

Townhome Community's Quick Actions Aid in Effectively Handling Fire

A community in Myrtle Beach, SC, which consists of 128 two-story townhomes, experienced a devastating fire in one of the units. As soon as the fire was reported, the CAMS team and association Board of Directors stepped in to evaluate the situation, calm residents, and control the crowds and media outlets that showed up on scene. In addition, emergency crews, insurance professionals, and restoration crews immediately began addressing safety concerns, assessing damages, and coming up with a plan of action.

SITUATION

In spring 2021, a two-story townhome experienced a fire. The fire began on the second level of the home and was caused by a faulty HVAC unit. The fire spread quickly throughout the top level of the unit as it was unable to properly vent.

- The community manager happened to be present on the property doing inspections when the fire initially broke out. When she noticed smoke, she approached the home and surrounding units to begin knocking on doors and alerting residents of the fire.
- The board president lives on-site and immediately joined the community manager in alerting residents of the fire.
- When emergency personnel arrived on scene, they had to remove the roof of the unit to allow the fire to vent upward and to gain access to properly extinguish it.
- The interior of the second floor was completely destroyed by the fire as well as exposed to the elements due to the removal of the roof.
- Local media became aware of the fire and arrived on scene. This became a distraction to both those responding to the fire as well as the community residents who were shocked and upset by the situation.
- Multiple service providers who had not been dispatched by CAMS also showed up on scene and claimed that they had been contacted by CAMS.

SOLUTION

Just as with any disaster, remaining calm and understanding the emotions of those closely affected is key. With fires being incredibly devastating by their very nature, quick responses by emergency personnel, restoration teams, insurance professionals, board members, and CAMS team members, were essential in handling the situation appropriately.

- The board president, community manager, and regional vice president remained on site to speak to media, control crowds, turn away unauthorized service providers, and provide a calm, comforting presence to those affected by the fire.

SOLUTION (CONT.)

- The community manager, regional vice president, and board president spoke with the fire inspector to learn about the cause of the fire and toured the building once it was safe to do so.
- The insurance company was immediately notified, and an agent was dispatched and arrived same day.
- Owners of affected units were notified right away so they could contact their insurance agents.
- The restoration company was notified and CAMS team members, the board president, and insurance agents immediately began coordinating with one another to make a plan for repairing the damages.
- The fire department had to break the front door of an adjacent unit to ensure no one was inside. The restoration company repaired the door same day so that the unit was not exposed to the elements and other dangers.
- The board members and community manager continually checked in with affected residents to update them on repairs and answer questions.



OUTCOME

- Due to early detection and reporting, damage was mostly contained to the unit in which the fire originated.
- Since CAMS team members were already on site, they were able to assist in keeping residents calm and quickly control crowds and media, thus preventing board members and residents from being bombarded with questions.
- The restoration company assigned one point of contact to communicate weekly with CAMS and the insurance agent so that they could, in turn, keep residents up to date on repairs.
- Due to the extensive nature of the damage and removal of the roof, some repairs were projected to take a few months to complete. However, residents were understanding of this, thankful no one was injured, and appreciated the emotional support and trusted guidance CAMS provided during this frightening, chaotic time.

When disaster strikes, having a plan in place is essential to the recovery of any community. Though there are many types of disasters that may come about, being able to understand the mindset of those affected, remain calm, listen to their thoughts, and provide a caring, calming presence is often equally as important as coming up with a restoration plan. To that end, CAMS has in place not only proven processes to navigate the material side of disasters, but also provides managers with training on how to properly address the human side of disasters so that boards and residents are able to receive the care and trusted guidance they deserve in these trying situations.

Does your community have the guidance it needs?
Call for details.

