

Fire hits top floor at Sheraton Southfield

A pre-dawn fire Wednesday sent billowing into the lobby of the Sheraton Southfield Hotel, 1707 Southfield, and caused widespread smoke and heat damage.

Southfield firefighters were called to the 15-story hotel about 3 a.m. after fire broke out on the north side of the hotel's top floor. Guests staying in the top 10 floors were evacuated to the lobby. No injuries were reported.

Fire officials said the blaze began in one room on the 15th floor and spread through the hallway. Rooms on the 18th and 19th floors were damaged by heat and smoke from the fire. Other parts of the hotel also received water damage.

No dollar estimate of damage was available at press time.

About 30 Southfield firemen, including auxiliary personnel, were called in to fight the fire. Also on the scene were two engines, an aerial truck, a life support unit truck and a squad car.

Firemen were still mopping up seven hours after the fire was first discovered. Cause of the blaze is still under investigation. Fire officials declined to speculate on the origin of the fire, although they said preliminary reports said the fire may have erupted in a mattress in one of the guest rooms.

Most guests at the hotel appeared in good spirits despite their rather rude awakening Wednesday morning. "I think it's exciting," one woman in her bathrobe told a reporter.

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City primary election switched to Aug. 2 to avoid holiday conflict

City of Southfield's primary election will be Aug. 2, instead of Sept. 13, 1977 to avoid conflict with the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashana.

Southfield City Clerk, Patrick Flannery Jan. 17 received unanimous approval from council members to change the primary date to the first Monday in August. Rosh Hashana is the second Tuesday in September when the municipal election was originally scheduled.

"The holy day would preclude Jewish voters from going to the polls," Flannery said. "It would also limit this office's ability to properly staff the polls Sept. 13."

Immediate action is necessary, the clerk said, because nominating petition deadlines will have to be changed from July 26, for the proposed September primary, to June 14 for the August primary.

Candidates for mayor, council, clerk and treasurer will be on the Aug. 2 ballot and will vie for public office in the general city election Nov. 8.

Southfield opted for September primaries in odd-year elections under a state statute passed in 1970. Officials said August was a bad time for elections because of the number of people on vacation and the long time span between primaries and general elections.

FLANNERY SAID the city could revert to the August primary this year because it's too late for the legislature to enact an emergency measure for a primary date other than Sept. 13 or Aug. 2.

"During the next 15 years, the only second Tuesday in September when Rosh Hashana falls on an odd year is Sept. 13, 1977," noted councilman Stephen Cooper who is expected to seek reelection.

Flannery estimated that 40-45 per cent of Southfield's 80,000 residents are Jewish. He said the cost of processing absentee ballots would be prohibitive and the work involved overwhelming.

"I'm concerned that candidates have time to circulate nominating petitions and meet their filing deadline," Flannery said.

Students study with virtuoso

Two Southfielders, who are enrolled in the department of music at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, will be studying and performing with virtuoso-pianist Georgy Sandor.

Jim Przygocki, son of Mr. and Mrs. Witold Przygocki of 27961 Chelmsford, and Dec Assen Wall, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Wall, 29538-Foli River, will appear with Sandor when he performs with the Western Michigan University Symphony Orchestra at 3 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 30, in Miller Auditorium.

Sandor, an artist-in-residence at the school for five days beginning Jan. 26, also will give a lecture demonstration at Kalamazoo College at 8 p.m., Friday, Jan. 28.

Hungarian-born Sandor, while at the university, will give class visitations, informal sessions, rehearsals, concerts and master classes for the students.

He is recognized in the music world as an unrivalled interpreter of the music of Bartok, Kodaly and Prokofiev.

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