

Heartland Nursing Home Evacuated After Fire

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By Christina Marnik

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Firefighters evacuate all the residents of Heartland of Martinsburg, a senior care facility, due to an electrical fire Tuesday evening. (Journal photo by Ron Agnir) MARTINSBURG - Approximately 110 residents at an area nursing home were evacuated Tuesday evening after a fire started in the facility's basement.

Fire engines and ambulances were dispatched to Heartland of Martinsburg, which is located at 209 Clover St., at approximately 6:03 p.m. Tuesday for a suspected electrical fire.

A total of 10 residents were taken to Martinsburg City Hospital for treatment of minor smoke inhalation. The remaining residents will spend the night at North Middle School, where food and any necessary medication will be provided. The American Red Cross will also be supplying cots for residents to sleep on.

"Our residents have been transported to City Hospital and North Middle School, and our staff is all there with them, and they're being very well taken care of," said Mark Wilson, regional director of operations at the facility. "We're contacting the families now and letting them know their loved ones are taken care of."

Fire officials are not yet sure what caused the blaze, but said it was contained to one room in the basement of the facility, where electrical equipment was stored.

Some smoke damage was also found throughout the basement, said Andrew DeHaven, deputy fire chief at Bedington Fire Dept.

It took firefighters about 10 minutes to put out the fire, but it took approximately 40 minutes to evacuate the 110 residents, he said.

"It was difficult to keep it orderly. There's a lot going on when you're trying to evacuate, you're trying to put the fire out, you're trying to keep control of people," DeHaven said. "Everything went pretty smoothly."

About 35 staff members were also in the building during the time.

Wilson said the building will need to be cleaned and repaired, but it should be ready for residents to return to within 24 to 48 hours.

Several fire and medical emergency departments responded to the scene. They include: Martinsburg Fire Department, Hedgesville Fire Department, Shepherdstown Fire Department and several units from Virginia and Washington County, Md.

The fire at Heartland and the immediate response by emergency services personnel from throughout Berkeley County and the entire local area appeared to have caused a delay for a student injured during a boys basketball game Tuesday night at Musselman.

A junior varsity Musselman player who suffered a dislocated knee injury late in the game's third

quarter reportedly had to wait longer than normal for an ambulance to arrive because so many ambulances were already assisting at Heartland.

The student was cared for by a crew from Frederick County, Va., according to a manager at Berkeley County 911 Central Dispatch, who added that a Berkeley County unit was on its way but the Virginia ambulance was able to make it to the scene first. The dispatcher did not know if the student was taken to the hospital.

- Staff writer Christina Marnik can be reached at (304) 263-8931, ext. 182, or cmarnik@journal-news.netAdd Content...