

2-28 Fire Response

Wednesday, 04 March 2009

On the evening of February 28, Chris Hodgdon (KE5IGO), responded to a house fire in Kaufman. This was a single dwelling fire located on Melody Circle in Kaufman.

On the evening of February 28, Chris Hodgdon (KCCERT Chief), responded to a house fire in Kaufman, representing Kaufman County CERT, Inc. and Kaufman County ARES, Inc. This was a single family dwelling fire that was located on Melody Circle in side the City of Kaufman. Not only did Chief Hodgdon respond, he was actually the first emergency responder on scene as this home was located just two doors down from his own.

He was alerted to the fire by the alarming cries of the neighborhood children, including his own, that informed him that "BRIAN'S HOUSE IS ON FIRE". Upon exiting his own home, he noticed that the house was indeed on fire with intense black smoke spewing from the garage and front roof area. Upon reaching the house, he noticed that the owner had returned to the inside of the garage attempting to close the door, which was already damaged, and proceeded to escort the owner out of the building for a second time to a safer location on the southern side of the structure.

When the fire first started, the home owner proceeded into the house trying to limit the path of the fire and while in there, was unable to return and exit through the front door. He then returned to one of bedrooms, where he broke out the window with a dresser and was assisted in getting out by neighbor and KCCERT Board Member Tina Sanders. This was the first time he was assisted from the home.

Within a few minutes, the first City of Kaufman police officers arrived on scene, Chief Hodgdon advised them that there was containers of various compressed gasses located in the garage, along with gun ammunition that arriving fire fighters would need to be aware of for their own safety. As the departments started to arrive and the fire fighters prepared to enter the structure, the sound of minor explosions could be hear from the ammunition being set off by the fire. This created a huge safety risk to both the fire fighters and by-standers. Within the first couple of minutes of their arrival, the officers worked to establish crowd control and providing important information to inbound fire vehicles. By the time the first fire truck arrived on scene, flames were already making their way through the attic region, coming through the roof and other locations within the house.

Do to high winds, the fire was able to spread very quickly though the attic and other areas, while also presenting a hazard of creating a massive grass-fire tot he pastures behind the home. This fortunately did not take place and the fire fighters were able to place on their efforts on saving the home. Do to design style and open doors in the house, the winds were able to sweep through the house very quickly by the effect of a wind tunnel.

Because of the high winds, both Kaufman Volunteer Fire Department and Scurry Volunteer Fire Department was dispatched to the location. The volunteer fire departments responded with a ladder truck and two engines. They put the ladder truck to work as soon as it arrived knocking the flames back down from above. The home owner was briefly checked by Kristina Channell, a Texas EMT, that was visiting with family when the fire happened and recommended he be completely checked out by ETMC when their ambulance arrived on scene. The owner was deemed in good condition with minor cuts and minor smoke inhalation.

The were two dogs that lived in the house along with the family. By the time the fire departments arrived, one dog was outside of the home, while the other was still missing. After the main portions of the fire were out, one of the fire fighters was able to locate the dog under the couch in the front room scared but safe, then was reunited with her owner by the fire marshal. The dogs are currently located with neighbors until the family has a place for them.

Besides major fire damage throughout the house, there was also sustained smoke and water damage in areas not affect by the flames directly. Some items were retrieved from the house by fire fighters look for hot spots and neighbors after the fire was completely out. By the time night fall had come, some friends started to board of the garage and broken window to prevent entry to the property and salvaged items continued to be moved into a neighbors garage and friends vehicles to be taken for storage.

Following standard procedures, the fire department as placed a call for assistance to the local Red Cross office located in Terrell. Once upon scene, which was after dark, Chief Hodgdon, escorted the Red Cross Disaster Assessment Team (DAT) member into the home and assisted in guiding through the structure. Once the Red Cross had made its assessment, EC Hodgdon escorted the DAT member to the owners of the home and provided other assistance as needed at that time.

The home was occupied by a family of three, which included an 18 month old baby. Luckily, the wife and child were not home at the start of the fire. The wife was made aware of the fire and proceed to the house, where she was reunited with her husband. Thanks to neighbors, friends and family members, the family was able to locate a place to stay and had help in preparing for the next phase, including more salvage of items, including clothing and moving forward with their lives. At the request of the family, Chief Hodgdon and other neighbors have committed to keeping an eye on the location during this time, until the house has once again, been returned to a secure place to live.

All Photos by Chris Hodgdon - KE5IGO representing Kaufman County CERT, Inc. (Chief) and Kaufman County ARES, Inc. (Emergency Coordinator)