



**THE CITY OF REDMOND
FIRE DEPARTMENT**

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Press Release

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Fire sprinklers score two saves in Redmond fires overnight

In a five hour period overnight, two separate fires were contained by the fire sprinkler systems installed in Redmond buildings. The first was a bathroom fire in an apartment and the second a car fire in the parking garage of an office building.

The bathroom fire, occurred at 7:26 p.m. on February 20, 2005, at The Village at Overlake Station, located in the 2500 block of 152 AVE NE. An unattended candle ignited the fire in the 308 unit apartment building operated by the King County Housing Authority. The fire alarm company alerted fire fighters more than one minute prior to residents calling 911. The fire sprinkler system extinguished the fire and fire fighters assisted with water removal. Damage to the apartment complex was limited to scorched paint on the bathroom wall, a burned wicker garbage can, and wet carpeting. The estimated dollar loss is \$1,100.00. 29 fire fighters, from Redmond and Bellevue, responded to the initial reports of the fire, however, only 13 were required to handle the water situation. In an unrelated incident, while wrapping up efforts on the bathroom fire, fire fighters assisted several persons from an elevator stuck between floors of an adjacent building in the apartment complex.

The car fire, occurred at 12:44 a.m. on February 21, 2005, in a parking garage of an office building in the 3600 block of 163 AVE NE, on the Microsoft campus in Redmond. Security officers attempted to battle the fire with portable fire extinguishers, but were driven back by thick, acrid smoke which hampered visibility. They retreated when the fire sprinklers activated. The fire sprinkler system controlled the blaze, confining it to the interior of the vehicle, until fire fighters arrived to complete extinguishment with hose lines connected to the building standpipe system. The fire sprinklers protected the surrounding structure limiting all damage to the initial vehicle. Firefighters used portable fans to assist the overwhelmed building exhaust system with smoke removal. 28 firefighters from Redmond, Bellevue and Kirkland responded to the incident initially. The car fire and smoke removal were handled by the crews of two fire engines and a ladder truck.

Upon arrival fire fighters found thick smoke, to the floor of the parking garage's first level, hampering visibility as they entered to extinguish the car fire. A number of systems were

installed in the parking garages to protect lives and property while assisting fire fighters: fire sprinklers, dry standpipes with connections strategically located throughout, smoke evacuation fans, and column markings to help fire fighters locate themselves amongst the myriad of concrete columns and automobiles. All of these systems were necessary for the firefighters to extinguish the car fire, but they did not address the visibility issue. Many years ago when parking garages were constructed on their campus, discussions between fire inspectors and Microsoft staff foresaw the difficulty in battling fire incidents such as tonights. Thermal imaging cameras were selected as a tool that would permit fire fighters to operate more efficiently in the zero visibility environment of a smoke filled, below grade, parking garage. Fire crews deployed two, thermal imaging cameras, which permit visibility through smoke, allowing them to walk directly to the standpipe connection, connect the fire hoses, and extinguish the burning vehicle. Without the thermal imaging cameras, firefighters would have crawled through the thick smoke attempting to locate the source fire. This would have taken significantly more time than tonight's operation. It is likely that in most circumstances the time delay would result in additional damage. It should be noted that, Microsoft provided funding for the thermal imaging cameras used by fire fighters tonight. The thermal imaging cameras were an invaluable tool which permitted prompt extinguishment of the car fire.

Fire investigators are onsite working to determine the cause of the fire. Damage appears confined to the interior of the 1993 Mazda RX7 two door coupe. The vehicle, valued at approximately \$12,600 appears to be a total loss.

The Redmond Fire Department urges you to observe the following safety tips:

- Observe your surroundings while away from home, whether at work, shopping, or traveling.
- Always locate the nearest two exits, plan your escape route, and know the distance to the exits.
- Smoke down to waist or knee level will quickly disorient you. If you haven't located an exit ahead of time it will be difficult to locate one now. Exit signs are not visible in thick smoke.
- If you find yourself in smoke, don't panic. Crawl low under smoke to the nearest exit.
- When a smoke detector or fire alarm sounds, immediately exit the building. Studies indicate in the event of fire, you have three minutes from the time the alarm sounds to exit the structure before smoke conditions will significantly impair your ability to exit.
- Remember fire sprinklers contain or extinguish fires, increasing the time you have to escape.
- Ensure smoke detectors are installed, less than ten years old, and you change the batteries annually.

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