

Police: Kids playing with lighter sparked fire

By **Jim Herr** - August 1, 2017



Firefighters from Cheektowaga and Buffalo fight a house fire on Shanley Street. August 1, 2017. (Jim Herr/Cheektowaga Chronicle)

CHEEKTOWAGA, N.Y. – Detectives assigned to the Cheektowaga Police Fire Investigation Unit say kids playing with fire caused Tuesday evening’s fire on Shanley Street.

Multiple fire companies from across the Town of Cheektowaga and the City of Buffalo joined forces to fight the flames at 402 Shanley Street.

The fire started in a garage and spread to a two-family house and a utility shed.

Cheektowaga’s Assistant Chief of Police Jim Speyer told Cheektowaga Chronicle Thursday that the fire was caused by kids playing with a lighter. No charges will be filed.

Two families were displaced by the fire. The American Red Cross said they are assisting a total of 13 people Wednesday morning.

The first call for help was dispatched to firefighters from Doyle Hose around 4:40 pm. Multiple fire companies were then called out to assist.

Chief Don Szumigala from the Doyle Hose Company described the scene, "I could see heavy smoke and fire conditions coming from the garage that extended into the rear of the house."

Because the fire was located on the City line, Buffalo firefighters were also dispatched to the scene to assist.

"Based on the placement, Buffalo was dispatched at the same time we were. They sent two trucks as well as our trucks. We called for additional resources more for manpower than for actual need of trucks," added Chief Szumigala.

The fire encroached on a shed across the city line, but because the main fire was in the Town, Cheektowaga Police will be handling the entire fire investigation.

There were no issues between the Town and City at the fire scene. "It actually becomes really helpful," the Chief said, "because Buffalo has some excellent guys that can come and help us out, being that they're on duty all the time. They can get here a few seconds before we get here by the time we grab our trucks and go. We have a very good relationship with the City and we work very well with them."

The extra crews were needed because some of the regulations on the fire departments meant that the firefighters could only go into the scene twice before they are mandated to rest.

One of the neighbors came home to find flames from the garage spreading from the house. Jan Winkowski told the Cheektowaga Chronicle, "It was really smoking before there were a lot of flames."

Winkowski said the fire spread very fast. "It all went pretty quick."

The chief agreed, he didn't have an exact time line, but he thought the scene went up in about ten minutes or less.



Buffalo firefighters help vent heat and smoke from a house fire on Shanley Street. August 1, 2017. (Jim Herr/Cheektowaga Chronicle)



Doyle firefighters overhaul a burnt garage on Shanley Street. August 1, 2017. (Jim Herr/Cheektowaga Chronicle)

Initial reports from a fire official said two people were inside the house when the fire started in the garage, but they got themselves out safely.

After evacuating, the families went across the street to Partner's Pizza. They were being taken care of with some water and pop while they waited for the Red Cross to arrive. The kids were also in the restaurant watching the Cartoon Network on television.

Damages are initially estimated to be around \$100,000 to \$150,000.



