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News Release

Fatality victim identified after structure fire at community home

Easterseals Capper Foundation home a total loss; state investigation ongoing

ARKANSAS CITY, Kan. (June 15, 2018) — Three area fire departments responded Thursday afternoon to a structure fire in Arkansas City that resulted in one fatality, but no other serious injuries.

The group home, located at 705 N. Sixth St., is considered a total loss. It is owned and operated by Easterseals Capper Foundation, a Topeka-based 501(c)3 community developmental disability organization with a Winfield office that operates several homes and living facilities in Cowley County.

The victim, Andrew Goodnight, 32, was transported to South Central Kansas Medical Center, where he died of his injuries. An autopsy has not been performed yet, but smoke inhalation is suspected.

“Staff at the facility did everything they could to help this individual,” said Ark City Fire Chief Bobby Wolfe. “It is a tragic situation for all involved. We offer our deepest condolences to Andrew’s family.”

The Arkansas City Fire-EMS Department, Udall Fire Department and Winfield Fire-EMS Department were dispatched about 3:44 p.m. for a major structure fire, responding with a total of six vehicles.

When firefighters arrived, they found the attic of the building was fully involved. Crews made entry at the rear of the duplex home, located on the west side, and found Goodnight about 40 feet inside.

He was removed from the structure and resuscitation was attempted at the scene. Resuscitation efforts continued during ambulance transport to SCKMC, but ultimately were not successful.

The cause of the fire, which started in the attic area, still is under investigation by the Office of the State Fire Marshal. The Arkansas City Fire-EMS Department is assisting with the investigation.

The residential area of the facility had a sprinkler and alarm system, but the attic was not sprinkled.

The building was occupied by four residents, including Goodnight, and two staff members at the time of the fire. All six are accounted for. The two staff members were treated and released at the scene.

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Goodnight, who had Down syndrome and autism, was the only person who was not able to exit the structure safely, although one staff member sustained injuries while trying to help him to evacuate.

The firefighter who extricated Goodnight from the building was transported to South Central Kansas Medical Center, where he was treated for exhaustion and later released.

The three surviving residents were taken to the nearby Northwest Community Center, which is air-conditioned, and later housed temporarily at Best Western Plus Patterson Park Inn in north Ark City.

The fire was brought under control about 5:15 p.m., according to Wolfe.

The temperature at the time of the fire was 96 degrees, with a heat index of 102.

Inquiries about the ongoing investigation should be directed to the Office of the State Fire Marshal.

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