

MEMPHIS FIRE DEPARTMENT

Memphis TN

Director's Review Board

Family Dollar Store Fire

June 15, 2003

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Since this report was transcribed from the original, some errors may have been made. This report was proof read several times for accuracy and no errors were identified.

If you come across any inconsistencies with this report and the original please notify me and they will be corrected.

Joe Norman
joenorman@memphisfire.net

www.memphisfire.net

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Family Dollar Store Fire

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On June 15, 2003 (Father's Day) a report of smoke coming from the Family Dollar Store located at 3732 North Watkins was made by three separate 911 calls. The first call came in at 19:43:22. Engines 31, 26, 27, Trucks 11 and 6, and Battalion 2 were dispatched at 19:46:27. Due to multiple calls, Rescue 2, Battalion 11, and Division 1 were dispatched at 19:48:31.

Engine 31 reported on the scene with light smoke showing from the roof and inside the store. They assumed Watkins Command at 19:50:39.

Engine 26 arrived at 19:51:14 and T-11 at 19:51:36. The Lieutenants from E-31 (Lt. Trent Kirk) and E-26 entered the store almost together and saw a light haze inside the store. Visibility was possible throughout the 100' length of the retail space. T-11 was initially sent to raise a ladder and check out the roof.

The Lieutenants on E-31 (Lt. Kirk) and E-26 donned their SCBA, entered the store and made their way to the doorway at the rear of the retail space that led to the twenty-three by seventy foot stock room. A light haze was found and a crackling sound was heard from the north end of the stockroom. In the north-west corner of the stockroom, the Lieutenants found a wood frame office approximately ten by ten feet in size. Immediately upon opening the office door, they encountered a fire that increased in intensity. An unsuccessful attempt was made to close the door.

A call was made by Lt. Kirk for a 1¾" pre-connected line at 19:52:43 over A-9, the fire ground channel. This call was acknowledged by the driver on E-31 and confirmed by E-31B (FF Charles Zachary) with SCBA in full operation asking "where do you want me to come with it?" E-31's Driver stated that they were pulling the two hundred foot line to provide reach to the back of the store.

E-27, T-6 and B-2 arrived on the scene between 19:52:24 and 19:53:59. T-11 was directed by B-2 to pull ceiling having laddered the Delta Sector.

Lt. Kirk reports that he has heavy fire in the rear and orders his driver to lay-out at 19:53:31.

FF Zachary and E-27C with SCBA in full operation laid the first 1¾" line near the back aisle of the store and began firefighting operations. Lt. Kirk was in the rear of the store. E-31C (hook-up Pvt.) was pulling slack inside the store.

T-6 immediately deployed to the rear of the structure per SOP. They positioned their 100' Aerial on the Charlie-Delta corner and began forcible entry operations at the rear door. This thirty-six inch double door was an outward swinging metal assembly with panic hardware installed. It was initially believed and then stated by a store employee, that a burglar bar was likely securing this door. It was not discovered until the door was forced at 20:03:15 that the bar was not in place.

E-26's Lieutenant recognized the distance to the back office and returned to E-31 to begin extending another 1¾" line to ensure proper reach. He was assisted in laying

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this 300 foot line by E-26B. Before this line could be assembled and reach the back of the store, visibility went to zero and high heat was encountered. E-26 established a five inch supply line for E-31.

Command called for an additional engine and truck at 19:57:00. E-6 and T-2 were dispatched.

Command checked with T-6 to see if they had opened the roof. Two members were sent from the rear door to the roof, to begin vertical ventilation at 19:58:19.

Rescue 2 arrived and was assigned to RIT (Rapid Intervention Team) duties in the Alpha sector at 19:59:02.

Battalion 11 arrived in the rear. A store employee reported that the manager could still be inside, as she had just left a short time ago and he was still there. (The store closed at 1800 hrs). B-11 relayed this information. Command then called for T-11 to initiate an interior search of the front of the building.

At 20:00:04 Command called E-31 with no response.

At 20:01:11, B-11 was assigned the Charlie / Delta Sector.

FF Zachary and E-27C observed flames coming from the top of the rear wall in the Bravo / Charlie Sector of the retail area. After operating the hose-line near the back aisle, visibility became almost zero as soon as they hit the fire. FF Zachary told E-27C that he needed some relief and left the nozzle presumably to go outside. Firefighter Zachary's movements are undetermined from this point forward.

It is believed that Lt. Kirk was in the stockroom awaiting arrival of the hoseline. He approached E-27C and directed him to bring the line back into the stockroom where he had reported heavy fire.

The pair turned left inside the stockroom and experienced high heat, hanging debris, falling ceiling, and an open electrical hazard that popped furiously when hit with the hose stream.

During the struggle, E-27C heard a call for help off to his right. The unidentified firefighter indicated he needed help and could not breathe.

Lt. Kirk and E-27C were knocked to their knees by falling debris. E-27C heard Lt. Kirk say that he was trapped. A *Mayday* call from Lt. Kirk came over A-9 at 20:02:03 stating, "Mayday! Mayday! Engine 31, I'm trapped inside!" A low air whistle is heard in the background during this transmission.

At this time, E-26A & B, T-11A, B & D were operating in the rear of the retail space. E-26A heard someone state that it was getting hot and it was time to back out. He believed this to be Lt. Kirk. They determined their position to be untenable after a rollover occurred in which eight to twelve ceiling tiles blew out in the Bravo / Charlie Sector. The crews of E-26 and T-11 struggled with debris and the hoseline for a brief period. As they attempted to leave following the hoseline toward the front door, E-26A ran out of air and fell behind as the two companies exited.

E-27C helped free Lt. Kirk and pulled him to his feet. Lt. Kirk advised E-27C that he was running low on air and wanted to buddy breathe. E-27C was also low on air as indicated by his low air whistle. The decision was made to exit the building by following the hoseline. There were considerable amounts of debris and obstructions that made following the hoseline very difficult. As they struggled toward the front, calls for help could still be heard from the Charlie / Delta area. E-27C felt Lt. Kirk's hand on his boot for the last time as he went over the top of a large pile of debris.

At 20:01:44 Division 1 arrived on the scene and began setting up his command post operation. When the Mayday was given over A-9, Command (B-2) was advising dispatch what equipment was being used and did not hear the transmission. He was advised by Fire Communications that E-31's officer was trapped inside at 20:02:20.

At 20:02:33 Command (B-2) deploys RIT to go in the front door stating that we have a man trapped inside. R-2 hearing the Mayday Call had already began to deploy to the front of the building. E-6B & C pulled a 3rd 1¾" line (150') to check for fire extension in the Bravo Exposure. Upon hearing the Mayday they brought their line to the Alpha Sector to enter the building with R-2.

Division 1 assumed Command, and B-2 became Operations.

Command called for a second alarm at 20:03. The second alarm companies consisted of: E-15, E-46 and E-28, T-4 and T-23, R-1, Hose-Tender 1, Hose-Tender 2, B-4 & B-5, E-19 High Pressure and Div. 2.

R-2 had the Snorkel set to ground station for potential aerial operations on the Alpha / Bravo Sector. The crew of R-2 attached their tag line to the front door and began their search. Heavy smoke and high heat was encountered as they entered the building.

T-6 advised Command that the back door was open at 20:03:13. Operations immediately directed the Positive Pressure Ventilation fan to be turned into the front door. At 20:03:46 Charlie / Delta Sector (B-11) requested additional personnel in the rear of the building for possible rescue. This request was acknowledged by Operations at 20:03:58.

R-2 encountered E-26A approximately twenty five feet inside the store. He was disoriented and out of air. R-2 removed E-26A from the building. R-2 and E-6 personnel entered following the handlines inside. E-27C struggling to exit the building lost the handline as he crawled over a pile of debris. Searching, he was able to find a hoseline. E-27C ran out of air and had removed his facepiece. E-27C, disoriented and fatigued, looked up and was able to see a small light moving toward him. E-6B was carrying this light on his turnout coat and heard E-27C call for help. E-6B & C directed E-27C to R-2 personnel immediately behind them. At 20:06:05, R-2 notified Command they were exiting the building with a downed firefighter and to have an Emergency Unit report to the front of the building. E-27C was found approximately 60' inside the structure without his helmet, hood or face-piece. E-27C informed R-2 that there were still two firefighters inside. Operations called for a Personnel Accountability Report (PAR) at 20:07:54, and command confirmed two firefighters were still missing.

T-6 did not hear they Mayday but performed two separate unprotected entries into the stockroom to search for the reported civilian victim. No one was encountered in either of these entries. On entry into the rear of the building no PASS device was heard during the first search but upon exiting the building the second time, T-6C heard a PASS device sounding inside the building.

SUMMARY: Division 1 has command, Battalion 2 is Operations and both are located in the Alpha Sector. Battalion 11 is in the rear assigned as Charlie / Delta Sector. E-31 is located at the front door with two 1¾" lines laid to the fire. A third 1¾" initially laid to the Bravo Exposure, is being repositioned by E-6's crew for use in the rescue effort. E-26 is serving as a supply engine from a hydrant on Watkins. R-2 is raised to ground station at the Alpha / Bravo corner for potential aerial operations. E-27, the third arriving engine, is positioned 50' south of the Alpha Sector uncommitted. T-11 is also in the Alpha Sector. T-6 is located at the Charlie / Delta corner and is the only fire apparatus in the rear of the structure.

Charlie / Delta (B-11) made two attempts to get additional manpower at 20:09:19 and 20:11:03 in the rear. Having heard a PASS Device, T-6A and T-6C are aware of the missing firefighters. B-11 was reluctant to allow entry without backup personnel or hoseline. He authorized T-6 to make a third entry for rescue of the missing firefighters, upon arrival of Emergency Unit 11. T-6A & C made their way to the inner wall separating the stockroom from the retail area. Reaching the doorway leading to the retail area they could hear an activated PASS Device. Listening, they could now hear two PASS devices activated on either side of the stockroom wall. FF Zachary was found immediately behind the door in the stockroom. T-6A notified command of finding one of the missing firefighters at 20:12:57. He and T-6C removed FF Zachary from the building where Emergency Unit 11 started immediate treatment. FF Zachary was determined to be in full-arrest at this time. T-6C could still hear the second PASS device as he exited the building.

R-2 made their third entry through the front door with two members of T-11. They encountered high heat and dense smoke. R-2A called for a hoseline and advised that they were going to have to put the fire out before further entry could be made. R-2A ran low of air and had to exit. R-2B went with his Lieutenant but R-2C & D continued the search with their thermal imaging camera. T-11B & D assisted R-2A the rest of the way out when his air supply ran completely out.

R-2C & D encountered two members of E-6 on a handline. They were later determined to be E-6B and C. Moving beyond E-6, R-2C & D encountered what they thought was a partial collapse and split up with one going left and one going right.

B-4 & B-11 made two additional requests for manpower at 20:14:05 and 20:14:15. No acknowledgement was recorded at that time.

T-6B reported a sag in the roof and reported a significant amount of fire coming through the Bravo Sector roof between 20:14:26 and 20:15:39. They left the roof and were ordered to the back door for the rescue effort.

B-4 called for Emergency Traffic and more manpower to the Charlie Sector. Operations acknowledged and requested an engine from staging to report to the rear at 20:17:07. R-1 reported they were enroute to the rear at 20:17:17.

E-28 & T-2 & T-4 were sent in the front with a handline in a further attempt at rescue. E-6 & R-2 were continuing search operations also entering through the Alpha Sector. E-15, the first engine to the rear, reported going to the Charlie Sector at 20:19:03. R-1 made entry with E-15's handline through the Charlie Sector door in an attempt at rescue. E-15B & C remained at the door as back-up.

Third alarm was called for at 20:19. The companies were: E-1, E-23, E-13, T-8, T-13, B-1 & B-3.

B-11 observed heavy fire coming from the door behind R-1 and ordered them out of the building at 20:23:06.

Command ordered all personnel out of the building and apparatus air horns blown for evacuation at 20:23:53. Another PAR was called for prior to commencing defensive operations.

SUMMARY UPDATE: E-31 has three 1¾" lines laid into the front door and is supplied by E-26. R-2 is also supplied by E-26 and is operating on the Alpha / Bravo corner utilizing its Snorkel. T-2 is set up in the Alpha / Delta sector being supplied by E-6. T-11 is positioned on the Bravo / Charlie corner supplied by E-15. T-6 is on the Charlie / Delta corner supplied by E-24. E-13 and E-19 were on hydrants supporting these water supply operations.

At 20:42:20 portions of the Charlie / Delta wall collapse into the stockroom effectively cutting off any further rescue attempts from that sector.

A large section of the Delta wall was observed to be structurally unsafe at 20:49:15 due to a reported bulge.

20:57:10 all aerial devices were ordered shut down.

R-1 began breaching a hole in the Bravo Sector at approximately 21:10. The location was based on reports from entry crews and the sound of the PASS device inside the structure. At 21:13:23 a small hole for visibility was made and a visual identification was made on Lt. Trent Kirk.

R-1 & E-13 made entry into the enlarged hole. Lt. Kirk was removed from the building by R-1 and E-13 personnel and passed to awaiting companies outside at 21:26:42. Lt. Kirk was taken to Emergency Unit 5 and later transported to the Regional Medical Center. A quick primary search was initiated in the immediate area for another possible victim (the store manager).

21:31:58 aerial operations resumed. Relief companies, E-10, E-40, E-52, T-16 & T-17 were requested by Command at 23:08.

The fire was reported under control at 21:51. Fire companies remained on the scene throughout the night and morning securing the scene and overhauling.

ATF arrived on the scene at 22:09:42. After conferring with the Memphis Fire Department's Fire Marshal and Investigators, agreed to be lead agency in this fire investigation.

Review Board Members

D/C Donald Ester / D-2A

B/C Henry Posey / B-1A

B/C Jason Stevens / B-10A

B/C Ken Reeves / Special Operations

Lt. Curtis Carpenter, T-3B

Lt. Bill Clark, E-8B

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