

NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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UPDATE – 5:25 P.M.

SUFFOLK, Virginia (July 14, 2021) Battalion Chief Chris Cornwell, Suffolk Fire Marshal, advises that they are currently working with the property management officials at Suffolk Tower Apartments to ensure that the fire alarm system at the building has been fully restored. He has further confirmed that the occupants of the building will be permitted to return to the premises tomorrow morning.

Suffolk Fire & Rescue staff are also working with property management officials to ensure that working smoke detectors are properly installed in each apartment unit.

Herbert Macarery Boothe, the resident of the building who was initially charged with Arson of an Occupied Dwelling, remains hospitalized at this time in fair condition. As previously noted, additional charges are forthcoming.

The additional adult male that was ground transported has been treated and released from the hospital.

The arson investigation remains ongoing at this time.

UPDATE - 11:00 A.M.

SUFFOLK, Virginia (July 13, 2021) The subject arrested this morning on the charge of

Arson of an Occupied Dwelling has been identified as Herbert Macarery Boothe, age 69, a resident of the 5th floor at the Suffolk Tower Apartments. No mug shot is available at this time. As previously noted, additional charges are forthcoming.

The residents of the apartment building have been advised that temporary housing will be needed until they can reoccupy the structure, and the Office of Emergency Management is currently working with the building's management officials in order to provide transportation for approximately 40 individuals to several local hotels. Suffolk Fire & Rescue staff are also assisting residents with securing any needed medications and other personal items. Temporary sheltering is currently being provided by Main Street United Methodist Church, located at 202 North Main Street.

UPDATE - 7:00 A.M.

SUFFOLK, Virginia (July 13, 2021) Chief Michael Barakey advises that 5 people were rescued during this morning's initial response, with 2 persons receiving emergency medical assessment and treatment from Suffolk Fire & Rescue personnel before being ground transported to a local hospital for further treatment. Both were in stable condition.

One firefighter sustained minor injuries.

The Fire Marshal's Office is investigating the cause of the fire and has confirmed that an occupant of the 5th floor that was initially transported for medical evaluation has been placed under arrest on a charge of Arson of an Occupied Dwelling, with additional charges forthcoming.

The initial alarm call was received at 4:03 a.m., and the first units were on scene at 4:09 a.m. The fire was found to have originated on the 5th floor, and was marked under control at 4:56 a.m.

Responding units included 9 Engines, 3 Ladders, 6 Medic Units, 10 Command and supporting staff, as well as the Rehab Bus are on scene, totaling more than 60 people.

A total of 32 people have been displaced, and the building officials are currently working with the Office of Emergency Management to determine potential lodging needs at this time. Firefighters are currently checking apartments floor-by-floor for air quality.

Mutual aid was provided by the Portsmouth Fire Department, Chesapeake Fire Department, and Isle of Wight to backfill Stations with staff and equipment.

THREE ALARM STRUCTURE FIRE SUFFOLK TOWER APARTMENTS

SUFFOLK, Virginia (July 13, 2021) Multiple Suffolk Fire & Rescue units are currently on the scene of a three alarm fire at the Suffolk Tower Apartments, located in the 180 block of North Main Street in Downtown Suffolk.

The incident initially came in as a fire alarm at 4:03 a.m. this morning, Tuesday, July 13, 2021, and quickly progressed to smoke alarms on multiple floors. Fire was showing upon arrival of firefighters, and multiple rescues are currently underway.

Suffolk Police are also on scene, and the roadway is closed from the 100 to 200 block of North Main Street for staging of emergency vehicles.

According to recent information from building officials, the apartment building includes 50 occupied units, and a total of 118 individuals.

This is a working incident and updates will be provided when additional information is available.

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