

Suspicious fires

2 Hills apartment blazes under probe

BY VIVIAN DEGAN
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills Fire Department investigators are calling two apartment fires from Sunday and Monday suspicious.

Firefighters from Stations No. 1, 3 and 5 responded to an apartment fire 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 14, at the Diamond Forest Apartments, 23060 Halsted, where they found flames from upstairs apartment.

According to the fire investigator's report, firemen chopped the front door of the burning apartment and entered with a fire hose to find flames climbing up the roof rafters to the roof ridge.

Firefighters had to chop the building's ceiling to determine the fire had spread into the attic. They used a second fire hose to fight the heat and ventilation fans to fight the smoke.

Fire Chief Richard Marinucci said the cause of Sunday's fire remains suspicious because the fire started on an exterior balcony, 10 to 19 feet above ground.

"It started outside where there is

nothing else to catch fire," Marinucci said. "It warrants further investigation of the background and samples of the area to check for flammable liquids."

The chief said the investigation is early, but if suspects are identified in a confirmed arson, the crime is punishable up to 20 years.

One firefighter reported a minor burn on his left wrist Sunday when a hot ember fell between his glove and sleeve.

"It was so minor, he didn't require medical attention," Marinucci said.

Police evacuated other tenants and apartment personnel from the wood frame apartment complex of more than 20 units.

Firefighters checked the apartments to the north and west and reported no damage to them, although the apartment below was damaged slightly with smoke and water.

The second suspicious fire this week began about 9:42 p.m. Monday at the Independence Green Apartment com-



PHOTOS BY RONALD POKRY

Fighting fire: Flames on the second floor roof of this Diamond Forest apartment building get doused by a Farmington Hills firefighter on Sunday.

plex.

Personnel from Stations No. 1, 4 and 5 responded to a fire at 37048 Polk, a two-story building with over 20 units.

Firefighters found flames from the second story apartment window, and extinguished flames in two bedrooms and hallway, determining the origin of

the fire to be in a bedroom.

The fire is still under investigation. Six tenants from first floor apartments had to be relocated at the Knights Inn Monday.

Anyone with information about either fire is urged to call the Farmington Hills Fire Department at 553-0740.

Up the ladder: Firefighters climb up to battle the blaze Sunday at the apartment complex on Halsted.

Runners pass torch for this year's drive.

BY BECKY BURNS
STAFF WRITER

A dozen women in matching white T-shirts with blue lettering milled around in front of a few shops on Old Woodward in Birmingham. As the torch-carrying runner approached, they mobilized, waving small red flags in the air and cheering. The torch switched hands and the next runner was off.

It was all over in just a few short minutes, but the women, who'd driven from Pontiac, Rochester, Berkley, Farmington Hills and Walpole Lake last week, didn't seem to mind.

"The United Way asked us, and they help us, so we can help them," said Leanne Curtin, after she'd watched United Way employee Gary David pass off the torch to Rochester resident Jeff Sherman. Curtin and her matching cohorts work for Oakland Family Services, one of the many agencies that receives money from the United Way each year.

The 23-mile Unity Run, which started at the Somerset Collection in Troy, kicked off the United Way's 49th annual Torch Drive.

Each torch-carrier covered a mile of the route, finishing with Kevin Degen of Southfield who rolled his way into Hart Plaza and passed off the torch to Detroit mayor Dennis Archer. The mayor then lit a 54-foot torch at Woodward and Jefferson avenues, joined by Virgil Carr and Geneva Williams of United

Way Community Services and seven children and adults representing various community agencies.

Degen, who has cerebral palsy and rode a special bicycle, is one of 1.7 million tri-county residents to benefit each year from services received from agencies funded by the Torch Drive, United Way spokesman Andrew Johnson said. Degen recently rode his bike from California to Washington, D.C., in a ride to benefit disabled athletes and raised more than \$50,000 for the local Kenny Foundation.

The United Way's goal this year, Johnson said, is to raise \$60 million to help support agencies in Oakland, Wayne and Macomb counties. "Ninety cents out of every dollar goes directly back to these communities," he said. Those agencies, in turn, use the money to provide services.

Oakland Family Services, for example, provides mental health and substance abuse out-patient services. About a quarter of its funding comes from the United Way, said Sheri Kaplan, director of the agency's Farmington offices. Dressed in her white T-shirt and waving her red flag, Kaplan said she was happy to come to Birmingham to cheer on the runners.

"It's important," she said, "because we see the ins and outs of the clients and how this money really affects them."

For details on how to contribute, call United Way Community Services at (313) 226-9200.

maximum coverage

Go from day to evening in this luxurious double-breasted maxi coat from Fleurette. Cashmere/merino wool. Black. Made in the USA. Sizes 4-14. \$740. Coats.



How did we squeeze so much fun into shopping?

longer hours

Now you can shop

10 am to **9** pm

Monday through Saturday.

Noon to 5 pm Sunday.

Jacobson's

Birmingham • Livonia • Rochester

Jacobson's

Birmingham (248) 644-6900 Livonia (313) 591-7696 Rochester (248) 651-6000
longer hours • Mon-Sat 10-9 • Open Sunday at Noon.