



# News Release

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## Severe Thunderstorm Cause Fires in Henrico

On Thursday July 29<sup>th</sup> a severe thunderstorm swept through Henrico County causing major damage and three major fires in its wake.

The first fire was located in an apartment complex in the West End of Henrico. There were multiple telephone calls received for a fire in The Reflections of West Creek Apartments. When crews arrived on scene, they saw fire coming through the roof of the building. With reports of fire showing the first arriving crews asked for additional crews on the assignment bringing more fire crews to assist in firefighting and possibly rescue operations. Crews made an aggressive interior attack, and limited the majority of the fire damage to one apartment. Some apartments on the lower level sustained substantial water damage during firefighting operations. There were no reported injuries either civilian or firefighter. The Hilton Hotel reportedly offered rooms for the residents of the twelve displaced apartments. Witnesses in the building at the time of the fire report that they felt the building get struck by lightning. The fire reportedly started immediately afterward. **This fire was confirmed as a lightning strike.**

The second fire involved a single family residence and was located in the 600 block of Carrington Green Place. The home was occupied at the time. They heard a 'Pop' and as they were in the process of checking the house when they began to smell smoke, and a neighbor arrived informing them smoke was coming from the roof line. The first arriving fire unit in this case was a fire medic unit which was able to assist the family in evacuating the house. When the first arriving fire unit arrived they found fire from the roof on the front side of the house. Crews attempted to make an interior attack on the fire; however the fire had progressed past a point of safe interior firefighting. The crews were pulled out of the structure and fought the fire from the outside with large caliber handlines and an aerial master stream. After the bulk of the fire was knocked down, crews again made an interior attack to extinguish the rest of the fire. There were no reported civilian or

firefighter injuries. The house was a total loss. ***This fire was confirmed as a lightning strike.***

The third fire was at 7525 Staples Mill Road. This is a commercial building housing the Virginia Dental Association. It was reported by the buildings occupants that they heard a “boom” and felt the building shake. The occupants self evacuated with the assistance of a volunteer firefighter from Hanover County who was nearby at the time. After the occupants had come out of the building, they saw smoke coming from the roof at the front left side of the building. The first arriving crews found fire from the roof. A “second alarm” was called to bring more equipment and personnel to the scene to assist in the firefighting operation. Due to the advanced progression of the fire; it was fought from the outside with large caliber handlines and aerial master streams. There were no reported civilian or firefighter injuries. The building is a total loss. ***This fire was confirmed as a lightning strike.***

During the period of the storm and immediately after (5:00pm-8:30pm), Henrico County 911 received 131 calls for service. In the first twenty five minutes, Henrico responded to and mitigated three major fires, and a smaller fire in the East End of the County. There was a power failure at the communications center due to a lightning strike that caused the county to go to a back-up dispatch system. The large volume of calls and the power failure associated with this time frame, taxed the Division’s resources to its limit. This resulted in extended response times. Hanover Fire and EMS assisted Henrico Fire in mutual aid, providing two engine companies to help mitigate the high call volume.

**If you have additional questions, please contact Assistant Fire Marshal Will Shumate [shu08@co.henrico.va.us](mailto:shu08@co.henrico.va.us) (804)349-2241**

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