



Loudoun County Fire and Rescue

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For Immediate Release:

Third Fire in Less Than a Month Attributed to Improperly Discarded Smoking Materials

South Riding, VA. - An early morning house fire Sunday is the third in less than a month caused by improperly discarded smoking materials. Fire officials encourage vigilance from citizens and warn of the inherent danger of fires caused by smoking materials.

Sunday, February 5th, just after 7:00 a.m., the Loudoun County Emergency Communication Center dispatched units to a reported structure fire in the 43300 block of Cedar Pond Place in South Riding. Fire and rescue units from South Riding, Brambleton, Moorefield, Dulles Airport and Fairfax County were dispatched. Firefighters arrived on scene and found a single family dwelling with fire coming from the rear deck of the home, extending into the residence. Additional fire and rescue resources were requested to supplement fire crews and ensure the safety of responders. The homeowners were located safely outside upon arrival of firefighters.

Crews worked quickly to extinguish the fire on the exterior and then moved inside to find fire extending up the back of the home and into the attic. Firefighters advanced hoselines into the attic space to put out the remaining fire and check for additional hot spots.

The Loudoun County Fire Marshal's investigation found the cause of the fire to be accidental, resulting from improperly discarded smoking materials in the rear of the home. Damages are estimated at \$100,000 and the family has been displaced. There were no injuries to civilians or firefighters.

The family who occupied the home were alerted to the fire by functioning smoke alarms which allowed them to escape unharmed. They are fortunate that as the fire rapidly spread upward along the outside walls and penetrated into the attic, the heat appears to have been significant enough to break a window, allowing smoke into the home to activate smoke alarms. In a rapidly moving exterior fire, smoke alarms (or sprinklers) may be bypassed and not activate as the fire extends up combustible siding and into the roof. In these situations, there is the potential for catastrophic roof collapse without occupants being aware, potentially trapping them in a deadly fire.

On February 3rd, firefighters responded to a house fire on Eastgate View Drive in Chantilly. A small fire had started on the rear deck of a townhouse as a result of improperly discarded smoking materials. Fortunately, an alert neighbor saw the fire and immediately alerted the residence. Prior to fire department arrival, the tenant had extinguished the fire, containing the damages to the exterior of the structure. Fortunately in this case, the fire was able to be extinguished before extending up the exterior and into the attic and adjoining townhomes. Damages in this incident were estimated at \$5,000 and there were no injuries.

In another incident on January 10th, improperly discarded smoking materials were to blame for a house fire on Harmony Church Road that did \$75,000 in damages and displaced residents. In that fire, two firefighters sustained burn injuries and were transported to a local hospital for care.

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Per the National Fire Protection Association, smoking materials (i.e., cigarettes, cigars, pipes, etc.) are the leading cause of fire deaths in the United States. You can avoid becoming a statistic by following some simple safety measures:

- If you smoke, smoke outside.
- Put your cigarette out in a metal or ceramic container filled with sand or use deep, wide ashtrays on a sturdy table.
- Soak cigarette butts and ashes in water to make sure they are really out before you put them in the trash.
- Never smoke in a home where oxygen is being used.
- Be alert! Don't smoke if you're sleepy, have been drinking, or have taken medicine or drugs that cause drowsiness.
- Keep matches and lighters up high, out of children's sight and reach.

Additionally, the Loudoun County Fire Marshal's Office recommends that every residence have working smoke alarms on each level of the home, inside bedrooms and outside sleeping areas. Loudoun County Fire and Rescue's "Put a Finger on It" smoke alarm program offers free home safety inspections and smoke alarms Loudoun County residents. If your smoke alarms are broken or outdated we will replace them with battery powered alarms at no cost and install additional alarms as necessary. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call the department hotline **703-737-8093** or visit www.loudoun.gov/smokealarms.



Photo credit: Cedar Pond Place-LCFR

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