

Fire breaks out on White House grounds

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- Hundreds of federal employees dashed to safety while a Marine broke a fifth-floor window to escape when fire erupted on the White House grounds Wednesday. White House Press Secretary Dana Perino said the two-alarm blaze in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, located across the street from the West Wing of the White House, appeared to have started in an electrical closet or a telephone room not far from U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney's second-floor ceremonial suite. City fire officials said it didn't appear suspicious in nature. The flames didn't reach the vice president's office but a Cheney spokeswoman said the office sustained smoke and water damage. Cheney was with U.S. President George Bush in the White House Situation Room for an intelligence briefing when the fire started about 9:15 a.m., the White House said. The two leaders were told of the fire when they returned to the Oval Office and later went outside to shake hands with firefighters. The Marine who found himself stranded on a section of roof in his full dress uniform was quickly reached by rescue personnel. He suffered minor cuts. The Eisenhower building was erected in the latter half of the 19th century.

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