

BROOME COUNTY FIREFIGHTERS' ASSOCIATION

BROOME COUNTY, NEW YORK

Two Alarm Inferno Leaves Young Man Dead in Binghamton

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Photos by R. Allen & G. Kilpatrick



R. Allen Photo - The residence at 20 Milford St as crews arrive on scene.

At 03:28 hours on the morning of Thursday, March 17, 2011, the tones rang in the City of Binghamton for a reported house fire at 20 Milford Street on the city's East Side. Upon arrival crews were met with a two and a half story, wood frame, single family dwelling with significant fire involvement on the outside front half of the house and extension into the inside. Crews were also faced with reports of people trapped in the residence. Due to these circumstances the duty chief in Car 21 immediately requested the 2nd alarm be struck.

Right from the time of arrival crews faced an issue with apparatus placement due to live electrical wires arching on the street in front of the structure. This issue was quickly overcome by stretching hand lines to the back of the house and entering through the still uninvolved rear of the residence. An aggressive attack and primary search was initiated in an attempt to locate any victims inside. This offensive attack was continued for as long as possible until deteriorating conditions caused a need to evacuate all crews from the structure.

At this point crews did a PAR check to make sure all personnel were accounted for and quickly changed operations to a defensive attack. Reports from family members that were in the residence at the time of the fire were now confirming that one member of the family was still unaccounted for. Several family members were taken to local hospitals after they barely escaped the fire by way of the rear porch area of the house with the help of neighbors, a neighbor's ladder, and City of Binghamton police.



G. Kilpatrick photo- Crews work to change operations from offensive to defensive.

As crews continued to fight the fire from the exterior, a brief period of low water pressure was experienced and a request made for the City of Binghamton Water Department, however this problem was quickly rectified. Also a short time into this fire a second house fire was reported only a few blocks away at 5 Gaylord Street. Quint 2 which had not completely committed to the Milford Street fire was assigned to respond to Gaylord Street along with one of the responding assistant chiefs. Mutual Aid standby companies were also requested to begin responding to this second fire.

The fire on Gaylord Street was quickly determined to be a small fire on the outside of the residence and had been put out by residents with the help of neighbors and a fire extinguisher prior to the arrival of responding units. Units assigned to this fire responded back to the Milford Street fire and mutual aid companies were reassigned to backfill stations to provide adequate coverage while Binghamton units were tied up on scene.

Crews put in several hours of hard work to bring this fire under control. Several partial collapses were also experienced in the front portion of the residence which exposed this structure to be balloon frame, which had allowed for quick and easy fire spread through the walls. After extinguishment was complete and City of Binghamton DPW had alleviated the most severe collapse hazards using tractors, firefighters were able to begin the search for the missing resident. Unfortunately, the 17 year old male was found deceased in what was left of the front portion of the structure where initial attack crews had been unable to reach.

Initial reports have listed both the Milford Street and Gaylord Street fires as suspicious and investigations are ongoing through the City of Binghamton Fire Marshal's office. Due to the fatality at the Milford Street fire the case is also being treated as a homicide investigation by the City of Binghamton Police Department. On another note Binghamton's east side and Engine 4 have been very busy over the last week having responded to two other unrelated fires including a natural gas explosion that severely damaged and blew the roof off a house only a few doors away at 31 Milford Street as well as another working house fire a few blocks north on Bingham Street.



G. Kilpatrick photo - Heavy fire vents from the attic as crews work to contain the blaze.



G. Kilpatrick photo - A crew works to extinguish the fire from side A.

Fire investigation staff remained on scene through most of the day as the structure was torn down due to instabilities and severe structural damage. In total Binghamton Fire responded a full response including a response to the scene by the spare engine and the spare tower to headquarters for standby, both staffed with off duty personnel. Mutual Aid standby was provided by Johnson City Fire Department, Vestal Fire Department, Five Mile Point Fire Department with a relocation of a tower ladder and crew, and Port Dickinson Fire Department with a relocation of an engine and crew both to Binghamton Fire Headquarters.



G. Kilpatrick photo - Crews continue to work at completely extinguishing the fire



G. Kilpatrick photo- A crew works on side D in an attempt to keep the fire in the front portion of the structure.



G. Kilpatrick photo- Multiple hose streams are directed at side A of the structure.



G. Kilpatrick photo- Very little is left of the front portion of the residence as crews continue to flow water.