



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
City of Duluth Fire Department

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For more information contact the Fire Department at 218-730-4391



DATE: 07/27/2011
NATURE OF INCIDENT: Lightning Strike House Fire
CASE NO.: 11005060
INCIDENT DATE :07/27/2011
INCIDENT TIME: 0410
INCIDENT LOCATION: 21 E 9th St
SUBJECT: 21 E 9th St House Fire
BY: Asst Chief Richard Mattson

The Duluth Fire Department responded to a report of a House fire this morning at 21 E 9th St. The dispatcher advised that there were two houses involved plus a fire burning in the middle of another yard down the street. Three occupants of the house on fire reported they were self evacuating. A second alarm was immediately dispatched due to the multiple incidents.

Upon arrival on scene it was determined that the fire was caused by a lightning strike. The residence at 21 E 9th St was fully involved on the front of the building. The fire was also causing the siding on 19 E 9th St to melt and burn. The exposure house was cooled down with hose streams. The main fire on the exterior was knocked down but could not be completely extinguished due to a gas line break at ground level under the deck at the front of the house. Interior operations were delayed until it could be determined if there was not an explosion hazard inside the structure. Once firefighter safety was assured, an interior attack was made and ventilation holes were cut in the roof to vent the attic. The burning gas under the deck burned for more than an hour after the main fire was extinguished while water and gas crews worked to find valves to stop the flow of gas to the structure.

Another small fire was also burning four houses down from the main fire building. This fire was coming out of the ground and was caused by a ruptured gas line in the yard directly under the tree where the lightning strike took place. This fire continued to burn until the gas was shut down but did not cause any damage to structures or property.

The damage to the home at 21 E 9th St was extensive. The exterior of the home was burned on two sides, the interior of the main floor was burned from fire extending in through a large window, and the fire also spread into the attic area causing heavy burning. Damage estimates to the home are placed at \$60,000 structural and \$20,000 contents. The damage to the home next door at 19 E 9th St was limited to burned and melted vinyl siding, soffits, and window trim. This damage is estimated at \$10,000. Residents of 21 E 9th St will be unable to stay in the home due to the extensive damage.

The cause of the fire is a lightning strike to a tree in the neighborhood. The lightning traveled through an underground gas main in the street and then up through a metal tracer line on the plastic pipe that lead to the fire house. This house was on the end of a dead

end gas main which may have been a factor in its involvement.

There were no injuries due to the fires. A total of 28 firefighters on 9 apparatus responded to the fires.