



NEWS RELEASE

Date: December 15, 2008
Release: Immediately
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(Stubborn Electrical Fire Displaces Two Hillsboro Families)

An electrical fire in the walls between two apartments forced families from five apartments into the cold Monday evening. The incident began when firefighters from Hillsboro Fire and Rescue were called to the Sunset Garden Apartments at 951 SE 13th Avenue at 5:25 pm. Firefighters determined that there were problems with the electrical panel but found no active fire at the time. They requested crews from PGE to respond along with the Department's fire investigator and an electrical contractor. All were on scene when they began noticing that the walls near the electrical panels were becoming hot and smoke was beginning to appear from the roof line. The incident commander requested a full first alarm assignment to bring additional resources and ordered all five townhouses in the two story building to be evacuated. Firefighters began pulling walls and ceiling materials down and found active fire burning in the ceiling between apartments. They cut away roofing materials and managed to extinguish the stubborn fire by about 7:00 pm.

Investigators say connections for the main electrical feed into the distribution panels had become loose and generated heat that ignited insulation in the walls. The fire migrated into the void space in the flat roof. The fire damaged two apartments before firefighters fully extinguished the flames. A total of ten residents and two guests in the two damaged apartments had to be relocated to other empty apartments in the complex. Damage estimates may exceed \$20,000.

Fire investigators and an electrical contractor checked electrical panels in other apartments in the same building and found loose connections. The Hillsboro Fire Marshal's Office will follow-up with the apartment management to ensure other apartment buildings in that complex are checked for similar problems. Residents in one of the undamaged apartments were allowed to return to their unit following a check of their electrical panel.

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Photo Caption: Descending 4434.jpg

Hillsboro firefighters descend from the icy roof of an apartment building following an electrical fire.

Photo Caption: Inv Stapleton 4438.jpg

Hillsboro Fire Investigator Martin Stapleton examines the electrical panel where loose connections caused a fire that forced several families out of their Sunset Garden Apartments Monday night.