



POST PHOTO/GRACE R. DOVE

Firefighters hoisted a saw to cut through the roof of the building to ventilate the fire.



Kunkle fire chief Jack Dodson coordinated the action on the department's ladder truck.

POST PHOTO/RON BARTIZEK



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Dallas fire chief Brett Slocum directed the crews fighting the fire, as it blazed in the background.

Newberry fire

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units were unoccupied and for sale.

Reported at 4:15 p.m., the smoky fire had already eaten through the roof of one unit by the time firefighters arrived on the scene. Flames shot at least 20 feet into the air and occasionally licked under the front wall above the garage of one unit.

Acrid black smoke billowed into the air and filtered from the eaves of the entire building as firefighters scrambled onto the roof and laid hose lines along the roadway.

As they worked, the front windows of both units began to pop out from the heat. Occasionally small objects, possibly aerosol cans propelled by their burning contents, shot into the air through the roof like miniature rockets.

Firefighters saved a Porsche parked in one of the garages by spreading a fireproof cover over it. Another resident's Jaguar XK-E parked in a nearby garage was undamaged.

"Our main problem in fighting the fire was an open crawl space under the roof, which connected all of the units," Slocum said. "It acted like a large chimney, drawing the superheated smoke and gases through the top of the entire structure."

Because the smoke and gases are between 1,400 and 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit, they can ignite wood very easily and spread a fire within a matter of minutes, he added.

"The hot gases are what ignites the fire, not the flames, as many people think," Slocum said.

Like many older buildings in the Back Mountain, the original units at Newberry Estates don't have fire walls separating them, although most newer ones do, he said.

Orchard East's 39 units, built in 1970; Orchard West's 43 units, built in 1972 and 12 units at Meadows built in 1974, all have similar construction with open crawl spaces under the roof, according to a Newberry Estates spokesperson.

All the newer units have fire walls, the spokesperson added.

An estimate of the damage was unavailable. The spokesperson said the units would be rebuilt.

Slocum estimated that 50 firefighters from Dallas, Kunkle, Shavertown and Trucksville worked at the scene. Ladder trucks from Kunkle and Kingston Borough helped them access the burning roof.

Siren will now sleep at night

DALLAS—Residents living near the Dallas Fire Hall will sleep easier, now that the fire company has activated its new pager system.

The siren's nocturnal wailing has been silenced. Long a downtown fixture, it has been replaced by modern technology.

The pager system alerts each member to emergency calls at night, eliminating the need for the siren. Audible several miles away depending on the weather, it will be turned off between 8 p.m. and 8 a.m.

"We'll continue to use it during the day because of outside activities," said fire chief Brett Slocum.

The pager system is only one of several pieces of new equipment the fire company has recently purchased, including hydraulic rescue tools (better known as "the jaws of life,") a gas detection meter

to monitor carbon monoxide and other dangerous gases and automatic tire chains for the main fire engine. The company also purchased a new ambulance, which cost \$100,000, Slocum said.

The fire and ambulance company is financed through an annual community fund drive.

Last year the fire company answered 164 calls, including 46 vehicle accidents, 12 brush fires, nine hazardous materials calls, 19 structure fires and four vehicle fires.

Ambulance personnel responded to 707 emergencies, including 82 car accidents and 396 medical calls.

by Grace R. Dove

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