

Vacant houses help firefighters train

By Bob Sklar
staff writer

THAT CLOUD of smoke you might have seen rising above the Tulane/Grand River area during the early morning hours of Nov. 17 wasn't the result of somebody's misfortune.

Rather, Farmington Hills firefighters were sharpening their skills by extinguishing a series of set fires in two vacant houses on Tulane, south of Grand River.

The four-hour drill enabled 20 of the department's 80 part-time firefighters to practice search and rescue as well as fire suppression.

The formal involved crews of three or four firefighters attacking separate fires. And the thrust was on entering the two-story houses so the firefighters could improve their skills at ventilating a burning building and extinguishing the flames.

"We try not to fight structure fires from the outside. Now, almost everything is done from the inside in terms of extinguishing," said Lt. Peter Baldwin of the Farmington Hills Fire Department.

A MAJOR reason why structure fires are fought from within is "to put us in the position of rescuing anybody who may be inside," Baldwin said. "Rescue is the number-one priority of fire service. Fire suppression is next in importance."

The houses on Tulane were donated by Farmington Hills developer Alan Gottlieb, who is planning an apartment building for the property.

Since 1983, the Farmington Hills Fire Department has had the opportunity to slate training sessions at 5-10 donated houses a year.

"The developers or owners still have to remove the rubble and fill in the basement," Baldwin said. "So they really do it more as a community service than for financial reasons."



Fire Chief Richard Marinucci shows some of the gear a firefighter must don at the scene of a blaze.

'You don't want to be more destructive than the fire itself. You only want to do what's necessary to suppress the fire. The special burns are where you experiment. You certainly don't want to do that on a \$100,000 home.'

— Fire Lt. Peter Baldwin

This time of year is when most houses are donated. "The developers or owners often want to clear their land before the first frost," Baldwin said.

BASED ON department feedback, firefighters find the special burns "very beneficial."

"Number one, everybody can participate in the attacks," Baldwin said. "During the course of a year, our firefighters — depending on their station's activity and on whether they're able to get to the station before the truck pulls out — may see only one or two actual house fires. So these drills are real important."

Despite the relatively informal setting, the special burns still provide a "real challenge," Baldwin said. "You still have the chance to win against a natural element through your own skill and through use of equipment."

He added, "It's a training function — and we want to keep it that way. But there's a certain amount of realism. We try to teach our people. We try to tell them what they may be doing wrong, or what they should have done a little differently."

FOR EXAMPLE, Baldwin said, "You don't want to be more destructive than the fire itself. You only want to do what's necessary to suppress the fire. The special burns are where you experiment. You certainly don't want to do that on a \$100,000 home."

Although the fire department's senior officers — Baldwin, Chief Richard Marinucci, Lt. Thomas Shurtleff and Fire Marshal Stephen Hume — may attend, the special burns are overseen by the district chief and the training officer from the hosting fire station.

"We serve primarily as safety officers," Baldwin said of the senior officers.

The special burns are in addition to the department's monthly station training and monthly departmentwide training.

The department also hosts periodic sessions that focus on such specialty areas as emergency medical care, arson investigation, hazardous materials and officer training.



Despite the training nature of the special burns staged Nov. 17, actual flames gave the setting a sense of realism.



Photos by Peter Baldwin

police/fire calls

Listed below are some of the Farmington-area police and fire calls received during the past week:

MAN TICKETED

A 23-year-old Farmington Hills man was ticketed for alleged false pretense with intent to defraud in connection with an incident at Putt 'n Games, 30749 Grand River, Nov. 19.

The man allegedly used a key, without permission, to open the mechanisms of the arcade games so he could set the machines and receive free playing time, according to a Farmington Hills police report.

DAMAGE REPORTED

Several damage reports were filed with local police agencies: An estimated \$2,200 in damage occurred sometime Nov. 10-18 at a construction site at 13 Mile and Drake. Windows were broken, siding was damaged and survey stakes were removed.

Construction damage, estimated at \$440, occurred at a building site on Rockwell Nov. 18.

Key gouge damage to a car's rear passenger side occurred on Willowbrook sometime Nov. 12-13. Damage was estimated at \$300.

A portion of fence was cut at Bob Duxseau Inc., 31625 Grand River, Nov. 21. Damage was estimated at \$50.

Someone fired three BB shots into the kitchen window of a house on Old Homestead about 9 p.m. Nov. 21. Damage was estimated at \$50.

THEFTS REPORTED

The following thefts were reported by local police agencies: A car radio valued at \$500 was reported taken from a car

parked at Town & Country Dodge, 31015 Grand River, Nov. 15.

A color television worth \$500 was reported stolen from the Bargainel Motel, 38300 Grand River, Nov. 17.

Two leather coats valued at \$307 were reported stolen from a residence on Kendallwood Nov. 17.

New carpet valued at \$1,983 was reported taken from a construction site on Sudbury Nov. 18 or before.

A color television was reported stolen from Woodcreek Apartments Nov. 18.

A car radio valued at \$94 was reported taken from a car parked at Hydralink Corp., 38880 Grand River, Nov. 18.

An electronic snowplow valued at \$2,000 was reported stolen from the front of a Jeep parked on the north side of J.W.'s Salon, 31423 12 Mile, Nov. 18.

A videocassette recorder valued at \$450 and cash from a change machine were reported stolen from the Mercy Center, 28600 11 Mile, sometime Nov. 15-20.

A saxophone and a corset, each valued at \$275, were reported stolen from Grace Elementary School, 29040 Shawwassee, Nov. 19.

A 1983 Lincoln Town Car was reported stolen Nov. 19 from a house at Nine Mile and Haggerty. The car was not returned when a 30-year-old man took it for a test drive.

A radar detector valued at \$400 was reported stolen from a car at Jax Kar Wash, 31500 Grand River, Nov. 21.

A trumpet valued at \$400 was reported stolen from Grace Elementary School, 29040 Shawwassee, Nov. 21.

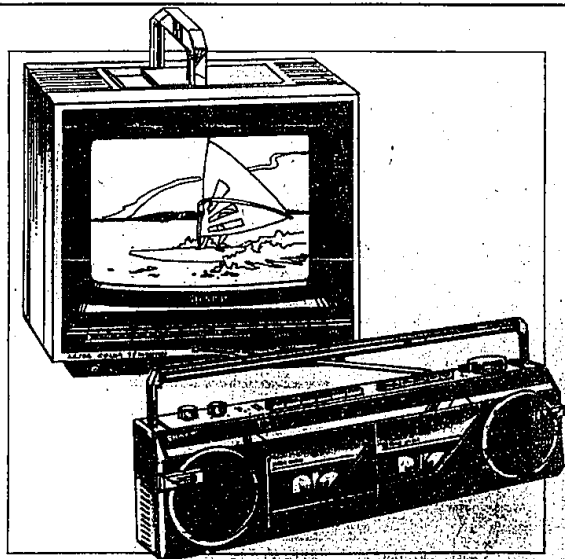
A 14-year-old Bloomfield Hills youth is suspected of stealing a radar detector valued at \$245 from a car parked outside the Bonnyard, 31006 Orchard Lake, at 7:20 p.m. Nov. 21. The car owner held the suspect until Farmington Hills Police arrived.

on the agenda

Farmington Hills City Council
31555 11 Mile, Farmington Hills
7:30 p.m. Monday, Nov. 25

Planis & Moran CPA's of Southfield will present Council with the city's 1984-85 financial audit. An amendment to the city's new snow and ice removal ordinance will be considered. Council will consider an agreement to participate in Oakland County's solid waste removal program. Farmington Hills administrators are recommending council not enter into the agreement because it is more cost-effective to continue with the city's current solid waste disposal company. Council will consider entering into the 1986 tripartite road improvement program with Oakland County and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). Also to be con-

sidered is adoption of a resolution to explore possibilities of creating a park foundation for the Spicer property on Farmington Road, between 10 and 11 Mile roads. Improvements to the M-103 and Grand River Avenue interchange will be considered. Council will discuss contacting MDOT to determine noise abatement needs for subdivisions along I-275. Council will consider adopting the following zoning amendments: on the south side of Nine Mile, east of Power road single-family residential to multiple family residential; east side of Orchard Lake Road, north of Barlow Street in the Oakland Hills Orchard subdivision from single-family residential to to plan of office service; southwest corner of 13 Mile and Drake roads from single-family residential to office research. Council will be asked to consider retaining an engineering service to conduct a survey of Farmington cemeteries.



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