



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 - 072

BATS ID: 1514082

Incident Date/Time/Location

Status

Investigation Open

Jurisdiction

Primary

Start Date/Time

5/2/2024 15:14 Thursday

Address - Unit A

403 Picardy Ct

City/State/Zip

Lakewood, NJ 08701

County

Ocean County

Additional Directions

Unit A

Investigator Information

Name

Jordan W Lavundi

Phone

732-370-7360

Email

jlavundi@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

Area of Origin/Device Placement

Area of Origin

Other

Area of Origin Subtype

Outside area, other

Fire Descriptors

Miscellaneous Information

Sky Conditions

Clear

Precipitation

None

Wind Speed/Direction

19 MPH / W

Temperature

84F

Humidity

35%

Latitude

40.037803

Longitude

-74.187892



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Person/Organization Information

Name

COWDRICK, DENYSE

DOB

7/26/1957

Sex

F

Juvenile

No

Relationship(s)

Discovering Party, Interviewed Party, Occupant, Owner, Resident

Race

Ethnicity

Age at time of Incident

66

Notes

403 A Co-Owner



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Name

COWDRICK, ARTHUR

DOB

12/9/1955

Sex

M

Juvenile

No

Relationship(s)

Interviewed Party, Occupant, Owner, Resident

Race**Ethnicity****Age at time of Incident**

68

Notes

403 A Co-Owner



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Attachments

Filename	Description	Date
006A0193.JPG	Roadside Exterior Overall	5/2/2024
		
006A0375.JPG	Lakeside Exterior - Overall	5/2/2024
		
006A0372.JPG	Fire Area	5/2/2024
		



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Narrative(s)

Title

SYNOPSIS

Author

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Description

Case # 24 - 072

Synopsis:

On Thursday, May 2nd, 2024 at approximately 15:14 hours The Lakewood Fire Department was dispatched and responded to 403 Picardy Court in the Leisure Village East gated community in Lakewood for a reported structure fire. The incident was reported via 911 call placed by a neighbor from 402 A Picardy Ct, Laura Monte [REDACTED]. The weather at the time of the fire was clear sky, 35 % humidity, 84oF, with a west wind at between 10 and 19 mph [<https://tinyurl.com/uh9755sf>, Mesowest.utah.edu, Station ID: N129-Lakewood].

Upon arrival, Engine 5's Officer – Captain Todd Stark observed a heavy smoke condition in the area. No visible flame observed from the front or roadside entrance to the structure. Engine 5 personnel made entry into Unit A from the roadside (north west facing entrance) with an 1.75" hose line. Through the first room, Capt. Stark observed a heavy smoke condition. Upon advancing to the next room, Capt. Stark now observed flame overhead. Lakewood Fire Chief John Yahr – Chief 01 arrived and assumed incident command. He upgraded the call to working fire assignment. Both units of the duplex, A and B, were now fire involved.

In addition to Engine 5, apparatus on scene included Ladder 5, 4 additional engines, 2 trucks and a Rapid Intervention Team. 2 water supplies were established. One evacuated occupant from unit 403 B was transported to the municipal building for a temporary shelter, but there were no reported injuries. Lakewood Building Department responded and "red-tagged" the structure uninhabitable.

The Ocean County Fire Marshal's Office was requested at approximately 15:23 hours.



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ACTION TAKEN

Author
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Description

Action Taken:

Deputy Fire Marshal's Jordan Lavundi – 1972 and Brian Mount – 1943 responded and arrived at approximately 15:45 hours. Upon arrival, DFM Lavundi checked in with command and was briefed about the incident and the ongoing fire suppression actions. DFM Lavundi collected responding Police: J. Burkhardt's (badge # 384) case number: 24-044962 and a brief statement of his observation upon arrival. Ofc. Burkhardt initially observed heavy smoke but no flame visible from the front (roadside) of the structure. All occupants exited the duplex and there were no injuries reported.

DFM Lavundi interviewed the occupant / owner of 403 B: Agnes "Sissy" Mayer, the owner/occupants of 403 A: Arthur and Denyse Cowdrick and the 911 call placer: Laura and Robert Monte [see statements]. DFM Mount conducted scene photography in a systematic manner. Both Deputy Fire Marshal's Lavundi and Mount conducted a thorough scene examination of the fire's probable area of origin.

All tools and equipment used were rinsed thoroughly on scene prior to being put back in service, available for future use. The Fire Marshal's Office concluded their investigation and cleared the scene at approximately 20:00 hours.



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SCENE DESCRIPTION

Author

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Description

Scene Description:

The roadside of the structure, faces north west. Occupants refer to the lake side (south) as the front. The structure is a single story duplex with an asphalt shingle roof and mixed exterior siding. The units include built-in attached garages. The electric meter(s) are located on the road side or north west and are observed uninvolved and only the 403 A unit has some observed exposure damage to the glass or front of the meter. The back of the meter and connection spades are observed undamaged by fire attack [refer to images 006A0212-0218]. The meter pan's for both units are also observed uninvolved and undamaged [refer to images 006A0194, 0222, and 0327]. The fire damage observed to the road side of both units is heavier to the A unit (right side or west). Interior of Unit A has observable heavy fire damage throughout and the roof is burned away. Interior of Unit B has some components observed intact although there are portions that sustained heavy fire damage. The heaviest of fire damage to unit B is observed toward the south west of the unit.

The lakeside exterior of Unit A appears to have sustained the heaviest fire damage. Unit A's lakeside front room is largely consumed from fire attack. In the same lakeside area, it is observed that Unit B still has the exterior entrance and windows intact, although there is observable fire damage in that area including the soffit and roof. The exterior is surrounded by a planting bed with newly installed mulch and flower pots. There is a couch frame that has observable fire damage and visible oxidation due to fire attack. The cushions are no longer present, purportedly having burned away. The couch was reportedly placed against the exterior wall of the south side of Unit A. On the left side of the enclosed porch (south side unit A) are observed flower pots including one that was later uncovered in the delayering of the debris that is melted down to the base [refer to images 006A0378-0382]. There are bag(s) of mulch observed in the planting bed. It was observed during fire suppression and overhaul actions that the mulch in different places in the beds continued to smolder throughout the scene examination until fire personnel extinguished the smoldering spots.



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SCENE EXAMINATION

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Description

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 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.

It is observed that the fire attack is consistent with originating in the south west side of the exterior of the structure, left side facing of the couch, and in the same area as the plastic melted down flower pot [refer to images 006A0372-0387]. The investigators were unable to unearth or observe any discarded smoking material. It had been reported by one of the occupants, Denyse, that earlier in the day she "took two cigarettes she found on the rock by the couch, squeezed them to be sure they were out and then put them into a/the flower pot" [see statement]. It had been reported by Arthur that there is no electric at the exterior in use at the time of the fire and no electric is observed. There are solar exterior lights observed and reported [see statement]. Unknown the count. One solar light is observed broken just outside the immediate debris field.

The investigators entered the enclosed porch or sunroom on the south side and investigated the outlet box observed facing south on the north wall of the south room. It is observed attacked by fire however due to the area around including the framing and insulation still intact and the sheetrock observed next to and across from the receptacle still present albeit smoke or burn damaged, it is eliminated as the probable cause [refer to images 006A0388-0392].

Based on the 911 call placer's statement, Robert: He had just been outside facing the fire area a few moments prior to observing the couch on fire from inside his home [see statement]. It is possible the fire begins on the left side of the couch, in near or at a/the plastic flower pot and advances to the couch. Upon which time the call placer Robert Monte observes the couch on fire extending to the south side exterior of the structure.



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CONCLUSION

Author

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Description

Conclusion:

At this time the fire is classified Undetermined. The area of origin is in near or at the landscape bed on the south side, exterior, of 403 A Picardy Court. The possible improper discarding of smoking material, and the exterior solar lights cannot be eliminated as a cause.

This opinion shall remain until such time as evidence, either physical or scientific is provided that would alter this conclusion.



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WITNESS STATEMENT 1 - Neighbor

Author

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Description

Witness Statements:

[1] Agnes "Sissy" Mayer - Occupant of duplex neighbor. 403 B Picardy Ct. LWD 08701 [REDACTED]

DOB: 10/04/1933.

Statement taken by: J. Lavundi - 1972, @ incident scene, ~1600 hours, Thurs. 5/2

"Peach" the neighbor entered her place and said: "we gotta get you out". Agnes states she is sitting in the recliner, in the front living room. Smoke followed Peach in, came from exterior. She is unsure the insurance....she states she "pays the bill". The house is in a trust. Agnes is a non-smoker. She states the last time she was outside is around 1130-12. She did not observe anything unusual.

Son, Greg Mayer: [REDACTED]

End Statement



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WITNESS STATEMENT 2 - Denyse Cowdrick

Author

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Description

[2] Denyse Cowdrick - Occupant / Homeowner. 403 A Picardy Ct. LWD 08701. (b)(6)

DOB: 07/26/1957.

Statement taken by: J. Lavundi - 1972, @ incident scene, ~1640 hrs., Thurs. 5/2

Owned approximately 8-9 years. Geico insurance. Denyse aka Peach. Denise and Arthur (husband) smoke. Denise was watching TV. Had lunch approximately 12 noon. She believes her husband was sleeping when she noticed the fire, unsure. She states she was in the living room. Earlier she had been outside: front and back. She had taken the dog for a walk. Denyse states she does not remember having a cigarette outside. She states she very rarely smokes out back (lakeside). They usually smoke in the garage.

She states the last time she went outside was to take the dog out. Unsure the time. It was after lunch. Approximately 1 hour before the fire, but cannot confirm. She states she went out front (lakeside) and observes 2 cigarettes "already put out" on rocks in front of bench. She states she picked up the cigarettes and squeezed the burned ends. She states she did not notice whether they were hot or not. Denyse states she then discarded them into a flower bowl, left of the bench. She states they will be going to daughter Joanna Crerand's (b)(6)

End Statement



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WITNESS STATEMENT 3 - Arthur Cowdrick

Author

Jordan Lavundi

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Description



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[3] Arthur Cowdrick - Occupant / homeowner. 403 A Picardy Ct. LWD 08701. [REDACTED]

DOB: 12/09/1955.

Statement taken by: J. Lavundi - 1972, @ incident scene, ~1705 hrs., Thurs. 5/2

Arthur states he heard "Peach" yell: FIRE. He came out of the bedroom and observed fire (visible flame) out front [lakeside]. Arthur states he went out the garage, stopped before shutting off the electric. He got the dog and left. Arthur states he observed flame and smoke exterior of the sun room. In the area of the seat / cushions. Arthur and Peach got "Sissy" (Agnes) out.

Arthur states he had just fallen asleep at approximately 1400 hrs. He states he went into the bedroom at approximately 1300. He could not fall asleep, so he went to the kitchen and grabbed a snack, then went back to the bedroom and watched TV. Arthur states he was last outside (lakeside) approximately 0730-0800 filled the bird feeder and bird bath. Does not recall anything unusual. In the sunroom, there is an Alexa and Echo plugged in. He reviewed the layout with DFM Lavundi including the exterior placement of the couch and where he observed seeing flame.

[Couch against exterior sunroom, LSF door to enter]. Arthur stated that he went out of the bedroom, then walked into sun room before going to garage. He states he observed flame outside going up the wall. He states there are solar lights, mulch, flower pots and bench w/ cushions.

{Follow Up - Scene Exam}

Arthur confirmed the location of the couch [after 1943/72 recreated]. LSF door to sunroom, against exterior porch wall. He states there is no electric at the exterior being used that he is aware of. He states only solar lights from the dollar store. Arthur states he usually extinguishes his cigarettes and put in his pocket. [He showed 1943/1972 one that he currently has in his pocket, extinguished down to the filter]. Arthur states he put cigarettes out on the slate: "He scrubs them out on the ground". But he usually does not smoke out front (lakeside).

End Statement



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WITNESS STATEMENT 4 - 911 Call Placer

Author

Jordan Lavundi

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Description

[4] Laura & Robert Monte - Neighbor / 911 CP. 402 A Picardy Ct. LWD 08701. [REDACTED]

Statement taken by: J. Lavundi - 1972, @ phone interview, ~1735 hrs., Thurs. 5/2

Laura:

Laura states she heard a pop. She is on couch in living room (side of fire inside house). She observes the bench on fire outside 403 A. She confirms that at that time flame only at couch. Smoke was moving fast and went up siding as she was calling 911.

Robert (husband):

Robert states he is sitting outside with his dog [exterior facing 403 A]. He goes inside and watches the Yankee game. After a few minutes (3-4) he hears a pop. He states he looked out the window sees smoke, grabbed a fire extinguisher. Robert states he observed heavy black smoke. He states he did not notice or observe anything when sitting outside w/ his dog.

End statement

End Report



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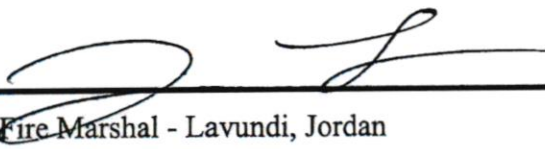
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Deputy Fire Marshal - Lavundi, Jordan

5/2/2024
Date

AFM Michael R. Marks #1970
Asst. Fire Marshal / Fire Investigation Coordinator - Marks, Michael

05/21/2024
Date