



CITY OF HARRISONBURG
**FIRE
DEPARTMENT**

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Adult narrowly escapes fire in home without functioning smoke alarms

HARRISONBURG, Va. – A woman was forced to escape her home through a second story window after a fire erupted in the early morning hours Sunday.

Harrisonburg firefighters were called to the 100 block of E. Weaver Ave. at approximately 1:40 a.m. on March 5 for a reported structure fire with flames coming from the side of the home. First arriving units confirmed an active fire in the residence.

Pets alerted the occupant to the fire, allowing her to escape. The home did not have functioning smoke alarms, and by the time pets alerted the occupant, fire had trapped her from escaping via the interior of the home.

“There is no doubt that this member of our community is extremely lucky to be alive,” Fire Chief Matthew Tobia said. “Fire can be deadly, and this incident highlights the immense importance of functioning smoke alarms. We ask everyone in our community to please check their own smoke alarms and their neighbors, especially those who may be infirmed, mobility limited, or elderly, who are the most at-risk when fires occur.”

The occupant suffered smoke inhalation and was treated and released from a local hospital. All of the pets in the home, including two cats and two dogs, survived. Firefighters were able to bring the fire under control in under 20 minutes. The cause of the fire has been determined to be accidental with damage estimates set at approximately \$65,000 for structure and contents. There were no firefighter injuries during response to this call. The Harrisonburg Fire Department was assisted by Rockingham County Fire Rescue, the Harrisonburg Rescue Squad and the Harrisonburg Police Department.

In the wake of the fire, HFD has several important messages for the community.



(Above) HFD responded to a fire on East Weaver Avenue early Sunday morning. The occupant was able to escape after pets awakened her.

- Install smoke alarms in every bedroom. They should also be outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home. Install alarms in the basement. Large homes may need extra smoke alarms.
- It is best to use interconnected smoke alarms. When one smoke alarm sounds, they all sound.
- Test all smoke alarms at least once a month. Press the test button to be sure the alarm is working.
- Current alarms on the market employ different types of technology including multi-sensing, which could include smoke and carbon monoxide combined.
- Today's smoke alarms will be more technologically advanced to respond to a multitude of fire conditions, yet mitigate false alarms.
- A smoke alarm should be on the ceiling or high on a wall. Keep smoke alarms away from the kitchen to reduce false alarms. They should be at least 10 feet (3 meters) from the stove.
- People who are hard-of-hearing or deaf can use special alarms. These alarms have strobe lights and bed shakers.
- Replace all smoke alarms when they are 10 years old.

HFD offers free smoke and carbon monoxide alarms to Harrisonburg residents. For assistance with free smoke alarms or questions about fire safety, Harrisonburg residents can call 540-432-7703.

The Harrisonburg Fire Department is an ISO-Class II All-Hazards agency providing essential emergency and non-emergency life safety services to the public who live, work and travel in Harrisonburg. More information about the Fire Department is available on-line at www.harrisonburgva.gov/fire or on Facebook[®], Twitter[®] and Instagram[®].

The City of Harrisonburg is centrally located in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. It is home to approximately 55,700 people. More information about the City of Harrisonburg is online at www.HarrisonburgVA.gov.



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