

Cigarette likely cause of SE Bend mobilehome fire

by Cheryl McDermott

Residents of a mobilehome in southeast Bend with no working smoke alarm were lucky to escape unharmed early Sunday when they smelled smoke from a fire which was sparked by a smoldering cigarette in a bedroom, fire officials reported.

The homeowner at space 70 in the Country Sunset Mobile Home Park at 61445 SE 27th Street noticed smoke coming from a back bedroom about 1:15 a.m., Fire Inspector Dan Derlacki reported in a news release. They found a small fire and quickly moved to extinguish it, believing they had put it out.

However, when firefighters arrived at the mobilehome owned by Rebecca VerValen, Derlacki said they found light smoke and discovered the fire was still burning. They contained the fire to the room of origin, and performed "salvage and overhaul operations" to remove the hazard, the inspector reported.

Derlacki said during an investigation they found a cigarette caught between the headboard and mattress which had apparently smoldered for quite some time before catching fire. Fire officials estimated \$3,000 in damage to the trailer - valued at \$11,000 - and additional \$3,000 loss to contents.

The fire inspector reminded citizens that if a fire is suspected in your home, you should immediately evacuate the building. "Trying to put the fire out on your own can put your life at risk," he said. He also said a working smoke alarm can save lives, and invites residents to contact the fire department with any questions about smoke alarms, or for assistance in obtaining an alarm.

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