

Fresno fire crews quench three blazes, adding to record year

By Carmen George



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ERIC PAUL ZAMORA — The Fresno Bee

Fresno firefighters were busy early Wednesday responding to three house fires within seven hours — including one that injured a firefighter when a ceiling collapsed on his head — to cap a record year.

In all three fires — two in central Fresno, the other in Kerman — working smoke detectors saved the day, waking up sleeping residents who were able to safely evacuate, said Pete Martinez, spokesman for the Fresno Fire Department.

“Fresno Fire would like to remind the public that smoke detectors do save lives and it is important to check smoke detectors monthly for proper function,” Martinez said.

Firefighters were called to the first blaze about 12:45 a.m. on Farris Avenue just north of Olive Avenue, just west of the Tower District. Upon arrival, light smoke was seen coming from the home's eaves. Firefighters determined the blaze had been smoldering in the attic for hours, caused by an electric fire that ignited wood framing, Martinez said. The fire damaged a bedroom and bathroom, causing about \$40,000 in damages. No one was injured.

Shortly before 4 a.m., the second fire was reported on the 3900 block of North Manor Avenue off West Avenue near Dakota Avenue. Heavy smoke was seen coming from an attached garage and burning the exterior of a home, but

firefighters managed to keep it from spreading beyond the garage and a small portion of the kitchen, Martinez said.

One firefighter was injured when a portion of the ceiling collapsed on his head. He was treated for his injuries and released at the scene, Martinez said.

The fire displaced four people, who are now staying with another family. The cause of the fire could not be determined and damages are estimated at about \$70,000.

Firefighters were called to the third fire just before 7 a.m. on California Avenue along the southern edge of Kerman in the North Central Fire Protection District that receives services through a contract with Fresno Fire. When firefighters arrived, the fire had crept into the attic, Martinez said. It is believed to have been caused by electrical wiring in a bathroom exhaust fan, he said. The fire caused about \$100,000 in damages and displaced three people, who were being helped by the American Red Cross.

One firefighter had a minor injury to his leg while putting away some equipment after the fire, Martinez said.

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And this is a record-setting year for total damages caused by fires — resulting in close to \$36 million in losses. That breaks the 2003 record of more than \$30 million in damages, Martinez said.

Overall for 2014, Fresno firefighters responded to more than 900 fires of all sizes which displaced 480 people, Martinez said.

Contact Carmen George: cgeorge@fresnobee.com, (559) 441-6386 or [@CarmenGeorge](https://twitter.com/CarmenGeorge) on Twitter.

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