



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

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## Early Morning 2-Alarm Fire at Walmart Contained by Sprinklers

HARRISONBURG, Va. – A properly functioning fire alarm and sprinkler system contained a serious fire at the Walmart in Harrisonburg early Monday morning.

Harrisonburg firefighters were called to the Walmart on Burgess Road at approximately 4 a.m. with what was initially dispatched as an automatic fire alarm. The incident was upgraded by the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Emergency Communications Center when they received a 9-1-1 call from the store reporting a fire in the warehouse area.

Upon arrival, firefighters confirmed the presence of a fire and an activated sprinkler system actively containing the fire. A second-alarm assignment was requested, bringing a total of approximately 40 firefighters to the scene. The fire was contained within 15 minutes and completely extinguished within 30 minutes. Personnel remained on location for an extended period of time clearing smoke from the 207,000-square-foot facility.

The cause of the fire has been determined to be accidental as a result of button-cell (or coin-cell) lithium-ion batteries that ignited inside combustible packaging within a heavy-duty wire framed storage unit.

“The presence of a properly functioning fire sprinkler system contained what could have otherwise been a catastrophic fire,” HFD Fire Chief Matthew Tobia said. “Lithium-ion batteries, even properly stored, have the potential to fail, causing a fire. As we are seeing globally, these batteries are posing new challenges for firefighters in an ever-evolving technologically driven marketplace. Firefighters did an outstanding job of completing extinguishment, preventing further damage.”

The building was evacuated prior to the arrival of firefighters, and there were no injuries to employees, community members or responders. A damage estimate has not been set while clean-up and recovery efforts are underway. HFD was assisted at the scene by units from Rockingham County Fire Rescue, Harrisonburg Rescue Squad, Harrisonburg Police Department and the Merck facility (located in Elkton). The majority of fire department personnel cleared the scene by 7:30 a.m., and the last fire department unit left the scene at approximately 8:45 a.m.

**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 approximately 56,879 people. More information about the City of Harrisonburg is online at [www.HarrisonburgVA.gov](http://www.HarrisonburgVA.gov).

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