



Ocean County Fire Marshal's Office (NJ)

INCIDENT REPORT

Official Law Enforcement Report - Unauthorized Dissemination is Prohibited

Incident Type: Fire / Undetermined

Agency Incident ID: 24-019

BATS ID: 1502850

Investigation Title: 24-019



Incident Date/Time/Location

Status

Investigation Closed

Jurisdiction

Primary

Start Date/Time

1/28/2024 20:39 Sunday

Address

174 Sterling Ct Apartment / Room Number: A

City/State/Zip

Lakewood, NJ 08701

County

Ocean County

Investigator Information

Name

Christopher Ventrice

Phone

732-278-5826

Email

cventrice@co.ocean.nj.us

Title

Deputy Fire Marshal

Property Use or Target Information

Type

Residential

Subtype

1 (Single Family) or 2 Family Dwelling

Status

Occupied And Operating



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Scene Details

Miscellaneous Information

Sky Conditions

Overcast

Precipitation

Rain

Temperature

39F

Humidity

100%

Latitude

40.044872

Longitude

-74.186578



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Person/Organization Information

Name

EVANS, JEFFREY

DOB

10/19/1953

Sex

M

Juvenile

Yes

Relationship(s)

Owner

Race

Black

Ethnicity

Unknown

Age at time of Incident

70

Hair Color

Black



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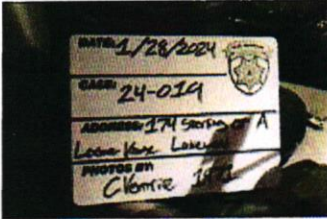
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Attachments

Filename	Description	Date
AV3A0002.JPG		1/28/2024
		
AV3A0008.JPG		1/28/2024
		
AV3A0059.JPG		1/28/2024
		
AV3A0071.JPG		1/28/2024
		



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Narrative(s)

Title

Origin and Cause Report

Author

Christopher Ventrice

7322785826

cventrice@co.ocean.nj.us

Description

Ocean County Fire Marshal's Office Case# 24-019

Synopsis:

On Sunday, January 28th, 2024, at approximately 20:39 hours, Lakewood Fire Department Engine 5 and Ladder 5 were dispatched to 174 Sterling Ct in the Leisure Village section of Lakewood for the report of a fire in the wall. Upon arrival, Engine 5 Lieutenant S. Seiffert observed smoke pushing out from under the siding in the A/D corner. Crews opened up the walls to find and extinguish a small fire burning inside the wall. Chief 1, J. Yahr, arrived on scene, taking command, and requesting the Ocean County Fire Marshal's Office for an origin and cause investigation.

Action Taken:

On Sunday, January 28th, 2024, at approximately 20:47 hours, the Ocean County Fire Marshal's Office was requested for an origin and cause investigation. At approximately 21:09, hours, I, Deputy Fire Marshal Christopher Ventrice, arrived on scene, meeting with Chief 1, where he relayed all known information. I then began interviews, systematic photographs, and a scene examination.

The Ocean County Fire Marshal's Office cleared the scene at approximately 22:28 hours. All tools, equipment, and personal protective gear was decontaminated upon completion of the investigation.

Scene Description:

174 Sterling Court is a single story duplex residence of type 5, ordinary construction, consisting of 2 units, A and B. The front of the structure faces North West.

The exterior of the structure is sheathed in a mix of brick and aluminum siding; the roof is sheathed in asphalt shingles.

The interior of the structure is sheathed in drywall, the floors are a mixture of wood and carpet.

The electric service enters the structure from the A, front, driveway side. The electric panel is in the kitchen, on the front exterior wall, inside the pantry, with no breakers tripped; the panel is a GE Load Center with an unidentified amperage.

The utilities, heat and hot water, are electric, and uninvolved in the fire, all located in the laundry room in the center of the residence.

Scene Examination:

The fire scene examination was conducted using the systematic approach which is known as the scientific method as discussed in the 2021 Edition of NFPA 921: "Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations" and the



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2022 Edition of NFPA 1033: "Professional Qualifications for Fire Investigator". The seven steps to the scientific method are; recognize the need, define the problem, collect data, analyze the data, develop hypotheses, test the hypotheses and select a final hypothesis.

Arriving on location at 174 A Sterling Ct, no damage is noted from the rear of the residence, accessed from Buckingham Drive. Proceeding to the front of the structure, the siding and sheathing is removed exposing the wall studs on the lower right corner of the A side, in the A/D (west facing) corner, under the window; charring on wall studs is observed in this area, no other damage is noted to the exterior of the structure. Progressing to the interior of the structure, a strong smell of smoke is noted throughout the residence, with minor smoke staining present. Moving to the north west bedroom on the D side of the residence, smoke staining is present inside the room. The drywall has been removed under the window on the A side wall exposing the wall studs; at the base of this area is the electric baseboard radiator, no damage is noted to the same. Observing the studs, heavy termite damage is noted to a significant amount of the wood; charring is present on the western half of the studs, with burn patterns indicating burning from the exterior side inward. On this wall is also a metal outlet box containing a single gang outlet, removing the faceplate, no fire damage or electrical activity is noted. An electrical wire coming out of this box continues west, through the studs, moving further into the wall beyond sight. Some of the wire exhibits minor exterior damage on the insulation from flame impingement but no unintended electrical activity is noted. Moving to the exterior of the window and delayering the area, charring and burning is heaviest in the bottom right corner, extending up the studs and terminating at the bottom of the window sill. Burns on the interior of the aluminum siding match the stud burn patterns, with the heaviest areas at the bottom, progressing up towards the window sill; the exterior or the siding only shows minor heat damage radiating through the metal. The heaviest of burning is between the two bottom boards against the concrete foundation, in the corner of this area, against the brick wall. No sources of ignition are identified inside the wall in this area. The homeowner, Jeffrey Evans (d.o.b. 10/19/1953), stated that his wife does smoke but she only smokes in the rear of the residence, outside. Delayering the mulch at the base of the area of origin, no signs of burning or charring are noted. The ground was wet from the rain, and no discarded smoking materials were found on the A or D side of the structure.

Conclusion/Origin and Cause:

At this time, the fire investigation is concluded. Through examination of physical evidence, including burn patterns, damage to the structure, and witness statements, I, DFM Christopher Ventrice, determined the Area of Origin to be in the North West corner of the structure, ground level on the A side, inside the wall in the lower right corner of the window (looking from the outside). The cause of the fires ignition is undetermined, as an ignition source could not be identified.

This opinion shall remain the same pending further physical or scientific evidence presented to this investigator which would alter the same.

The Ocean County Fire Marshal's Office cleared the fire scene at approximately 0806 hours, turning the scene back over to the homeowner.

End of Report.



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Title

Interview - J. Evans

Author

Christopher Ventrice

7322785826

cventrice@co.ocean.nj.us

Description

Jeffrey Evans, 174 Sterling Ct #A, Lakewood, [REDACTED] d.o.b. 10/19/1953, 1/28/24, Apprx. 2120 hours

Jeffrey stated to me that his wife (Toni Evans d.o.b. 1/21/1954) alerted him to the smell of smoke in the house. Upon investigating, no source was found so he went back to watching tv. Approximately an hour later, his granddaughter (Khadijah Davis d.o.b. 9/13/94) arrived at the house and observed smoke in her bedroom. Jeffrey stated that he called 911 and evacuated. He stated that the house had not experienced any electrical problems, and that his wife Toni only smokes on the other side of the house, outside.



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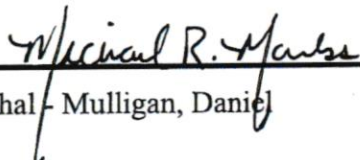
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Deputy Fire Marshal - Ventrice, Christopher

2/28/24
Date

FOR D.P.M.  #1970

Chief Fire Marshal - Mulligan, Daniel

02/05/2024
Date