



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Photos courtesy Beaufort Fire Department:

1. A firefighter emerges from inside the blazing apartment
2. An exterior view of the Stuart Town Apartment fire

Kitchen fire sparks blaze at Stuart Town Apartments Monday evening

A kitchen fire quickly grew out of control in a Port Royal apartment Monday evening, causing major damage and injuring the resident, fire officials said.

The fire started when the resident at Stuart Town Apartments was frying food and the oil caught fire. Open doors fanned the flames, which quickly spread to the living areas. When firefighters arrived moments after the 6:37 p.m. alarm, flames already were climbing out of the apartment windows and the front door, Beaufort Fire Chief Sammy Negrón said.

The resident suffered burns to his hand, forearm and foot when he tried to carry the hot pan and oil outside of the apartment, Negrón said.

“This was a very dangerous situation that could have been even more tragic in this apartment complex,” Negrón said. “Residents quickly reported the fire and we had firefighters on the scene within minutes, working hard to extinguish the flames.”

Beaufort County EMS treated the resident for minor burns. Firefighters remained on the scene until about 10 p.m. and contained fire and smoke damage to just the one apartment. An adjacent unit suffered minor water damage.

To combat the fire, 23 firefighters including a crew from Burton fire district worked at the apartment complex near Ribaut Road That included four fire engines and three squads with support from the Burton Fire District.

More than half of all residential fires in the United States start in the kitchen and are caused when the cook isn't paying attention. The best way to prevent a kitchen fire is to stay in the kitchen and avoid distractions. If you must leave the kitchen, turn off the burners, Negron said.

The National Fire Protection Agency has documented that 86 percent of fire related deaths and 77 percent of fire related injuries are a result of fires which begin on the kitchen cooktop.

"The best way to avoid injury is to leave! Get everyone out of the house and call 911," Negron said. After calling 911, and if the fire seems very small, some techniques for extinguishing a kitchen fire include turning off the heat, smothering the flames with a lid, or using a fire extinguisher or agent such as baking soda. Never use water on a grease fire and never pick up a pan of burning oil or grease, he said.

Another contributing factor to Monday's fire was open doors. The resident apparently left both front and rear doors open as he escaped the house. The flow of oxygen pumped up the fire and helped it grow into the attic spaces via the eaves.

"Having the doors opened really made this fire grow quickly and it was a hot fire," Negron said. "The nearby apartments and their residents were in great danger if this fire had gotten out of control."

Monday's fire at Stuart Town Apartments also consumed most of the furnishings in the living room, kitchen and dining room, according to Capt. John Robinson of the Beaufort Fire Department. The doors to both bedrooms however, were closed. While the outside of the bedroom doors were blistered from heat, the content inside remained unharmed – including a small kitten which survived.

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