself to the kitchen in the one apartment,” he said. “The family room and dining room had slight heat damage and smoke damage and the bedrooms had smoke damage. The four bedrooms in the wing and all the units did have some smoke get into, but the fire damage did not extend past the kitchen of origin.”

The Alton Fire Chief said 9-11 was called in quick fashion. He said the incident started from leaving a pot of grease on the stove.

“The person fell asleep and the fire grew beyond his means of putting it out,” Sebold said. “Fortunately we got there quickly and were able to put the fire out. Just in that wing alone of the building there were four apartments. In just a couple more minutes that fire would have been in the living room and dining room and worked toward the other bedrooms. A breached door would have affected those other apartments because there is a common stairwell.”

There are 12 to 14 other apartments nearby that could have been affected without the quick firefighting at the scene, the chief said.

“Everybody got out,” he said. “We did have one person inside that was affected slightly by the smoke, but he was not transported to the hospital. He refused treatment at the scene and is fine. The occupants are a 32-year-old woman and her four children ranging in age from four months to 12 years. They are displaced.”

The Alton Fire Department has a cooperative agreement worked out with the Comfort Inn in Alton if rooms are available in these types of situations and the chief handed them a voucher for a room for tonight. Sebold also contacted the American Red Cross and Salvation Army to assist.

“The tenants from the other apartments in the building were displaced because of the smoke damage and will be relocated to other apartments in the complex, Sebold said. He added the people from the other apartments will not be dislocated long, just until the stairwell is cleaned up.

As far as the apartment where the fire started, the chief estimated it could take three weeks to a month for them to be able to come back, depending on how fast insurance processes the claim.

