



Palm Beach County Fire Rescue

INCIDENT REPORT

Official Law Enforcement Report - Unauthorized Dissemination is Prohibited

Incident Type: Fire / Accidental

Agency Incident ID: 18118136

BATS ID: 935185

Investigation Title: Oliphant Fire Report

Incident Date/Time/Location

Status

Investigation Closed

Jurisdiction

Primary

Start Date/Time

11/10/2018 21:33 Saturday

Address

1402 North D Street

City/State/Zip

Lake Worth, FL 33460

County

Palm Beach County

Investigator Information

Name

Joshua Faircloth

Phone

561-616-7054

Email

jfaircloth@pbcgov.org

Title

Law Enforcement Fire Inv

Badge Number

24740

Property Use or Target Information



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Scene Details

Area of Origin/Device Placement

Area of Origin

Function Areas

Area of Origin Subtype

Bedroom - < 5 persons; included are jail or prison

Fire Descriptors

Electrical Device

Ordinary Combustibles

Damage and Casualties

Est. Damage

\$170000.00

Pre Incident Value

\$191310.00

Primary Gov't Association

No Government Association

Miscellaneous Information

External Case Number

18143391

Sky Conditions

Mostly Cloudy

Wind Speed/Direction

9 / NE

Temperature

77F

Method of Entry

Not Applicable

Latitude

26.633066

Longitude

-80.061591

Investigator Right of Entry

Exigent Circumstances



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Contact Arrival

Requesting Person	Requesting Agency	Requested Date	Arrival Date	Scene Released Date
Chief Spiegelhalter	PBCFR	11/10/2018 9:40 PM	11/10/2018 10:27 PM	11/10/2018 12:41 AM



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Person/Organization Information

Name

OLIPHANT, ELIJAH J

DOB

8/4/1984

Sex

M

Juvenile

No

Relationship(s)

Occupant, Owner

Eye Color

Brown

Hair Color

Brown

Race

White

Ethnicity

Non-Hispanic

Age at time of Incident

34

Height

5' 10"

Weight

180

Drivers License Info

DL Number

O415-210-84-284-0

State

FL

Country

USA

Issue Date

7/6/2018

Expiration Date

8/4/2026



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Name

OLIPHANT, SHARON G

DOB

7/27/1988

Race

White

Ethnicity

Non-Hispanic

Sex

F

Age at time of Incident

30

Juvenile

No

Relationship(s)

Occupant, Owner

Eye Color

Brown

Hair Color

Brown

Height

5' 10"

Weight

135

Address Information

Street Address

1402 North D Street

City/State/Zip

Lake Worth, FL 33460

County

Palm Beach County

Contact Information

Primary Phone

561-223-5746



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Attachments

Filename	Description	Date
DSC_0208.JPG		11/16/2018





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DSC_0210.JPG

11/16/2018





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DSC_0215.JPG

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DSC_0214.JPG

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DSC_0223.JPG

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DSC_0225.JPG

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DSC_0223.JPG

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DSC_0233.JPG

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DSC_0234.JPG

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DSC_0242.JPG

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DSC_0263.JPG

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DSC_0264.JPG

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DSC_0265.JPG

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DSC_0266.JPG

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DSC_0270.JPG

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DSC_0271.JPG

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Narrative(s)

Title

Oliphant Fire Report

Author

Joshua Faircloth

5616167054

jfaircloth@pbcgov.org

Description

SYNOPSIS

The opinion expressed in this report was based upon the totality of the investigation that was conducted, including examination of the scene, witness interviews, and a review of scientific literature. Based upon these factors, the residential structure fire on November 10, 2018 at 1402 North D Street Lake Worth Florida, was classified as accidental. The analysis of the fire intensity and movement patterns indicated that the area of fire origin was the south bedroom, which was utilized as an office. The cause of the fire was from an unspecified electrical malfunction involving lithium-ion batteries from an electric bike (E-Bike). The fire spread to other combustible materials throughout the room and progressed into the attic. There were no reported injuries as a result of this fire. This case is closed pending further investigative information.

INVESTIGATOR'S ACTIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

INITIAL INFORMATION

Palm Beach County Fire Rescue Department (PBCFR) responded to a reported residential structure fire. Dispatch records indicated that PBCFR engine 91 was dispatched to the scene at 2133 hours and arrived at 2139 hours. PBCFR Chief Craig Spiegelhalter was the incident commander and requested an investigator to respond to the scene. At the time I received this assignment, I was the on call investigator.

Chief Spiegelhalter stated that PBCFR units were dispatched to the scene for a residential structure fire. Engine 91 was the first engine on scene. Engine 91 reported active smoke and flames extending from the south side of the structure. Upon entry fire was located in the south bedroom and attic space. The fire was extinguished and no injuries were reported as a result of this incident. He requested an investigator to respond to conduct an origin and cause investigation.

Palm Beach County Sheriff's Deputy Eves ID 25511 provided PBSO case number 18143391.

STRUCTURE DESCRIPTION

The structure was a single family residential dwelling. The overall structure measured approximately 1559 total square feet. The interior of the structure consisted of three (3) bedrooms and one (1) bathroom. The construction for this structure was determined through post fire examination. The structure was located within



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a residential area and was located on the east side of North D Street.

The exterior walls were constructed of painted concrete block. The interior walls were constructed of wood studs covered with drywall. The roof construction consisted of wood trusses covered with plywood and composite type shingles. The structure was constructed on a poured concrete slab facing west.

The electric utilities were in service at the time of the fire. They were supplied by Florida Power and Light via a service drop located on the north side of the property. There was no gas service to the property. The electrical wiring was protected by circuit breakers. The property was maintained and consistent with other properties in the area. According to the Palm Beach County Property Appraiser this structure was built in 1951.

The structure's active and passive fire protection systems were evaluated, documented, and analyzed; in conjunction with applicable codes, standards, and guides. These fire protection systems were determined not to play a significant role in the evolution of the fire.

SCENE EXAMINATION

A systematic approach was utilized for the examinations with progressions made from the exterior areas to the interior areas and from areas suspected of having the least damage to areas of greater damage with an emphasis on the recognition, identification, and analysis of fire, heat, and ventilation patterns. All examinations were conducted in a clockwise direction. A perimeter search of the area was conducted and no unusual containers or devices were found, which were unusual for the environment. Photographs of the fire scene were taken in a clockwise motion using a Nikon, D5200 Digital Camera with AF-S DX 18-55mm lens. The scene photos were recorded onto a media card and a sketch of the scene was completed. Prior to leaving the scene all tools and boots were cleaned using a positive pressure water source.

EXTERIOR EXAMINATION

The exterior examination was initiated at the front (west side) of the dwelling. Smoke staining was observed under the soffits on all four sides of the residence. Heavy smoke staining and thermal damage took place to the attic vents on the north and south sides of the structure. Thermal damage caused stress fractures in the concrete exterior walls around the south bedroom. Heavy smoke staining took place above the exterior south bedroom door. The upper wood portions of the exterior door frame for the south bedroom suffered fire damage and were charred. During extinguishment efforts holes were cut into the roof and the exterior south door was removed from the doorway.

INTERIOR EXAMINATION

The interior examination was initiated at the front (west side) of the building. The structure was orientated with the front door opening to a living room. Located to the north of the living room was the dining room,



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and kitchen. Orientated to the east of the kitchen was a hallway leading to two bedrooms and a bathroom. Located to the south of the front door was a bedroom, which was utilized as an office. Heavy smoke staining took place throughout the residence. A clear line of demarcation took place in the living room and dining room. It extended down approximately four feet from the ceiling. The wall in the living room that bordered the south bedroom (room of origin) exhibited signs of calcination. Smoke staining took place throughout the attic of the structure.

AREA OF ORIGIN

The south bedroom was examined. The room was orientated with a desk, computer, TV and chair on the west wall. Located on the east wall was a couch. Along the north wall on both sides of the door opening was shelving. All of these items suffered heavy fire damage. Due to extinguishment efforts all of the gypsum board in the room was pulled down. This exposed the wood truss and plywood located in the attic. They were smoke stained and charred due to flame impingement. I located the burned remains of an electrical bike in the fire debris near the exterior south door. I recovered the burned remains of the battery cell for the bike on the floor approximately five feet away from the bike. The battery was near the entry door leading from the south bedroom into the living room. Photos of the battery cell were taken on the floor; where the item was recovered. I then repositioned the battery on to the desk and placed an evidence placard next to it. The fire, heat, and ventilation patterns were consistent with the fire taking place in the south bedroom at floor level.

WITNESS STATEMENTS

In an interview with the owner/occupant Elijah Oliphant, identified by his Florida driver's license, I learned the following:

- He brought his electric bike inside in order to charge the battery.
- He took the battery off of the bicycle and placed it on the floor near his desk.
- His wife then asked him to help her get their child ready for bed.
- He walked away from the battery and it began smoke and hum.
- He ran to get some water. At that moment the battery began to burst into flames.
- He and his family made it out of the residence without harm.

In an interview with the owner/occupant Sharon Oliphant, identified by her Florida driver's license, I learned the following:

- She advised she heard Elijah yell fire she saw smoke filling the residence.
- She ran outside with her family.
- She advised they purchased the bicycle in June 2018 as well as the battery. The battery was universal and not a Mongoose brand.
- She advised the electric bicycle was a Mongoose. The brand of the lithium-ion battery was Hailong - 3 model number 52B-17.5AH.
- She advised they were up to date on their mortgage payments and not behind on any bills.



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EVIDENCE COLLECTION

The Scan Disk SD picture card was sent to the PBSO photo lab for processing.

OTHER INVESTIGATIVE INFORMATION

A computer search on Elijah and Sharon Oliphant revealed no prior insurance claims related to fire. Furthermore, a search of the property revealed no prior insurance claims related to fire.

I was unable to locate any failure information on the lithium-ion battery.

INVESTIGATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

A number of hypotheses evolved during the investigation that were considered as to what role they may or may not have played in the cause and spread of this fire. The following hypotheses are some that were considered, and where appropriate, ultimately ruled out as a cause for this fire:

WEATHER

A check with weatherunderground.com revealed no lightning strikes, prior to or during the fire. As a result, the weather was eliminated as a possible cause of the fire.

SELF HEATING AND SELF IGNITION

There had been no recent remodeling, painting, staining, or processes involving any material commonly known to spontaneously heat in the area of origin. As a result, self-heating and self-ignition was eliminated as a possible cause for the fire.

SMOKING

During my scene examination, I found no signs of any discarded smoking materials in the area of origin. As a result, smoking was eliminated as a possible cause for the fire.

CANDLES

During my scene examination, I found no candles or candle like materials in the area of origin. As a result, candles were eliminated as a possible cause for the fire.



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RESISTIVE HEATING AND ELECTRICAL ISSUES

During the scene examination, I found the burned remains of a lithium ion battery on the floor near the entry way leading from the south bedroom into the living room. This was the area where the homeowner/occupant Elijah Oliphant advised he had placed the battery prior to the fire. Elijah witnessed the battery begin to smoke and burst into flames. As a result, I was unable to eliminate resistive heating and electrical issues as a cause for the fire.

CRIMINAL HUMAN ACTION

I examined the possibility that a criminal human action was responsible. Elijah and Sharon and their child were the only ones present at the time of the fire. The fire occurred inside the south bedroom. They were the only ones who had access to this area at the time of the fire. During their statements they did not advise anyone had broken into the home. As a result, criminal human action was eliminated as a possible cause for the fire.

CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH

The aforementioned fire was classified as accidental. The area of fire origin was identified as the south bedroom. An unspecified electrical malfunction with a lithium-ion battery was identified as the cause of the fire. The homeowner witnessed the battery suffer the malfunction. The fire, heat, and ventilation patterns were consistent with the fire originating from the south bedroom. There is no further information on his incident at this time. This case is closed pending further investigative information.



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Law Enforcement Fire Inv - Faircloth, Joshua

Date

Approving Official

Date