

Bad light bulb installation sparks fire at Bend assisted living facility

by Cheryl McDermott

Fire inspectors said that improper installation of two fluorescent light bulbs in a fixture over a bathroom sink was the cause of a fire in one unit of an assisted living facility in northeast Bend on Tuesday afternoon, and credited the building's sprinkler and alarm systems in addition to well-prepared and quick-acting staff for saving lives and property.

Firefighters responded to an alarm at the Awbrey House at 2825 NE Neff Road about 2:30 p.m., November 20, Bend Fire Inspector Cindy Kettering said. By the time units arrived, a fire in the bathroom of Unit 133 had already been extinguished "by a single sprinkler head.

Kettering said that installation of the bulbs allowed one of two pins on the end of each bulb to be improperly seated, and the exposed pins heated up and melted the surrounding plastic fixture cover, ultimately causing a fire.

The \$3-million building suffered \$3,000 in damage, with an additional \$1,000 damage to contents, the inspector estimated.

The staff did everything right, Kettering said. When the alarm sounded, they immediately focused on the safety of the residents, and followed an emergency evacuation plan. A resident was asleep just a few feet away in an adjacent unit, and a single sprinkler head extinguished the fire.

This is the third time this year that a building's sprinkler system saved lives and property, Kettering said, urging residents to consider installing home fire sprinkler systems. "The combination of working smoke alarms and a home fire sprinkler system reduces your risk of dying in a fire by over 90%", she said.

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