Sixteen-Fatality Fire in Highrise Residence for the Elderly

Johnson City, Tennessee

USFA-TR-039/December 1989

FEMA
The U.S. Fire Administration develops reports on selected major fires throughout the country. The fires usually involve multiple deaths or a large loss of property. But the primary criterion for deciding to do a report is whether it will result in significant “lessons learned.” In some cases these lessons bring to light new knowledge about fire—the effect of building construction or contents, human behavior in fire, etc. In other cases, the lessons are not new but are serious enough to highlight once again, with yet another fire tragedy report. In some cases, special reports are developed to discuss events, drills, or new technologies which are of interest to the fire service.

The reports are sent to fire magazines and are distributed at National and Regional fire meetings. The International Association of Fire Chiefs assists the USFA in disseminating the findings throughout the fire service. On a continuing basis the reports are available on request from the USFA; announcements of their availability are published widely in fire journals and newsletters.

This body of work provides detailed information on the nature of the fire problem for policymakers who must decide on allocations of resources between fire and other pressing problems, and within the fire service to improve codes and code enforcement, training, public fire education, building technology, and other related areas.

The Fire Administration, which has no regulatory authority, sends an experienced fire investigator into a community after a major incident only after having conferred with the local fire authorities to insure that the assistance and presence of the USFA would be supportive and would in no way interfere with any review of the incident they are themselves conducting. The intent is not to arrive during the event or even immediately after, but rather after the dust settles, so that a complete and objective review of all the important aspects of the incident can be made. Local authorities review the USFA’s report while it is in draft. The USFA investigator or team is available to local authorities should they wish to request technical assistance for their own investigation.

This report and its recommendations were developed by USFA staff and by TriData Corporation, Arlington, Virginia, its staff and consultants, who are under contract to assist the USFA in carrying out the Fire Reports Program.

The USFA appreciates the cooperation and assistance received from Johnson City Fire Chief Douglas W. Buckles, Inspector Arson Investigator Steve Shell, and Chief Building Inspector Charles Joe Cannon, as well as Tennessee Arson Investigators Johnny Robertson and Mike Donnelly.

For additional copies of this report write to the U.S. Fire Administration, 16825 South Seton Avenue, Emmitsburg, Maryland 21727. The report is available on the Administration’s Web site at http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/
Sixteen-Fatality Fire in Highrise Residence for the Elderly
Johnson City, Tennessee

Investigated by: Daniel J. Carpenter, Jr.

This is Report 039 of the Major Fires Investigation Project conducted by TriData Corporation under contract EMW-88-C-2649 to the United States Fire Administration, Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Revised: March 2011
U.S. Fire Administration
Mission Statement

As an entity of the Department of Homeland Security, the mission of the USFA is to reduce life and economic losses due to fire and related emergencies, through leadership, advocacy, coordination, and support. We serve the Nation independently, in coordination with other Federal agencies, and in partnership with fire protection and emergency service communities. With a commitment to excellence, we provide public education, training, technology, and data initiatives.
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Sixteen Fatality Fire in Highrise Residence for the Elderly
Johnson City, Tennessee

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OVERVIEW

A Christmas Eve fire that caused the death of 14 residents and two visitors occurred at the John Sevier Center, a highrise residence for the elderly, in Johnson City, Tennessee. It also injured about 50 other people including 15 firefighters.

One victim was found in the elevator lobby on the sixth floor, one in Room 107, and the rest, 14 victims, on higher level floors in living units. (See Appendix A for the name, age, and location discovered of all victims.)
**SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Building</td>
<td>Eleven story “downtown” hotel, converted to apartments for the elderly in 1980.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Fire</td>
<td>Originated in apartment on first floor, spread into combustible ceiling space and extended to second floor. Smoke spread throughout structure, principally through open pipe chases and elevator shafts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Casualties</td>
<td>Sixteen fatalities, located from first through tenth floors of the 11-story building. Fifteen civilians and 15 firefighters were injured.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fire Protection Features</td>
<td>Each apartment had a hard-wired smoke detector connected to an enunciator.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delayed Discovery</td>
<td>Fire originated in living room of apartment. Single station smoke detector in apartment was separated from fire by closed bedroom door. Fire penetrated combustible ceiling void and spread before sufficient smoke traveled below the ceiling to activate corridor smoke detection system.</td>
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The fire started in Apartment #102 shortly after 1700 hours and traveled out of the apartment and across the ceiling above the main hallway smoke detectors (which would have activated the 9-1-1 fire alarm system) across to the main lobby. Swirling smoke trapped many of the occupants on the upper floors of the 11-story building before any notification or alarm was heard by them. (See Appendix C for floor plan of apartment of origin.)

The alarm was received at 1711 by the dispatcher of the Johnson City Fire Department. The first units were on the scene within four minutes. Upon arrival, flames were observed on the first floor and additional calls were made for backup units to respond. More than five hours later, firefighters were still breaking windows and heavy smoke continued to hamper their rescue efforts. Johnson City firefighters, public safety officers, and hundreds of volunteer firefighters and civilians who had responded to the call assisted in the rescue and treatment of the injured. Almost every available emergency unit and crew from as far as 70 miles away answered the call. Helicopters from as far away as Virginia helped to move the injured from the fire scene to nearby hospitals.

Sub-freezing temperatures hampered rescue efforts and made some of the occupants resistant to leaving the building. The freezing conditions caused firefighters to have to force open exit doors.

The building had a history of “false alarms,” which may have caused some of the occupants not to be too concerned even if the alarm was heard. Many of those who were able to make it out on their own in the early stages of the fire simply wandered off, or were treated and released by rescue workers. Others were assisted by their families and friends. Red Cross workers tried desperately to determine who and how many occupants were still left in the building.

**BACKGROUND**

The fire on December 24, 1989, was the second fatal fire to occur at the John Sevier Center within two months. A previous fire, which occurred on October 25, 1989, caused the death of 76-year-old Joseph R. England. Fire officials attributed the cause of that fire to the accidental filling of a kerosene can with gasoline by friends of the deceased which was later used to fill a kerosene heater. The occupant died three days later from the effects of smoke inhalation.
Even though this fire prompted the Johnson City Commission to issue directions for all buildings in
the downtown area to be inspected within two years, the John Sevier Center had only been inspected
by building officials for repairs necessitated by the fire, because of time constraints.

The Johnson City Fire Marshal’s Office had investigated the fire which occurred on October 25,
1989. A final inspection of Apartment #513 was also conducted during the week of November
27. Another inspection of smoke towers and standpipes was also conducted because of reports that
heavier than usual accumulations of smoke had traveled to the upper floors at the time of the fire.
This heavy smoke accumulation was later attributed to a break in the pipe chase between floors,
thereby allowing the smoke to travel freely to the upper floors of the building. Fire officials had
attempted to correct the situation by working with building officials and engineers to convince the
owner of the seriousness of this situation and bring the building into compliance.

Primary concerns with the building involved vertical penetrations, allowing smoke to travel upward
between floors, the capacity and proper functioning of ventilation to remove and segregate smoke,
and also the lack of sprinkler systems, even though the building did contain a standpipe system
which met code requirements at the time it was renovated in the late 1970s.

At the time of the fire the John Sevier Center housed approximately 145 residents. Exactly how
many were actually in the building when the fire occurred has not been determined. Several of the
residents who were thought to be missing were later accounted for.

THE FIRE

According to Fire Chief Douglas W. Buckles, flames were visible on the first floor and choking smoke
had already reached the upper floors of the John Sevier Center when the first fire units arrived at the
scene, which was within four minutes after receiving the alarm.

At the time the alarm came in, Engines 1, 3, 4, and the tower truck were at Johnson City Country
Club. Engines 2, 3, 4, Ladder 1, a tower, and a snorkel were dispatched to John Sevier Center at
11:15. Ladder 1 arrived there about the same time as the apparatus coming from the country club.
Public safety officers cross-trained as firefighters provided some of the staffing. Staffing for the first
alarm companies was as follows: Engine 2: driver, three public safety officers; Engine 3: driver,
three firefighters; Engine 4: driver, firefighter, two public safety officers; Ladder 1: driver, firefighter;
Tower: driver; Snorkel: driver. Public safety officers arrived just prior to department apparatus in
their own vehicles and had initiated rescue operations. Other public fire safety officers responded as
well. (See Appendix B for complete list.)

A second alarm was immediately sounded and additional staffing requested. Eventually a call went
out to all Johnson City firefighters, public safety officers, and rescue workers to report to their duty
stations. (See Appendix B for Fire Incident Report, First Report, First Responders, Master Personnel
Watch Manifest, Equipment and Personnel Used to Control the Fire, and a list of other fire depart-
ments, rescue squads, businesses, and community organizations that contributed staff support,
equipment, and assistance.)

Even though the first alarm was apparently delayed because the smoke had traveled at ceiling level,
above the hallway smoke detectors, the fire was confined to the lower two floors of the building.

Flames had already penetrated an open area which had served as a mezzanine when the building
had been a hotel, which had been covered over with plywood and other materials. Recognizing the
fire’s extent and the potential for further fire spread and risks to life safety, Chief Buckles immediately requested additional support by public safety and emergency rescue personnel.

The fire was brought under control shortly after arrival, and fire damage was limited to the floors. Smoke continued to fill the building, requiring ventilation and rescue operations to continue for at least another five hours.

More than 200 paid and volunteer firefighters responded along with public safety officers, emergency medical technicians (EMT), and rescue workers, from over 70 miles away to help combat the greatest tragedy Johnson City has ever experienced. Hundreds of others brought food and clothing for victims and rescue workers. Many acts of heroism were reported.

Fire and police personnel responded as planned and volunteer units provided the additional staffing and equipment so vitally needed at the scene and also to cover fire stations providing fire protection for the other areas of the city.

Sub-zero temperatures impaired the refilling of air bottles at the scene, because the pump on the portable unit was frozen. Other fire departments readily provided the many air cylinders needed as well as other equipment. According to Chief Buckles, each department seemed to know in advance where to position their equipment to the greatest advantage, and every member of that department went about his or her business in a professional manner, without adding confusion to such a major operation.

Media reports state that “Johnson City’s fire and police departments responded with the sort of efficiency we have come to expect.”

**FIRE CAUSE AND DELAYED REPORT**

While the cause of the fire had not been determined at the time of this report, it is generally believed there were several minutes between the time the fire originated and the time it was reported via the 9-1-1 alarm system.

It is apparent where the fire occurred, however, and based on this knowledge, investigators believe the fire ignited a loveseat in the immediate area of origin in Apartment #102 and then traveled in a vertical path until reaching a dropped ceiling supported by wooden joists. The fire quickly traveled across the ceiling, gaining in intensity as it consumed combustible materials above the dropped ceiling. Only after the flames had progressed out of Apartment #102 and into an open lobby area was there sufficient smoke coming down from above the ceiling tiles to cause the automatic hall smoke alarms to activate.

**THE STRUCTURE**

According to building officials the building was approximately 65 years old. It was originally a highrise hotel that had been converted to a “residential highrise” in the late 1970s. At the time of conversion and renovation the building was periodically inspected to insure compliance with the building codes in effect at that time. The last time a major inspection was conducted by building officials was in 1980. Periodic fire inspections of public areas were conducted, with the last one (prior to the October 1989 fire) done in January 1989.

While city officials recognize that the building would not meet today’s building and fire codes, they were quick to point out that the Center met all of the city codes in effect in 1980.
However, because of the October fire and because of concerns it raised about smoke travel and reports of floors and walls being breached, fire officials were in the process of updating the building to meet present day codes. Sprinkler systems were planned and provisions were being discussed with owners and engineers to see if anything could be done to limit occupancy only to ambulatory residents, particularly on the upper floors.

Fire escapes were provided in the west and south wings, along the middle, and at the mezzanine level. Smoke fans were also provided in the west and south wing exits which leads directly to the street level. A center stairwell which was part of the old hotel was not marked as an exit, nor did it exit to the street. It apparently was to be used only by maintenance personnel and not the residents of the building.

**SMOKE DETECTORS**

Local smoke detectors were located in the bedrooms of each apartment and were monitored in the manager's office. Hallway smoke detectors were strategically located throughout the Center and activated a 9-1-1 system both in the building and at the fire department dispatcher's office.

Notification and early warning was delayed because of the rapid spread of smoke above the ceiling level and the fact that the bedroom door in Apartment #102 was closed during the fire. This fact prevented either alarm to function as it was designed to function and allowed the fire and smoke to enter above the detectors into the main lobby. Eventually detectors were activated, as were several others.

If heat detectors had been above the ceiling level, this might have provided earlier alarm and the additional time necessary to alert occupants.

**ESCAPE ROUTES**

Even though several of the occupants had already exited the building prior to the arrival of the fire department, many others hesitated to venture out into the sub-freezing temperatures. This caused a back-up of people trying to descend the stairways and may have caused some to believe the exit doors would not open even though they were equipped with panic bars. Reports indicate the firefighters may have had to force open these doors to gain access to the building and complete evacuations.

Some of the occupants may have even returned to their apartments to await rescuers rather then to attempt to find another exit.

**HUMAN BEHAVIOR**

While thick smoke filtered up through elevator shafts and pipe chases, residents using crutches, walkers, and canes attempted to exit through narrow stairways from as high up as the tenth floor. Others, too frightened, too old, or too confused simply stayed in their apartments and waited for the rescue teams to arrive. Not all were fortunate enough to be found, however, before they succumbed to the deadly gases. Reportedly, one couple, found dead, had been sitting in their chairs reading the Bible.

Because of the frequency of seemingly minor fires or false smoke alarms, some residents may have simply ignored the alarm. Others, because of poor hearing, may not have even heard the alarm. This situation may have added to the already confused atmosphere that seemed to prevail, as many residents left their apartments to go into a hallway already filled with smoke.
Fire resistant doors had been installed at the entrance of each apartment. However, the automatic door closers were removed in many of them due to resident complaints the doors were too hard to open.

THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Johnson City Fire Department provides protection to a fast growing community with a current population of 48,000 people in a 29 square mile area. The department operates under the guidelines established by the Tennessee Commission of Firefighting, the Tennessee Fire Incident Reporting System (TFIRS) fire reporting system, the National Fire Protection Association, and the Johnson City Civil Service Commission. The Insurance Service Office (ISO) has rated it as a class three department.

The 74-person department responds from five fire stations and is augmented by 100 public safety officers who have been cross-trained in firefighting activities. From January through September 1989, there had been 712 fire calls that had been answered, 669 fire prevention inspections, 27 plan reviews, 273 code enforcement investigations, and 42 fire investigations resulting in six arrests for arson.

Prior to the fire in Johnson Sevier Center, two fire prevention programs had been started. The Learn Not To Burn Curriculum was begun in the city’s public schools and the Juvenile Firesetters Program was developed through the Watauga Mental Health Center. Because of staff limitations and time constraints, other planned projects had not been implemented.

CODE COMPLIANCE/VIOLATIONS

Presumably the John Sevier Center met code requirements at the time it was renovated as a “highrise residential” property in 1980. There is no question, however, that a properly installed sprinkler system could have prevented the rapid spread of fire on the first two floors. Nor is there any question that heavy smoke traveled rapidly up elevator shafts and pipe chases causing most of the victims to die of smoke inhalation, even though the fire was contained to the first two floors. Questions remain in the minds of some residents, family members, building owners, elected and appointed city officials as to whether or not the building was properly classified at the time it was renovated and if it were properly inspected by building and fire officials before, during, and after completion of the renovation process.

While many documents provided by code enforcement authorities to attest to the fact the building had been inspected during this phase of the changeover, questions still prevail as to how thorough these inspections were and on how closely the existing codes were complied with. Were building permits obtained for all interior constructions since renovation?

Even as late as the previous fatal fire in October 1989 code violations were observed yet left uncorrected because time and the inspectors workload did not permit more thorough preliminary inspections or more frequent follow-up inspections.

The October fire had similar consequences due to rising smoke in the pipe chase areas. Even though a person died, the fire was not deemed to be “important enough” to have a sprinkler system installed at the time. The owners and managers of the building have said they planned to install a sprinkler system in the building in the Spring of 1990. Yet, large holes were left open between floors where smoke passed freely to the floors above.
COMMUNITY RESPONSE

While hundreds of people gathered food and clothing for victims and rescue workers to help fend off the below freezing temperatures, nearby hotels offered free rooms for the survivors and their families.

The American Red Cross had declared the Center a National emergency, thereby providing additional funds for the local chapter to help residents find housing and provide health care and other necessities. Of those residents not staying with friends or relatives, the Red Cross, Salvation Army, and city officials provided temporary shelter and assistance in relocating them to permanent quarters.

Several community and civic organizations have also pledged support as have businesses, corporations, and individuals. J. C. Penney Company opened its doors Christmas day to allow residents to purchase clothing and personal items through the Red Cross at substantial discounts. Those residents who had J. C. Penney credit cards were also allowed to defer payment on their individual accounts. Fast-food restaurants and motels also offered free meals for the residents.

A memorial service for the victims was held January 7 in Johnson City’s Freedom Hall.

ANALYSIS OF SIGNIFICANT FACTORS

Many of the events and circumstances leading up to this fire could have been detected and/or prevented.

Structure – This 65-year-old building was originally constructed before fire protection and building codes required sprinkler systems, which could have saved lives.

Smoke Detectors – Only one smoke detector was installed in the bedroom of the apartment where the fire began. Since the fire started in the living room and the bedroom door was closed during the insipient stages of the fire, the fire had ample time to travel up through a dropped ceiling and burn the wood bar joists above, thereby gaining sufficient headway into an open lobby area before being detected by the hallway smoke detector. A minimum of two smoke detectors in living quarters and heat detectors above dropped ceilings, and in attic and storage areas should be required.

Sign-out Roster and Visitor Log – Since the fire occurred on Christmas Eve, many of the residents were away visiting friends and relatives. While this may have been a blessing in one respect, it increased the anxiety of search crews who were trying to determine the whereabouts of those still remaining in the building. A sign out roster and visitor log could have alleviated this problem.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. When a tragedy such as this occurs, the Catastrophic Theory of Reform may be used to overcome apathy, raise public awareness, and stimulate legislators and citizens to implement necessary fire safety reforms.

   This Christmas Eve fire, that killed 16 people, has prompted legislators and fire officials to review existing structures throughout the State of Tennessee. While interest is high following a major fire it is an excellent time for not only Johnson City, Tennessee, but all areas of the country to review code classifications and compliance procedures to assure thorough and timely inspections of all residential properties, particularly those used as retirement centers and/or nursing homes.

   Legislation requiring sprinkler systems in all public places where “large gatherings” occur is already being considered as a positive move for the State of Tennessee.
2. Smoke detector requirements should be reviewed for adequacy, particularly in older buildings where large numbers of people reside.

   Fire stops, false ceilings, and code compliance to meet today’s building standards must be reviewed.

3. Codes should be strictly enforced and when violated, severely punished.

4. Special efforts must be made to involve fire suppression personnel in fire prevention activities and pre-fire planning programs.

   Greater emphasis and additional personnel assigned to the fire prevention and education functions of the fire service would help bring about citizen awareness.

5. Both building and fire code officials need to cooperate better to provide complete and thorough inspections when buildings undergo renovation.

   They should not simply “sign off” when work is complete. Also, proper classification of existing buildings, as well as new construction, must be considered. Should the code requirements for a “highrise residential” structure which houses predominately elderly residents (who are or are assumed to be ambulatory) be any less strict than a “retirement home”?

6. Building owners and property managers should be educated in the limitations of the elderly.

   Research is needed on what may be expected of the elderly in the event of an emergency, and what they may physically be incapable of performing.
APPENDICES

A. List of Victims’ Names, Ages, and Location Discovered.

B. Johnson City Fire Department Fire Incident Report, Master Personnel Watch Manifest, Equipment and Personnel Used to Control the Fire, and other Fire Departments, Rescue Squads, Businesses, and Community Organizations Involved in the Emergency Response and Recovery, and List of First Responders.

C. Floor Plans Showing Point of Origin.

D. List of Photographs and Slides.
## APPENDIX A

### List of Victims’ Names, Ages, and Location Discovered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Victim</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Location Discovered</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Juanita Ward</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>Room 107 1st Floor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Fred Kidd</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>Room 801 2nd Floor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ivan Atwood</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Room 710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Carmen Baughan</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>Room 1007 – Time 22:05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Lori Carlisle</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>Room 510 – Time 20:09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Ethel Francis</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>Room 608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. William Carl Ogburne</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Room 813 – Time 20:21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Cleo Range</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>Room 704 – Time 20:17</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Doris Riening</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>Room 813 – Time 20:21</td>
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<td>11. Emma Shade</td>
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<td>Room 108 – Time 20:06</td>
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<td>13. Ethel Shelton</td>
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<td>14. Lora Shook</td>
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<td>Room 403 – Time 20:20</td>
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<td>16. Josephine Eager</td>
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<td>Room 503</td>
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## APPENDIX B

**TENNESSEE FIRE INCIDENT REPORTING SYSTEM**

**Johnson City Fire Department**

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### SITUATION FOUND

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<td>Emergency Medical call</td>
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<td>Trash fire</td>
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<td>Rotten wood</td>
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<td>Electrical fires</td>
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<td>Molotov</td>
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### ACTION TAKEN

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<td>Smoke</td>
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<td>Rescue</td>
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### MUTUAL AID

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### SOURCE OF HEAT

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### CONSTRUCTION TYPE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wood</td>
<td>61</td>
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### TYPE OF MATERIAL GENERATING MOST SMOKE

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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wood</td>
<td>62</td>
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### PROPERTY INSURED

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>House</td>
<td>63</td>
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### OFFICER IN CHARGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doug Butts, CHIEF</td>
<td>12-24-83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/1/80</td>
<td>1-8-80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---
On 12-27-59 while answering an alarm at Thomas Cty. Country Club we received an alarm for John Siver Center. All responding units left at once except 821. Upon arriving 820 pulled a 1 1/2 line from ladder. I was attached the fire. After donning full equipment I proceeded to assist Capt. Triment. At this time I noticed heavy smoke from upper floors and proceeded at this time to use P50 to begin rescue procedure. We began at the stairs facing Room St. Bringing people down stairs from 2nd and 3rd floors. We worked this area until we found no more people. I then moved to the lobby entrance on Fondo St. to assist Fire fighting. The fire personnel had a 1 1/2 line inside. I immediately called for a 2 1/2 line and used the 1 1/2 as a back-up. After seeing this section was manned I proceeded to the west end of the building to the stairwell and again began rescue operations. Before I went to this area Capt. Triment and myself were in agreement to call in off duty personnel. I worked this area with off duty people searching 4th, 5th floors. After getting relief for myself and the people with me I went back to Fondo St. and got new orders from Chief Buckles. At this time I was ordered to go to Market st-side and direct ventilation and fire fighting activities at this side of the building.
Summarizing the situation Capt. Tainter directed fire fighting and I directed rescue. I felt our personnel did a great job for such a bad situation. My people used every effort to save lives and protect property.

12-27-89
Lt. Mike Mak
To: Chief Buckles
From: Roger Teewhit (820)
Subject: FIRE - John Sover Center 12-24-89

At the time the alarm came in, engines 1, 5-4 were at Johnson Oil, Country Club. Engines 2-3-4-11 were at Johnson Oil. Engines 2-3-4-11 were dispatched to John Sover Center. At 15:31, S.N. Rentz, Comm. Center, informed us that there was a fire on the first floor. Upon my arrival I found flames coming from a window on east side of building facing Rand St. Ladder truck I arrived about the same time. I proceeded to ladder one pull one 1/2 line to window and put on fire after about two minutes fire was out in room. I proceeded to second floor of building, which is north side of building and saw one 1/2 line from engine 11 in door way. Engine 12 crew was attempting to hook at door that back out and pulled one hose and made another attack on fire. The hose, 1/2 line, backup lines at hna was to handle rescue operation. At this time about 5-10 min into fire, I notified Comm. Center to get wordhelp by calling DEP, DEP, and Police, Personals, and informed them to call Gas Co. & Power Board as the lines were being advanced. Ceilings were falling with heat.
Appendix B (Continued)

Fire in them... we made good progress to about 40 feet in building when we encountered heavy fire on both sides and in front of us. There was a few areas that took an extreme amount of water to put out. Progress was slow from that point. The snuffer was placed on rescue to begin rescue operations. The tower was initially placed on market there were people at a few windows some we could reach some we couldn't. It was no people entering building at all stairways for rescue. Rescue squad were assisting in the evacuation. At our point about 45 minutes into the fire we had no air bottles and that hampered operations for a few minutes there were many people wanting to go into building to get someone out but were not allowed only fire and police personnel were allowed about an hour had passed when we started to get more air bottles. Lt. Shealy and officer Rich Steele were sent to fill empty air bottles usually.
### Appendix B (Continued)

**MASTER PERSONNEL WATCH MANIFEST**  
**JOHNSON CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WATCH COMMANDER</th>
<th>MONTH</th>
<th>DAY</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant Jack Shipley 115 (320)</td>
<td>DEC. 24</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>PLATOON</td>
<td>WATCH</td>
<td>WEEKDAY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergeant Becky West 222 (330)</td>
<td>3RD</td>
<td>1600-0000</td>
<td>SUNDAY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergeant</td>
<td>EARLY OFF:</td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergeant Mike Harris 189</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desk Sergeant</td>
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#### ZONE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSO</th>
<th>I.D.</th>
<th>UNIT</th>
<th>D.P.A.</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G. Lester</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>311/5112</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Friggs</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>312/5117</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>B</td>
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#### ZONE 2

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<tr>
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<th>I.D.</th>
<th>UNIT</th>
<th>D.P.A.</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D. Harrison</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>321/5114</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Pierce</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>322/5115</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>T. Ditto</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>323/5153</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>B</td>
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#### ZONE 4

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSO</th>
<th>I.D.</th>
<th>UNIT</th>
<th>D.P.A.</th>
<th>Reason</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B. Stevens</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>341/5164</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>A</td>
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</table>

#### ZONE 6

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<tr>
<th>PSO</th>
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<th>UNIT</th>
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<th>Reason</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J. Hawk</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>362/5247</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>J. Shepherd</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>363/5151</td>
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#### K-9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSO</th>
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<tr>
<td>J. Devorey</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>K-9/3/5220</td>
<td>10-80/1700hrs</td>
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#### OFF DUTY

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<tr>
<td>A. Dalpich</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>VACATION</td>
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<tr>
<td>X. Heflich</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>VACATION</td>
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<tr>
<td>J. Huskins</td>
<td>065</td>
<td>COMP TIME</td>
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<tr>
<td>C. Smith</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>VACATION</td>
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**WATCH COMMANDER’S SIGNATURE:** 

[Signature]

---

16  U.S. Fire Administration/Technical Report Series
### A Shift Roster

**Date:** 1/3/89

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asst. Chief</th>
<th>Gordon Lake</th>
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<tr>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>Roger Steinert</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>Mike Nash</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engine 1</td>
<td>Kenneth Miller</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engine 2</td>
<td>Gerald Moore</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engine 3</td>
<td>Paul Greene</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engine 4</td>
<td>Charles Alexander</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lewis May-Huck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mike Hamilton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don Nelson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Buddy Collins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ted Rades-UHC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engine 5</td>
<td>Danny Jones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chester Campbell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engine 6</td>
<td>Charles Hanagal</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bob Barnham</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mike Fox</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engine 7</td>
<td>Stanley Daniels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladder 1</td>
<td>Steve Weaver</td>
</tr>
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<td>Jerry Leonard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tower 1</td>
<td>Charles Hawkins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Snorkel 1</td>
<td>Paul Holder</td>
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<table>
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</table>

**Vacation:** 2.  
**Sick:** 1.  
**Comp. Time:** 2.  

"G" Day: 2.  
"B" Day: 2.  
"A" Day: 2.
Appendix B (Continued)

JOHNSON CITY FIRE DEPARTMENT

JOHN SEVIER CENTER FIRE, DEC. 24, 1989

EQUIPMENT AND PERSONNEL USED TO CONTROL FIRE

PERSONNEL

JOHNSON CITY FIRE DEPT......64
JOHNSON, CITY POLICE........61
OTHER RESPONDING AGENCIES.....UNKNOWN

FIRE ENGINES, LADDER TRUCKS AND OTHER EQUIPMENT

FIRE ENGINES

# 2... 1500gpm AMERICAN LAFRANCE
# 3... 1500gpm AMERICAN LAFRANCE
# 4... 1000gpm PIRCH

LADDER TRUCKS

LADDER # 1 ... 1000gpm MAXUM QUAD
SNORKEL #1 .. 85' ELEVATING SNORKEL, AMERICAN LAFRANCE
TOWER # 1 .... 102' ELEVATING PLATFORM, GRUMMAN, 1500gpm.

OTHER VEHICLES

818... FIRE CHIEF'S CAR
819... ADM. ASST. CHIEF'S CAR
820... 4X4 SCAT (QUICK ATTACK VEHICLE) ASST. CHIEF
821... 4X4 SCAT CAPTAIN
822... 4X4 SCAT LIEUTENANT
826... UTILITY TRUCK

EQUIPMENT USED TO CONTROL FIRE

175... SELF CONTAINED BREATHING APPARATUS
600-700 COMPRESSED AIR BOTTLES
2000'... 1 AND 3/4" FIRE HOSE
900'... 3" FIRE HOSE
1500'... 2½" FIRE HOSE 2450
200'... 1" BOOSTER HOSE (SPOT FIRES)
9...... 1 AND 3/4" NOZZLES
3...... 2¼" NOZZLES
3...... MASTER STREAM NOZZLES ON ELEVATED LADDERS CHARGED
3...... 200' ROPE LIFELINES
1 CRANE FROM MURPHY CRANE SERVICES
2...... 35' GROUND LADDERS
2...... 20' ROOF LADDERS
5...... 14' AND 16' ROOF MADDERS
3...... 24' PUMPER EXTENSION LADDERS
A NUMBER OF VARIOUS HAND TOOLS SUCH AS AXES, PIKE POLES, LIGHTS
2...... PORTABLE COMPRESSOR SYSTEMS FOR FILLING AIR BOTTLES
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region I Rescue Squads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Region I Vice-President:** Vernon DeBord, 577 Roddy Dr., Morristown, TN 37814  
**Region I Secretary:** Ron Martin, 5016 Doss Rd., Kingsport, TN 37663

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Squad Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>City, State, Zip</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bean Station Rescue Squad</td>
<td>Rt. 42 Box 14-B, Bean Station, TN</td>
<td>37708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAP:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.D.:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Meet: 1st &amp; 3rd Thursday in every month at 7:00 pm.</td>
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</table>

| Bluff City Rescue Squad     | Box 239, Bluff, City, TN    | 37618              |
| CAP:                        |                             |                    |
| U.D.:                       |                             |                    |
| Meet: 1st Tuesday in every month at 7:00 pm. | |

| Bristol Lifesaving Crew, Inc. | P.O. Box 302, Bristol, VA | 24201             |
| CAP:                        |                             |                    |
| U.D.:                       |                             |                    |
| Meet: Thursdays at 7:30 pm.  |                             |                    |

| Carter County Emergency & Rescue Squad | P.O. Box 602, Elizabethton, TN | 37643 |
| CAP:                        |                             |        |
| I.D.:                       |                             |        |
| Meet: 1st & 3rd Thursday in every month at 7:30 pm. | |

| Church Hill Rescue Squad   | P.O. Box 611, Church Hill, TN | 37642 |
| CAP:                        |                             |        |
| U.D.:                       |                             |        |
| Meet: Every Tuesday at 7:30 pm.  |                             |        |

| Erwin Emergency & Rescue Squad | P.O. Box 406, Erwin, TN | 37650 |
| CAP:                        |                             |        |
| U.D.:                       |                             |        |
| Meet: 1st & 3rd Tuesday in every month at 7:00 pm. | |

| Grainger County Rescue Squad | Water St., Rutledge, TN | 37861 |
| CAP:                        |                             |        |
| U.D.:                       |                             |        |
| Meet: 1st & 3rd Thursday in every 7:30 pm. | |
Appendix B (Continued)

JOHNSON COUNTY EMERGENCY RESCUE SQUAD  
203 Vandilla St., Mt. City, TN 37683  
CAP.: [redacted]  
U.D.: [redacted]  
MEET: Every Monday in every month at 7:00 pm.

JONESBORO EMERGENCY & RESCUE SQUAD  
P.O. Box 361, Jonesboro, TN 37659  
CAP.: [redacted]  
G.D.: [redacted]  
MEET: Every Thursday in every month at 7:30 pm.

KINGSPORT LIFESAVING CREW  
1800 Crescent Dr., Kingsport, TN 37662  
CAP.: [redacted]  
U.D.: [redacted]  
MEET: 1st, 2nd & 3rd Monday in every month at 7:00 pm.

LIMESTONE FIRST RESPONDER RESCUE UNIT, INC.  
P.O. Box 26, Limestone, TN 37681  
CAP.: [redacted]  
U.D.: [redacted]  
MEET: 2nd Wednesday in every month at 7:00 pm.

MORRISTOWN EMERGENCY & RESCUE SQUAD  
CAP.: [redacted]  
U.D.: [redacted]  
MEET: Every Thursday in every month at 7:30 pm.

NEWPORT, RESCUE SQUAD  
P.O. Box 364, NEWPORT, TN 37821  
CAP.: [redacted]  
U.D.: [redacted]  
MEET: 2nd Tuesday in every month at 7:00 pm.

SCOTT COUNTY VA LIFESAVING CREW  
P.O. Box 1088 Gate City, VA 24251  
CAP.: [redacted]  
U.D.: [redacted]  
MEET: 1st & 2nd Monday in every month at 7:00 pm.

SULLIVAN COUNTY RESCUE SQUAD  
Rt. 3, Box 1076 TCADS, Blountville, TN 37617  
CAP.: [redacted]  
U.D.: [redacted]  
MEET: 1st & 2nd Monday in every month at 7:30 pm.
Appendix B (Continued)

GRAY RESCUE SQUAD
P.O. Box 8188, Gray, TN 37615
CAP.: [redacted]
U.D.: [redacted]
MEET: 1st Monday in every month at 7:00 pm.

GREENEVILLE EMERGENCY & RESCUE SQUAD
P.O. Box 241, Greeneville, TN 37743
CAP.: [redacted]
U.D.: [redacted]
MEET: Every Monday in every month at 7:00 pm.

HANCOCK COUNTY RESCUE SQUAD
P.O. Box 207, Sneedville, TN 37869
CAP.: [redacted]
U.D.: [redacted]
MEET: 2nd Thursday in every month at 7:30 pm.

HAWKINS COUNTY RESCUE SQUAD
P.O. Box 213, Rogersville, TN 37857
CAP.: [redacted]
U.D.: [redacted]
MEET: Every Thursday in every month at 7:30 pm.

HICKORY TREE FIRE & RESCUE
Rt. 3 Box 1445, Bluff City, TN 37618
CAP.: [redacted]
U.D.: [redacted]
MEET: 1st Tuesday in every month at 7:30 pm.

JEFFERSON COUNTY RESCUE SQUAD
P.O. Box 261, Dandridge, TN 37725
CAP.: [redacted]
U.D.: [redacted]
MEET: 2nd & 4th Monday in every month at 7:00 pm.

JOHNSON CITY EMERGENCY & RESCUE SQUAD
507 E. Main St., Johnson City, TN 37601
CAP.: [redacted]
U.D.: [redacted]
MEET: 1st & 3rd Thursday in every month at 7:00 pm.
Appendix B (Continued)

Bloomingdale Fire Department
North Kingsport Fire Department
Warriors Path Fire Department
Bluff City Vol. Fire Department
Sullivan County Vol. F.D.
Sullivan West Vol. F.D.
Kingsport F.D.
Bristol, Tenn. F.D.
Central Community F.D.
Hampton, Valley Forge F.D.
Stoney Creek Vol. F.D.
Elizabethton F.D.
West Carter County Vol. F.D.
Watauga Vol. F.D.
Jonesborough F.D.
Embreeville F.D.
Nolichucky F.D.
Limestone F.D.
Sulphur Springs F.D.
Morristown F.D.
Avoca Vol. F.D.
Piney Flats F.D.
Gray Vol. F.D.
Unicoi F.D.
South Unicoi Vol. F.D.
Erwin F.D.

Murphy Crane & Rigging
Tennessee Highway Patrol at Fall Branch
Professional Scuba, Inc.
Virginia State Police, Aviation Division
Walmart Department Store
Mahoney's
Wiseman's
Hardees

Bean Station Rescue Squad
Bluff City Rescue Squad
Bristol Lifesaving Crew, Inc.
Carter County Emergency & Rescue Squad
Church Hill Rescue Squad
Erwin Emergency & Rescue Squad
Gray Rescue Squad
Greeneville Emergency & Rescue Squad
Hancock County Rescue Squad
Hawkins County Rescue Squad
Hickory Tree Fire & Rescue
Johnson City Emergency & Rescue Squad
Johnson County Emergency & Rescue Squad
Jonesborough Emergency & Rescue Squad
Kingsport Lifesaving Crew
Limestone First Responder Rescue Unit, Inc.
Morristown Emergency & Rescue Squad
Sullivan County Rescue Squad
Sharpe's Ambulance Service, Inc.
Greene County Ambulance Authority
Hawkins County E.M.S.
Sullivan County E.M.S.
Quality Care Medical, Inc.
S & S Convalescent Services
Appendix B (Continued)
First Responders on Johnson City Fire

Fire Marshal George Leonard

1st Alarm Engine 2 - Driver
   Gerald Moore
Public Safety Officers
   David Harris
   R. Pierce
   T. Ditto

Engine 3 -
   Driver
   Charles Alexander
   Firefighter
   Mike Hamilton
   Firefighter
   Don Nelson
   Firefighter
   Buddy Collins

Engine 4 -
   Driver
   Chester Campbell
   Firefighter
   Danny Jones
   PSO
   Rick Stevens
   PSO
   J. Vaughn

Ladder 1 -
   Driver
   Jerry Leonard
   Firefighter
   Steve Weaver

Note: PSOs responded, but names are not known.

Tower -
   Driver
   Charles Hawkins
   Snorkel -
   Paul Holder
   PSOs responding -
   8:20 Acting Assistant Chief Roger Tienart
   8:21 Acting Lieutenant Stanley Daniels
   8:22 Lieutenant Acting Captain Mike Nash
APPENDIX C

Floor Plans Showing Point of Origin
APPENDIX D

List of Photographs and Slides

Slides and photographs are included with the master report at the USFA. The pictures on the following pages were made from the items asterisked below. The diagram on the last page shows the position from which the photos were taken in the room of origin.

1. Street view from Roan Street near library shooting up.
2. Street view from Roan Street near library shooting level.
3. Shot from Fondo Circle looking at north entrance.
4. Shot inside from north entrance door, through lobby.
5. Controls for alarm panel (equipment).
6. AOT Fire Alarm Control Panel enunciator for fire alarm system.
7. Annunciator panel for general emergency and smoke alarm for individual rooms. Also, phone for fire use to individual floors for command office.
8. Shot of elevator in lobby north side elevation.
9. Overhead in lobby showing “L” shape vertical penetration to second floor.
10. Shot of Apartment #102 from hallway showing drywall not going to ceiling deck. Only just above drop ceiling.
11. Standpipe hose system next to Apartment #102 (room of origin).
12. Inside the apartment adjacent to Apartment #102 looking up a wall between apartments (drywall did not go to top of ceiling deck).
13. Inside entrance to Apartment #102 (room of origin).
15. Couch, front view (area of origin), in Apartment #102.
16. Right side of couch, showing point of origin in corner at window.
17. Desk area from entry way.
18. Left side of door facing bedroom, left side.
19. Right side of door facing bedroom, right side.
20. View leaving Apartment #102 in hallway.
21. Inside of door frame, Apartment #102, showing where door closure had been removed.
22. Just outside of Apartment #102 in hallway showing burn pattern on door of Apartment #102 which may have been left open by occupant.
23. Smoke detector in Apartment #101 bedroom (similar to detector in all apartments).
29. Landing to second floor fire door.

30. Second floor looking down to mezzanine through burn hole in plywood floor.

31. Outside view from Roan and E. Market looking northeast.

32. Outside view of third floor level from Market Street looking northwest.

33. Outside view of rear of structure from on top of parking garage looking northeast.

34. Outside view from corner of downtown loop and S. Roan Street, looking south.

35. Outside view looking southwest from S. Roan and library.

36. Outside view looking west from S. Roan at Mumsey Church, looking at room of origin.

37. Outside view from top of library looking southwest.
1. Street view from Roan Street near library showing up.
2. Street view from Roan Street near library shooting level.
10. Shot of Apartment #102 from hallway showing drywall not going to ceiling deck. Only just above drop ceiling.
17. Right side of couch, showing point of origin in corner at window.
Second floor looking down to mezzanine through burn hole in plywood floor.