

Press Release: May 21, 2006

Mountain View Firefighters Complete Garage Fire Investigation

News 4 Video Link: <http://cbs4denver.com/video/?id=17439@kcnc.dayport.com>

Boulder - Investigators from The Mountain View Fire Protection District have completed their investigation into a garage fire that completely destroyed the garage structure and its contents, as well as damaged an adjoining green house Sunday evening.

The owner's 23 year old son, who lives in the house with his parents, was working on a motorcycle in the garage and emptied the bike's fuel tank. He then took the fuel outside in a plastic bucket but soon realized the bucket had leaked some of the fuel on the ground, both inside and outside the garage. Fearing the fuel would not evaporate fast enough, and in an attempt to get rid of it, he lit it on fire. It was then that he realized the fuel was too close to the structure and tried putting it out with a garden hose. The water only served as an accelerant and pushed the flames further into the structure. That's when he called 911 for help, but by the time firefighters arrived it was too late.

Shadow, the arson dog from the Longmont Fire Department, was called in and his tracking proved that arson was not the result of the fire. The fire has been ruled accidental. According to officials, the damage is estimated at approximately \$45,000 to both the structure and its contents

The fire, West of Erie, located at 11874 Billings Ave in Boulder County, was approximately 1/3 involved when firefighters arrived. The lack of sufficient personnel initially at the scene aided in the loss of the structure according to fire officials.

"We are doing the best job we possibly can with the resources we have allocated to us, but sometimes that's not enough," said Jesse Hodgson, spokesman for Mountain View.

"This is a wake up call and we need the support of our citizens to hire more career firefighters and bring on more volunteers. Without that, I am afraid we will have more fires like this where we have to call in all of our neighbors to help us put them out, and that takes time- sometimes more than we have- especially if someone is trapped or injured," Hodgson continued.

Sunday's fire injured both the owner's son and a firefighter. Both were treated for smoke inhalation at the scene and released.

Hodgson pointed out that it takes several firefighters to fight the fire because of the labor intensive work involved in initially trying to get water on a fire. He says that connecting an engine to a hydrant, pulling hose off the truck and getting it to the best place to fight a fire like Sunday's are just a couple of tasks that must be accomplished quickly to be effective. Mountain View responded Sunday with 3 people initially, a battalion chief and an ambulance. An engine from Lafayette was the next to arrive 10 minutes after the initial call and then additional engines from Mountain View were next to arrive.

Citing safety, to increase staff and volunteers, Mountain View asked voters to approve a mill levy increase and bond issue earlier this month, but it was turned down nearly 2-1.

1,047 voters turned out at the polls, out of a potential of more than 20,000 registered voters who reside within Mountain View's response boundaries, which include Erie, Niwot, Dacono, Mead and the rural areas of both Boulder and Weld Counties.

Fire officials are quick to point out that they did everything possible to save the garage and were

successful in protecting a nearby Gazebo and the house.

That's thanks to our command officers and mutual aid departments and their quick response to help us at least keep the fire contained to its origin," Hodgson said.

Responding Sunday evening to the call were Mountain View Fire, Lafayette Fire, Rocky Mountain Fire, Boulder Rural Fire, Frederick/Firestone Fire, Boulder County Paramedics, Pridemark Paramedic Services, Boulder County Sheriff, Erie Police Department, and the Longmont Emergency Unit.

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