

CHARLESTON

FIRE DEPARTMENT



Citizen injured during Hanover Street Fire

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Charleston, SC (January 25, 2016): Units with the Charleston and Saint Andrews Fire Departments, Charleston Police Department, and Charleston County EMS responded on January 21st, 2016 to 35 Hanover Street for a reported structure fire. Units were dispatched at 4:11 AM and the first fire department unit arrived on scene at 4:16 AM and encountered heavy fire venting from a second story window.

The two-story building included a bar/restaurant on the first floor, known as The Palace Hotel, and two apartments on the second floor. A tenant of the rear apartment was alerted to shouting and exited his home to find fire and smoke coming from the windows of the front apartment and the occupant unable to escape due to a security door at the primary entrance. The tenant from the rear apartment, along with staff from the Palace Hotel, discharged fire extinguishers into the burning apartment and forced open the security door to assist the occupant escape the building. Charleston County EMS evaluated the occupant for smoke inhalation and transported him to a nearby hospital.

Fire personnel initiated an interior attack on the fire and brought the fire under control at 5:09 AM. Fire, heat, and smoke damaged the front apartment and the roof structure of the building. The second floor rear apartment received smoke and heat damage. The Palace Hotel sustained significant water damage.

“Firefighters arrived quickly and went to work immediately to control the emergency,” said Deputy Chief of Operations John Tippett. “Crews were faced with the challenges of search, rescue, and suppression, while trying to contain the fire to the original structure. Buildings were located less than 10’ on either side of incident, but firefighters acted quickly to contain the blaze, resulting in only minor scorching of the siding of one adjacent structure.”

Members of the Charleston Fire Department Fire Marshal’s Division responded to investigate the fire and the circumstances leading to the injured party. The fire was determined to have originated within the bedroom of the front apartment. Multiple electric space heaters were discovered in the fire debris in the bedroom, each powered by extension cords, and in close proximity to combustible items. The investigation into the specific cause or failure continues, but is believed to be related to the use or operation of the space heaters within the bedroom.

“Portable space heaters are intended to provide a short-term source of heat,” said Fire Marshal Mike Julazadeh, “and should not be utilized in place of a permanent heating source. Space heaters need to be plugged directly into an electrical outlet, maintained at least 3’ from combustibles, and turned off before leaving the area or going to bed. No working smoke alarms were discovered during the investigation into this incident – the results of this fire could have been much more catastrophic.”

The Charleston Fire Department would like to take remind citizens of these important tips:

- 1) Install and maintain working smoke alarms. Smoke alarms should be placed on every level of a residence and near sleeping areas. Smoke alarms should be tested monthly and batteries changed annually.
- 2) Portable space heaters or heating equipment should be kept 3-5 feet away from any combustibles and plugged directly into the household electrical outlet.
- 3) Remember to turn portable heaters off when leaving the room or going to bed.
- 4) Extension cords should not be a substitute for permanent wiring.
- 5) Make sure the extension cord or temporary power strip is rated for the appliance you are utilizing. Make sure all equipment and extensions cords bear the mark of an independent testing laboratory such as UL (Underwriters Laboratories).

If you have any questions on smoke alarms, cold weather or heating safety, or use of extension cords, please contact Community Educator Ryan Kunitzer at 843-958-6401 or by email at kunitzerr@charleston-sc.gov.

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