



Menlo Park Fire Protection District

Fire Investigation Report

By: Menlo Park Fire Protection District
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1 **SYNOPSIS:**
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3 On June 3, 2024, a fire occurred at 2700 Middlefield Road in Redwood City, located in the
4 unincorporated area of San Mateo County. The fire was confined to Building B, a six-story, 104-unit
5 multi-family residential structure that was under construction at the time.

6 There were no reported injuries associated with this incident. Following a thorough investigation, the
7 cause of the fire was classified as undetermined. No further follow-up will be conducted by Menlo
8 Park Fire Protection District unless new information is discovered requiring follow-up.

9 This synopsis provides a concise summary of the incident for reporting and documentation purposes.
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12 **PROPERTY/SCENE DESCRIPTION:**
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14 2700 Middlefield Rd, known as Middlefield Junction, is a San Mateo County owned property that
15 houses a medical facility, and was actively constructing two multi-family residential structures.
16 Building A is a 5-story wood frame building. First floor is light commercial and floors 2-5 is wood
17 frame multi-family residential. Building B was a 6-story, first floor concrete podium parking garage,
18 with floors 2-6 wood frame multi-family residential. Both buildings were actively in the same
19 construction phase to be completed together. These buildings were located behind the 3-story
20 medical facility and were funded to provide low-income housing within San Mateo County.
21

22
23 **INVESTIGATION:**
24

25 The San Mateo County Fire Investigation Task Force page was requested by PR1 Jon Johnston to
26 request additional assistance for performing a cause and origin investigation.

27 Rights of entry were first obtained through exigent circumstances. After the fire was extinguished,
28 written consent to enter form was signed by site Superintendent Devin Blackwood.

29 The purpose was to conduct an examination of the incident scene and collect all of the available data
30 and documents from the incident scene. This was performed through scene documentation, through
31 photography, videography, evidence recognition, documentation, and preservation; witness
32 interviews; review and analysis of the investigation of others; and identification and collection of data
33 from other appropriate sources.

34 Investigations includes Supplemental reports for:

35 Neighborhood Assessment Team

36 Photo/Video/Audio

37 Witness Interviews

38 Supporting Documentation

39 Ignition and fuel source testing for area of origin



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2 The fuel package, possibly unfaced wrapped insulation which was located in the northwest corner of
3 room 523 which was identified as the room of fire origin, and also located near a water main
4 penetration within the wall from the floor below according to construction plans. Combustible wood
5 framing was exposed throughout most of the structure along with storage of combustible construction
6 materials. The structure did have windows installed, no doors, and was still open to free ventilation
7 with open windows. The structure was not weather tight at the time of the fire. The structure was
8 able to achieve total burn with fire spread throughout the structure with majority complete combustion
9 of combustible materials, specifically within the area of origin.

10 A fire suppression system was in the process of being installed and was not active at the time of the
11 fire. A firefighter temporary standpipe was installed and was dry with an accessible Fire Department
12 Connection. Varied reports of housekeeping of the construction site could be a contributing factor to
13 rapid fire spread.

14 Prior to the fire, very few hot work permits were documented with the Superintendent. After the fire
15 on June 3, many hot work permits were documented with the Superintendent.

16 17 18 **Competent ignition sources identified and considered:**

19
20 The following items were field tested by this fire investigation team to help determine possible fire
21 cause.
22

| | SOURCE | | | |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| FUEL | CIGARETTE | TORCHING (SWEATING PIPE) | Chopsaw Metal Sparks | Open flame |
| Plastic wrapped INSULATION | Very little melting, no sustained ignition | Sustained ignition of plastic to fire spread | No ignition | Sustained fire and spread |
| SAW DUST | No ignition | Not tested | No ignition | Not tested |
| CONSTRUCTION FRAMING WOOD MATERIALS | Not tested | Sustained ignition of wood materials to fire spread | No ignition | Not tested |

23
24 The following items were not in the room and were not found in the debris pile and therefore were
25 eliminated as competent ignition sources for this fire. Electrical, batteries, cooking appliances.
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1 **First fuel ignited:**
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3 According to interviews one of the first fuels ignited was the plastic wrapping around unfaced
4 packaged R-11 or R-19 insulation, but cannot be verified.
5
6

7 **Event:**
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9 0851 text - From SMC Building inspector Farshid arrives 2700 Middlefield Rd to Luis Serrano
10 Approximately 0900 Luis and Farshid began inspections of the 4th, 5th, and 6th floors of Building B.
11 Includes Room 521 and 523.
12 Approximately 0900 third party inspectors Henselmann and Joaquin began.
13 Approximately 0915 - 0930. Nearby neighbor Alvaro Cruz hears yelling "It's sparking"
14 Approximately 0930 - Inspectors Henselmann and Joaquin begin inspections on 5th floor by stairwell
15 four (Unit 501)
16 Approximately 0939 - Ruben Gandara states this is the first smell of smoke. It goes unnoticed for 10
17 minutes until he calls Cesar Garcia.
18 Approximately 0940 - SMC Building inspection concludes and permit card is signed inside of the job
19 site trailer. No sign of fire at this time.
20 Approximately 0945 - Kim Martin leaves for Costco to get paper towels.
21 Approximately 0945 - 1000 SMC Building Inspector Farshid leaves the construction site.
22 0949 - Phone call between Ruben Gandara and Cesar Garcia about the smell of smoke. Ruben sees
23 people exiting the south side of the building.
24 Approximately 0950 - Jamal has a conversation with Chuck (Drywall foreman) on manlift, where
25 Chuck asks Jamal if he smells smoke.
26 0957 - Daniel (electrician foreman) looks at the time on his phone because he sees two of his guys
27 taking a break. A few minutes later he hears someone yell "Fire"
28 Approximately 5 minutes before the confirmed fire, Hernaldo Cruz and Brando Alvarez see Sashko
29 walk by units 524 and 525 and they smell the scent of candles. Shortly thereafter, they see smoke
30 coming from the hallway.
31 1011 - Joaquin calls Luis Serrano and says there is a fire (Call lasts 13 seconds)
32 1011 - Luis calls 911, runs out of the trailer and blasts air horns 3 times. (4 minutes call)
33 1011 - Kim arrives from Costco, exits car and hears Intercom, see Luis running and blasting horn
34 1012 Initial notification to PSC. CAD incident created.
35 1014 Full assignment dispatched: E3 E5 E9 T9 BC3
36 1017 - Luis Serrano calls Devin Blackwood
37 1018 - BC3 balances to a structure fire assignment: E6 E4(RIC) BC1 M22 SQ409
38 1019 - First fire engine E3 arrives on scene
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STATEMENTS:

See supplemental witness statement and interview reports.

INJURIES:

No injuries noted at this time from public or firefighting personnel.
Smoke inhalation reports were filed by numerous San Mateo County Sheriff officers and smoke irritation noted from local residents. (See San Mateo County Sheriff's report for further information.)

ITEMS OF INTEREST:

Soldered copper plumbing pipe found in the area of origin debris.
Deeply charred insulation found in the room of origin debris.
No remains of power tools found in the room of origin debris.
No remains of hot tools, torches, hot plates, cooking devices or smoking material found in the room of origin debris.
Dispensed fire extinguishers in the area of origin and in the hallway to room of origin debris.
Hot works permits documentation.

CONCLUSION:

The fire that occurred on June 3, 2024, at 2700 Middlefield Road in Redwood City, within the unincorporated area of San Mateo County, was investigated thoroughly. The area of fire origin was identified as Room 523 in Building B, a six-story, 104-unit multi-family residential structure under construction.
The first fuel ignited was most likely the plastic wrapping around unfaced packaged R-11 or R-19 insulation. While the competent ignition source could not be definitively identified, the possibility of an open flame device could not be ruled out. However, the specific ignition event remains undetermined. As a result, the classification of the fire is determined to be undetermined. There were no injuries associated with the incident, and no further follow-up is required.



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|---|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | ASSISTING AGENCIES: |
| 2 | |
| 3 | Woodside Fire Protection District |
| 4 | Redwood City/San Carlos Fire Department |
| 5 | San Bruno Fire Department |
| 6 | San Mateo Consolidated Fire Department |
| 7 | North County Fire Department |
| 8 | Santa Clara County Fire Department |
| 9 | Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) |