

## **This Afternoon's Two Alarms / Avent Ferry Road**

07/19/11 396 W, 3 I - + 8 - 3

Two alarms at [3108 Avent Ferry Road](#). Reported as smoke in area by EMS 1. Dispatched as smoke investigation with Engine 20. Working fire found by EMS 1 at a two-story, wood-frame apartment building. ~~Total 4,897 square feet (one section of two or three)~~, Three connected buildings, each approximately 5,000 square-feet, built 1970. Engine 20 arriving, and requesting a second alarm on arrival. Heavy smoke showing through the roof. Rest of structure fire assignment dispatched by that time, and already en route.

Still collecting and sifting through incident details, while sitting in a hotel room in Richmond. Dispatched 5:23 p.m. Double double-inch lines into the building to start. Evacuation and searches accompanied fire attack. Battalion 3, then Car 10 assuming command. Heavy fire progressed along the roofline.

Defensive Aerial operations started about a half-hour into the incident. Ladder 7 (aerial platform) flowing on left side, and then center of building. Crews also started/continued working inside a second building (or second section of same building), with heavy fire in attic area. Second hydrant sought to supplement water supply. Water plant subsequently relayed information to command about problems with pressure on the system.

Two engines special called for manpower about 6:00 p.m. Temperature at time of fire about 92 degrees. What was the heat index, anyone know? Portable monitor from Engine 8 deployed, after they arrived special-called. That's a new piece of equipment, preconnected. Probably other ground monitor(s) used, as well. Controlled 6:45 p.m.

Twenty people displaced. One or two cats reportedly rescued. One firefighter transported with back injury (and which news reported as smoke inhalation). Avent Ferry Road closed between Gorman and Trailwoods during time of fire. Cause determined as accidental, electrical. Twelve units rendered uninhabitable.

First alarm: E20, E5, E1, L7, R3, B3. Working fire plus second alarm: E13, E14, E2 E6, L4, R2, B2. A1, C10, C20. Special called: E8, E27. Other fire: C1, C2, C4, C5. Relief: E16, E23, E10. Medical: EMS 1, EMS 11 EMS 13, EMS 4, EMS 37, EMS 2, B1, MD1, Truck 1.

Some of the media coverage includes [WRAL](#), [WTVD](#), [NBC17](#), and the [News & Observer](#) (with a gallery of 27 photos from Takaaki Iawbu). Lee Wilson arrived right after Engine 20, and was on scene for a number of hours. Below are a couple mobile phone photos from Lee, and an aerial shot from WRAL. Click to enlarge:



*Lee Wilson photo*



*WRAL photo*



*Lee Wilson photo*

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Here's a You Tube video from a bystander. Interesting comments from the videographer. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNOForlh6..>

**A.C. Rich** - 07/19/11 - 22:57

Here comes the part where a buncha trolls get on here and say...."You coulda out that out with 2 aggressive hoselines like they do in PG"...Derp.

Just watched the video. Great jobs guys.

**Jake T.** - 07/19/11 - 23:18

Please don't feed the trolls...

Signed, Blog 100

**Legeros** - 07/19/11 - 23:23

Were there water problems? What was the initial plan? It doesnt look like it was confined very good early on but since i wasnt there i wonder if evacuation may have been a priority first? Isnt the first time Kings Ct. has lit up thats for sure. Its good for one big fire every 5-10 years.

**curious** - 07/19/11 - 23:46

That square-footage is from tax records. Is that structure really only 5,000 square-feet? Seems larger...

Curious, I wasn't there either, but what radio traffic I heard included Engine 20 very early directing incoming units to evacuation.

**Legeros** - 07/19/11 - 23:51

Prior major fires at that location have included:

Jul 4, 1993 – 3114-3118 Avent Ferry Road – Three alarms.

Jul 7, 2005 – 3101 Kings Court – Three alarms.

Interesting, both in the month of July.

**Legeros** - 07/20/11 - 00:04

The local news coverage was surprisingly good today; WTVD especially tried to give credit to the firefighters initially trying to vent the roof. They called the ladder a "cherry picker" but overall I noticed that my family and other civilians were proud of the RFD after this incident. Mike, you should let us know when you're going to be traveling; I'm in the process of moving from Richmond back to Raleigh and would like to buy you a drink

**Eric** - 07/20/11 - 02:19

Lee has published some of his photos, all late-incident shots to start, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/leewilson/s..>

Narrative above updated a bit. Will flesh out more with Lee's info, when he posts. Believe the building was indeed bigger than 5,000 square-feet. Looks like maybe two (or event three) adjoining buildings of that size?

Eric, thanks for the offer of a drink. I am just pausing in town, for sleeping, and resuming morning drive north.

**Legeros** - 07/20/11 - 07:49

Regarding water pressure and hydrants, took a look at the Wake County Imaps system, to see if water pipes and hydrants are available as a map layer. They are NOT, although stormwater piping is. Must be an intentional inclusion, but would sure be interesting as public info., at least for fire buffs. (I am guessing responders already have access to water system information and mapping via their own systems/MDTs.)

**Legeros** - 07/20/11 - 07:59

Dang thats a big fire

**wow** - 07/20/11 - 08:27

I heard E2 hand layed 1200 feet of 5-inch? Is that true, or just the rumor mill?

**Heard** - 07/20/11 - 09:03

I was at the fire. The first in engine company did a great job with their size up and hose placement. Everyone on that fire scene including EMS worked their butt's off( and thanks for what you do EMS in rehab!) One two inch line by the first in engine company was not going to stop that fire, so the first in did all they could do. We decided to go three or four apartments down. We went to div.2, pulled celings, and put a two inch line in the attic to stop the from spreading while the ladder put the fire out. We still got out flanked. Then we went a couple of more apts. down and was able to stop it there. I forgot to mention,all the apartments share a common attic with no fire walls!!

**RFD** - 07/20/11 - 22:18

Hey Jake T, The ladder was more then needed on this one.This was a 5000 sq ft structure heavily involved not a 1500 sq ft house, no one is going to criticize ladder use here. But as RFD described it was well placed handlines and aggressive interior work that stopped the fire from taking the entire building. Glad to see the aggressive Raleigh again. The ladder was needed for extinguishing the part of the structure that was written off. The GPM needed to extinguish a fire putting off that many BTU's of heat was way higher then any handline could handle, but in the end the interior aggressive fire attack and ceiling pulling is what stopped that fire. Im proud of the RFD on a job well done inside and out on a fire that had a huge head start.

**McLatte Troll** - 07/20/11 - 22:28

The comment was intended for those who like to sit back and say that we're not aggressive enough without knowing and saying we should be more like \_\_\_\_\_.

**Jake T.** - 07/21/11 - 08:28

Incident description as further fleshed out by Lee, in his photos: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/leewilson/5..>

**Legeros** - 07/21/11 - 09:35

Why is it when Raleigh have a big fire,certain folks on this blog can find no wrong.But when the other departments have a fire they can always find fault.Impress us with your brilliant minds and wisdom Raleigh guys and give us a good critique of what they could have done better

**Badger** - 07/21/11 - 11:52

Couple questions out of curiosity, not hate, why didn't engine 20 or ladder 7 park closer to the building?(for extra reach). Second, why did the ladder crew cut the vent hole so far away from the fire? It seems it almost assisted the spread instead of putting it say at the highest point of the roof of the apt on the D side of the fire origin apt? Lastly while the end of the building was "written off" it looks like the crew who evacuated the dog could have done decent work stopping spread to the end unit with a hose line. Doesn't seem to me like, sayyy the last two apts on the row could have been spared? Again, im just curious as to how it went, preferably someone who was there...Thanks!

**Curious George** - 07/21/11 - 12:12

George, others, can such detailed questions about in-the-moment decisions be fairly and accurately answered in a forum like this? Perhaps if the officer and crew members involved were all here, or someone with that collective knowlege, maybe.

But we still lack the context of the many mitigating factors that affect each decision on the fireground. Conscious or otherwise. And those include the smallest details or actions, that collectively produce larger effects.

It seems like some readers would like— and truthfully would learn from— an incident review-style discussion here. BUT we don't have everyone here, nor in real-time, nor with all identities shown.

I guess we do the best we can. But nits are hard to pick (right phrase?) here, because the questions too easily seem critical, accusatory, etc.

Thanks for reading. Good luck with your question-asking.

**Legeros** - 07/21/11 - 12:31

why is it that my honest questions about similar tactics with WF fire keeps getting pulled?

**MOONSHINE** - 07/21/11 - 14:22

.Mr. Shine, send me a private message and I will explain why your last post was deleted.

**Legeros** - 07/21/11 - 14:35

WOW really Raleigh come on.

**DCFNC** - 07/22/11 - 21:49

Lets see Mr Shine's post. It can't be as bad as some others posted about other fire departments

**truckie92032** - 07/23/11 - 10:42

Regarding the post bt Mr. Shine, he was asking a question about the postings/comments of a specific user. Between being anonymous and what was written, the comment read more like an attack. Thus it was pulled. I gave additional tips, and will tell more later. Be polite, be respectful. Can't go wrong there. Mail me with questions.

**Legeros** - 07/23/11 - 10:57

Come on guys don't make fun of them because they were scared. They could have stopped it if they had just gotten in there and started getting in the attic from the get go. What kind of training do you Raleigh guys do since I don't see a trench cut put in place? I see a bunch of random spot vent holes that seem to have dragged the fire along and made things worse. Thats unacceptable and caused much more damage than necessary. Being understaffed could be the problem...but thats just my two cents on it. Oh and in reference to other commentary on this blog site why did the Raleigh boys go back in after the ladder flowed? I thought that was "unsafe".

**whacker** - 07/24/11 - 23:38

People are making there opinions by what they see in the pictures. The call came in as a smoke investigation in the area. E-20 went down Trail Wood and there was a guy burning leaves and they thought that was were the smoke was comming from. EMS 1 was riding down the street and saw smoke. They went into the apartment complex and found the burning apartment. Div C was completly involved and the fire had already broke trough the roof. The reason for the vent holes where they were cut is Command had already wrote off the first section of the



building( there were three sections) thinking there were fire stops between sections, thats why they were put there. The whole entire building had a common attic. So dont judge by looking at the pictures. Oh and DIV C, had about 6'of flat ground before a 15' drop off so getting a line back there was tough. It was a fast moving fire with a barn style roof with no fire stops. So the whole second floor , with the barn style roof, was in the attic. Where you see shingles in the pics, that was the attic. When the ladder started flowing the fire still was walking the attic. You cant flow water on the fire if the roof is intact. So the decision was made to put a line in the attic on the third section to stop the fire spread. It worked and at no time did I feel in danger, because it was where the fire was stopped. And damage by putting vent holes , it's a 4x8 sheet of plywood and a little bit of shingles. "Risk alot to save alot, Risk a little to save a little"

It's in a firefighters nature to Monday morning quaterback somebodys fire, and they could have always done better. ( I am guilty also)

**RFD** - 07/25/11 - 00:32

Let me first say I was not there, but I worked that side of Raleigh for most of my career. The building was not 5000sq ft. but at least 15,000sq ft. The hydrants inside the complex are not good, the ones off Gorman St. are off an 8" main and from what i understand the closest one on Avent Ferry and Gorman (which is a 12inch. main) was Out of service, Thus having to hand lay around 1000 ft of 5 inch hose through the woods to another hydrant on Avent Ferry. The second in Engine (E-8) was out,not sure if they were training or another call. 80% of the building is covered in tar and asphalt shingles on 103 degree day so you could imagine how hot the roof was and combustibile. Like RFD said the yard in the rear of the building is narrow and there was no access for any apparatus (for a possible blitz attack). I imagine that there was probably at best 12 firefighting personnel on scene until the second alarm could get there. 4 of which were On the ladder. 1 driver running the pump, another driver probably accountability and 3 as RIT. So 3 people on the whole first alarm pulling a 2 inch line, and it was probably just 2 guys on one 2 inch line for the first few minutes. Very heavy fire load, basically 1/3 of building in Div C. was burning its ass off. What exactly do you whackers expect. I saw 2 2in. lines in the building not outside until the call was made for the aerial. Scared? They tried to save 2/3rds of the building, it didnt work out but were able to still save 1/3, all occupants and pets made it out and only 1 minor FF injury. Were there things that could have been done different? Sure, as firefighters we should all look to learn and improve on every call, not just fires. Am I biased because i work for Raleigh, Damn right and proud of it. I reckon if we could have 5 people per Engine then it would definitely help but I nor the rest of the RFD FF's have control over that. We have always done more with less and invite anyone from any other department that critiques us prove that they can do the same per person. I dont work for Prince George or DCFD or FDNY and have no idea what their tactics, equipment or personnel are but I'm sure they also do the best with what they have so I'm not going to say one way or another how they fight fire. I'm not perfect, Raleigh is not perfect and I have not met or heard of the perfect firefighter, if anyone here is it then please leave your name so I know who to model myself after. Thanks.

**gen3fire** - 07/25/11 - 14:04

Thanks for clarifying the building size, K.C. The more I read and saw in pictures, the more I was inferring three buildings of 5000 square feet, joined.

**Legeros** - 07/25/11 - 14:13

I want to start by saying good job to the firefighters who were on this scene. I wish I could catch an apartment like this every shift day I work. I'm glad though because rehabin in 103 degrees is not fun. Anyone who goes and does as well of a job as you guys did on a 103 degree day needs respect given to them by their fellow firefighters.

**Justin** - 07/25/11 - 14:30

I give you Raleigh guys credit even when you botch a fire you still make it seem like a great stop. Custer should have had yall at little big horn.

**Badger** - 07/26/11 - 12:55

So much "love" around here. Anyways. Found this: <http://firefighterspot.com/#1777256/Gorm..> and this: <http://www.technicianonline.com/news/fir..>

Not sure if the Technician photos were taken by Lee or not but theyre good.

**Jake** - 07/26/11 - 13:52

I am continually fascinated. For my knowledge and better understanding, how many of you here have actually operated at a true multi-alarm large multi-residential structure fire before? ...and arrived behind the proverbial "8-ball" and actually understaffed at the onset? It will help me understand your perspective and bias as I read the posts. Capt. Ray (gen3fire) captures the essence realistically well in his explanation.

**A.C. Rich** - 07/26/11 - 14:14

A.C. – It wouldn't matter if every call went perfectly (obviously they don't) the nameless pricks that live their life on this blog would make up something to take about. Peace out ya'll. PTB! SAME TEAM PEOPLE!

**AB** - 07/26/11 - 14:48

Maybe "pricks" is too harsh, but I agree it is better for all if we focus on the facts and try too understand the realities. Mike's blog is read by MANY so there is a unique opportunity here to actually share in a positive manner.. and learn (I do daily!).

**A.C. Rich** - 07/26/11 - 15:31

Hey lets talk about Apex's (three alarm) single family house fire today. Sounds like alot of fire from the get go. It didnt even sound like they got to the fire inside before backing out and flowing from ladder three and four.

**New Thread** - 07/26/11 - 16:37

WoW so APEX tried an interior attack but was forced out by the conditions so they set up aerials to finish the job. Maybe Apex could give Raleigh a few pointers.

**Newer Thread** - 07/26/11 - 19:37

5 engines 2 ladders hardly sounds like 3 alarms when 3 engines 2 ladders was the original dispatch. 2 additional engines later special called for manpower and due to weather. Maybe Apex was just trying to do it the Raleigh way and lead fire attack with the aerial. After all everyone wants to be like Raleigh because they always do it right

**Three Alarm Really?** - 07/26/11 - 19:38

Really folks??? *Either MAN UP and sign your name or SHUT UP!!!! Do I do quite a bit of critquing folks and their fires on here* Yep I sure do, but at least I have the guts to put my name and will stand behind what I say in person as well. Does every fire go right???? NOPE, usually at least 2 things will go wrong, but having guts, brains, and a "can do" attitude can usually overcome them. There have been several fires lately, all similiar in nature...rapidly advancing exterior fire into an attic and spreading even quicker there. Each fire was handled the way each IC deemed best for the fire based on available resources, information, experience,guts, brains, and a "can do" attitude. If you weren't there, it's cool to ask a question or several,but bashing when you weren't there and have ZERO first knowledge and then being too much of a coward to sign your name, well....There is a term in the fire service for people like that, it's called a MUTT!!!! FTM-PTB!!!!

Off from soapbox rant, stay safe...

**Wayne** - 07/26/11 - 21:03

And there it is (everyone wants to be like Raleigh) nope we dont no one always does it right.

**no name** - 07/26/11 - 21:37

Good Point

Raleigh is a good deparment but they are not perferct by any means.

NO ONE IS

**josh** - 07/26/11 - 21:40

Guys,

All the fires from Apex, Raleigh and Wake Forest that have been discussed on here all have a few things in common.

1. No matter the size of the fire they all went out.
2. No citizens that I am aware of were seriously injured.
3. ALL THE FIREFIGHTERS WENT HOME!!!!!!!

Quit bickering and do some real manly open discussions.

Thank you and keep Asheville Fire in your thoughts and prayers. Also stay hydrated today.

**Scooter** - 07/29/11 - 11:46

Well said Scooter

**Sparky** - 07/29/11 - 11:57

Name: (real name  
preferred)

Remember personal info?

Yes