



CITY OF HARRISONBURG  
**FIRE**  
**DEPARTMENT**

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## Fire sprinkler extinguishes deck fire at apartment complex

HARRISONBURG, Va. – A properly functioning fire sprinkler quickly controlled a fire on the third-floor deck of an apartment building on New Year’s Day, averting what could have been a catastrophic fire.

The 911 center began receiving calls at approximately 6:30 p.m. for a reported deck on fire in the 1000 block of Woodbury Circle. Dispatchers directed the caller to activate the fire alarm which alerted residents to the fire, allowing them to safely escape. A first-alarm assignment was dispatched, bringing 17 firefighters to the scene.

The first-arriving engine reported light smoke showing from a third-floor apartment deck area with an activated sprinkler. Upon investigation, crews determined that a fire had ignited on the exterior decking material but was quickly controlled by the sprinkler.

An investigation revealed that the cause of the fire was accidental due to improperly discarded smoking materials. Flammable liquids stored nearby caused the fire to grow quickly, but was effectively controlled by the sprinkler. Damage has been set at \$7,500 and the saved value of the building at more than \$3 million.

“A single sprinkler head averted a potentially tremendous fire loss,” Fire Chief Ian Bennett said. “Fire sprinklers make all the difference in helping keep our community safe.”

The Harrisonburg Fire Department reminds all residents of the dangers of improperly discarding smoking materials. According to the National Fire Protection Association, smoking materials, including cigarettes, pipes, and cigars, started an estimated 17,200 home structure fires reported in the U.S. annually. These fires caused 570 deaths, 1,140 injuries and \$426 million in direct property damage. Smoking materials caused 5



*(Above) The fire started on a third-floor balcony and was controlled by a sprinkler.*

percent of reported home fires, 21 percent of home fire deaths, 10 percent of home fire injuries, and 6 percent of the direct property damage. The HFD wants residents to “wash their butts” by dousing smoking materials in water before discarding and placing such materials in a sturdy metal container filled with sand or water.

**The Harrisonburg Fire Department** is an ISO-Class II All-Hazards agency providing essential emergency and non-emergency life safety services to the public who live, work and travel in Harrisonburg. More information about the Fire Department is available on-line at [www.harrisonburgva.gov/fire](http://www.harrisonburgva.gov/fire) or on Facebook®, Twitter® and Instagram®.

**The City of Harrisonburg** is centrally located in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. It is home to almost 55,000 people. More information about the City of Harrisonburg is online at [www.HarrisonburgVA.gov](http://www.HarrisonburgVA.gov).



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