

Classroom set afire Saturday

By Craig Piechura
staff writer

A fire at Farmington High School Saturday could have been much worse than it was if the drapes that were set afire hadn't been made of flame-retardant material.

Investigators say the fire was intentionally set. "It appears to me, and it's speculation, that the draperies themselves were ignited," said Sgt. Norm Maddison, fire marshal for the Farmington Public Safety Department.

An area resident spotted flames coming from the rear of the west wing of the high school and dialed 911, which connected the caller to Livonia Police because Farmington isn't on the 911 emergency system. The call came in at 8:06 p.m. and Farmington fire fighters were at the scene at 5:08 p.m., according to department reports. Flames could be observed at the rear of the school.

Damage was confined to classroom 107-E, a math classroom, with damage estimated at between \$1,500 and \$2,000 by the fire marshal.

Investigators believe the fire was set by someone who was inside the room, not by something thrown through the window.

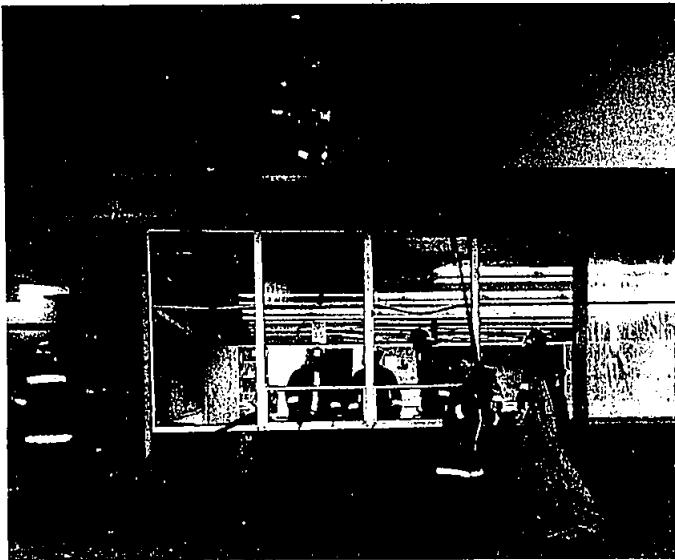
Smoldering draperies were tossed outside by firefighters after the shatterproof plastic windows had melted from the heat of the fire. Inside, the room ceiling tiles were destroyed by the blaze.

A smoke-blackened hot water radiator wasn't damaged.

FIREFIGHTERS quickly contained the blaze and prevented the fire from spreading or going through the roof. Blowers, which kept the smoke from damaging other rooms, were loaned to the department by Farmington Hills fire officials.

"We were fortunate," said Jerry Potter, school principal. "I have no idea who, how and why (the fire was started). As of now we know nothing. Classes resumed today with no problem at all."

The classroom where the fire broke out will be used after renovations are made. Police have no suspects in the case.



Firefighters on the roof found flames hadn't come through the ceiling. On the ground firefighters dragged a smoldering fire-retardant drape out through the ceiling. On the ground firefighters side.



Windows in a math classroom at Farmington High School melted from the heat of a suspected arson fire Saturday. Investigating the blaze in Sgt. Pete Amato (second from right) and other Farmington public safety officers.

but are analyzing materials confiscated in the blaze. The fire marshal said preliminary investigation failed to turn up any evidence of a flammable agent such as gasoline used to start the fire. "It doesn't appear at this point that an accelerant was used," Maddison said Monday. A total of 31 firefighters — 19 from the city and 12 volunteers from Farmington Hills — responded to the fire. Two fire engines from the city and a ladder truck from Farmington Hills were on the scene until 6:26 p.m.

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