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No injuries in Sonoma fire

Neal Ross | Sonoma Valley Sun

Two people, six birds and a pair of dogs are safe following a fire this morning at the Sonoma Commons townhouse complex on West Spain Street.

“Looks like the fire was confined to the dryer and a little bit of the laundry room,” John Franceschi, Division Chief with the Sonoma Valley Fire and Rescue Authority, said over the roar of engines and ventilators. He added that the building’s sprinkler kept the fire from spreading and that the exact cause was still under investigation. “The dryer and washer are in a little laundry room closet, and it burned half the door off.”

The blaze began around 10:10 a.m. on the upper level of a two-story building in West Spain Street’s 800 block. Four engines from the SVFRA were the first to respond, and dark smoke poured from the apartment’s front door as firefighters uncoiled hoses and pulled them up the outside stairs. A second alarm went out at 10:17 a.m. summoning a Cal Fire engine from the agency’s Glen Ellen station.

No injuries had been reported by press time. An unidentified woman who lived on the lower level was awakened by a neighbor pounding on the door. The unit’s upper residents Tish Thames and her daughter, Sammy, wiped back tears as they waited for news of their two four-year-old Brussels griffon dogs, Autumn and Teddy, who were still inside.

“I saw smoke coming on the top of my room, like right above the door ... I screamed ‘Mom’ a few times and then I didn’t hear anything,” Sammy said, adding that a neighbor had unsuccessfully tried to retrieve the dogs before crews arrived.

Crews pulled out the apartment’s window screens and started a ventilator, and a short time afterward while one firefighter carried out the burned laundry room door. At 10:23 the smoke began to dissipate. A minute later the Cal Fire crew arrived, their yellow turnouts mingling with the SVFRA black, and shortly afterward a SVFRA firefighter carried from the lower apartment a large birdcage with six small birds – all alive and chirping, their broccoli and romaine breakfast intact.

At 10:28 a.m., crews began withdrawing the hoses. Moments later, the Thames’ erupted in happy shrieks as one dog, bewildered but safe, was carried down the stairs by a grinning SVFRA firefighter – followed shortly by another firefighter and the other dog.

Both dogs were taken to a local veterinarian for evaluation. “We’re just like, really ecstatic they’re alive,” Sammy said.