



## ARCATA FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

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631 NINTH STREET, ARCATA, CA 95521-6204  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### McKINLEYVILLE STRUCTURE FIRE

McKINLEYVILLE, CA- (October 31, 2013)- Arcata Fire District personnel responded to 1131 Silverado Avenue in McKinleyville after receiving a report for a residential structure fire. Firefighters arrived and found a small fire located in one of the bedrooms. The occupants had escaped after numerous unsuccessful attempts to extinguish the fire themselves. AFD Firefighters began an offensive fire attack and quickly contained the fire to one bedroom.



The homeowner advised she had fallen asleep on the sofa and was awoken by the sound of her smoke alarm activating. When she investigated the reason for her smoke alarm activating, she discovered the fire was burning on a mattress, night stand and quickly spreading up the wall toward the ceiling. The occupants' first reaction was to wake her daughter up, and have her call 911. Before the 911 dispatcher could ascertain information that the house was on fire, the call was disconnected. The dispatcher sent a HCSO deputy and one engine to investigate because she had heard the word "smoke" during the first call. The mother and daughter were attempting to extinguish the fire using pans of water. After three unsuccessful attempts she and her daughter fled the structure. After numerous attempts to re-contact the cell phone, the dispatcher was successful in getting through to the daughter. It was then that the dispatcher confirmed there was a fire inside of the house and



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a full response was dispatched. During the numerous attempts by the dispatcher to re-contact the daughter, the mother broke out the exterior window to the bedroom and made a second attempt to extinguish the fire with a garden hose. The fire was knocked down but not extinguished. When the first engine arrived, firefighters made entry and contained the fire.

Both occupants sustained minor injuries during their attempt to extinguish the fire. One sustained second degree burns to her foot while the second sustained a laceration to her hand. Neither victim sought medical attention for their injuries.

Battalion Chief Campbell reported, "We are grateful this family had working smoke alarms in place because that is what saved their lives. This fire was growing rapidly and had the ability to spread throughout the entire house without early detection from smoke alarms. Although they did a great job slowing the fires progress, these ladies really put themselves in harm's way. I can't say I blame them for their actions but I wish all of the necessary information could have been shared during the first 911 call. This one almost got away from them and a delayed fire response could have resulted in more damage or more severe injuries."

The homeowner indicated she had a candle burning on the night stand next to the bed. She indicated she had lit the candle, left the room then fell asleep on the sofa.

Battalion Chief Campbell reports, "Candles are extremely hazardous. There are LED candles available which offer a much safer option for this type of ambiance. Time and time again I have witnessed families lose everything they own because of a candle left unattended. Thankfully the family had working smoke alarms in this incident".

Damage to contents is estimated at \$11,202 with a value saved at \$112,016.  
Damage to the property is estimated at \$14,936 with a value saved at \$149,355.

The Arcata Fire Protection District would like to remind everyone to check their smoke alarms monthly and change the batteries on November 3, 2013 during daylight savings. Smoke alarms save lives!

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