PRESS RELEASE

June 13, 2017

Investigation into the Cortland Apartment fire continues.

The investigation into the cause of a fire at the Cortland Apartments on Little Elliott Drive Hagerstown continues today by Hagerstown City Fire Marshals. The 2-alarm fire on Monday morning was reported to the 9-1-1 center shortly after 5am. Hagerstown Fire Marshals worked on site for over seven hours Monday to determine the fire's cause. Final emergency service units cleared the scene at approximately 12:30 pm Monday.

The fire involved one of the Cortland Apartment buildings that contained 12-units. Hagerstown City Fire Marshals have determined that the fire originated on one of the apartments exterior balconies. The fire traveled upwards on the exterior of the building and into the attic area. Fire walls in the attic and between apartments contained most of the damage to one corner of the building. The fire caused significant damage to apartments 2, 6 and 10 of this building. The investigation found that the building had a functional automatic sprinkler system, fire alarm system and apartment smoke alarms. Interviews and inspections of these systems found all worked appropriately for the design of the system and location of the fire. The sprinkler system activated when balcony windows cracked from the heat allowing the fire to extend into the apartments. As a result of the sprinkler system activating, the building’s fire alarm system then began to sound alerting the residents of the fire and allowing them time to evacuate safely. The sprinkler system design was to provide occupants time to evacuate safely from a fire. A sprinkler system is not designed for an exterior fire. The sprinkler system was successful in delaying the fire from extending into the occupied areas of the building long enough to give the 46 occupants of the building sufficient time to escape.

Two injuries occurred, one to a Hagerstown Fire Department firefighter; who suffered a minor injury, and one occupant of the building who was treated at the scene for exposure to the smoke. Another occupant was treated for an existing medical condition not associated with the fire.

Occupants displaced by the fire were taken to the Cortland Community Center where they were being assisted by the American Red Cross and Cortland Apartment’s staff. Persons wishing to help those displaced by this fire should contact the American Red Cross or the Cortland Apartments to offer their assistance.

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