



Massachusetts State Police

FIRE INVESTIGATION SUPPLEMENT REPORT 2020-117-577/2

Report Date: 01/19/2021

Primary Information	
Description:	Follow up to 358 George Carter Road, Becket "Doris Duke Theatre"
Dissemination Code:	report respect the security of its associated case
Reporting LEO:	Quigley, Daniel B (MSP3864 / Fire Investigation West Team / Massachusetts State Police)
Report Status:	Approved
Report Status Date:	02/05/2021
Approved By:	Mazza, Michael (msp1464 / Massachusetts State Police)
Cause Of Fire:	Undetermined
COF Subcategory:	Undetermined
Injuries/Fatalities:	None
K9:	YES

Property Information	
Property Description:	358 George Carter Road, Becket "Doris Duke Theatre"
Property Use:	Commercial
Mobile:	NO
Single/Multi Story:	Single Story
Smoke Detectors:	YES
Heat Detectors:	NO
Sprinklers:	Yes-Inoperable
CO:	UNKNOWN
Occupied:	NO
Abandoned:	NO
Estimated Value:	\$6,852,000.00
Estimated Loss:	\$6,852,000.00
Type Of Insurance:	Commercial
State Property:	No

Fire Origin Information	
<u>Area/Origin</u>	<u>Description</u>
Interior	C / D Corner Area

Insurance Information	
Insured:	Jacobs Pillow Theatre Group
Insurance Company:	ARBELLA, INC.
Insurance Agent:	Toole Insurance

Synopsis
Follow up to 358 George Carter Road, Becket "The Doris Duke Theatre"
1. In summary members of Fire and Explosion Investigation Unit were requested to Jacobs Pillow Theatre Group located at 358 George



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Synopsis - Continued

Carter Road in town of Becket on November 17, 2020 approximately 0800 hours for a structure fire at the Doris Duke Theatre located on the facility grounds. Upon investigators arrival the structure had sustained heavy damage and was a complete loss. Fire suppression operations were still taking place, and the scene examination was delayed.

2. The Doris Duke Theatre is a one story dance studio and theatre. The theatre is comprised of wood frame materials. The theatre is used to train and rehearse professional dances. The theatre seats 230 patrons to watch dance performances. The total square footage of the theatre is approximately 7,038 square feet. The theatre holds vast amount of electrical equipment for use during dance performances. This includes professional lighting and audio systems.

3. On the date of incident, the fire was first discovered by [REDACTED], building a new addition on the property. [REDACTED] discovered the fire approximately 0655 hours. [REDACTED] was able to capture video footage of the fire, which was provided to investigators. This video footage was reviewed and showed the Doris Duke Theatre on fire. The fire was generally located in the C / D corner of the building. This included the outdoor entry way. This area of the theatre housed a waiting room, entry door way, and the upstairs audio visual control room. The fire was large and consumed most of the D side of the theatre. Video footage captured fire spreading outwards. The fire encompassed the entire height of the theatre including the gable. Flames were protruding from the theatre into the air about 15 to 20 feet high.

4. Approximately 0707 hours Deputy Chief Massini of Becket Fire Department was the first to arrive on scene. Arriving fire fighters attempted to attach water hoses to an adjacent fire hydrant with no flowing water present in hydrant. Thus tanker trucks were used to shuttle water to the scene in order to fight the fire. This resulted in a delay of fire suppression efforts. Due to the non-operable fire hydrant, likely a greater loss of the structure occurred. Further it was discovered that same hydrant and its pump station controls the water flow to the sprinkler system within the Doris Duke Theatre.

5. The structure sustained catastrophic fire damage and is a total loss. Only remnants of the A/B corner and A/D corner exterior walls remain. Based on the initial video footage and physical damage it is suspected that the origin is located in the vicinity of the C/D corner. Chief Mikaniewicz of Becket Fire Department, requested a bucket loader in order to move building debris to eliminate smoldering and hot spots. Prior to this, the scene was photographed including aerial photography using a DFS drone. Due to the heavy damage from the fire and loss of the structure a physical examination was restricted.

6. Tpr. Clayton deployed accelerant K9 Bijou to the accessible areas of the Doris Duke Theatre with negative result. (Separate AK9 reports attached to this report.)

7. Investigators based their origin and cause considering observable damage with greatest loss. Witness interviews and photographs from first responders displaying initial stages of fire growth. This aided in determining the most likely origin area of fire. Investigators learned that the last people to use the theatre were four performers practicing the night prior on November 16th. All four were interviewed about their actions and observation while last in the theatre. All stated they followed the proper protocols regarding entry and exiting the building including turning off all lights and electrical equipment. No abnormalities were noticed including unfamiliar sounds, odd smells, or anything out of the ordinary. All performers were asked if they smoke. Two of the performers acknowledged smoking but stated they did not smoke in the vicinity of the theatre and only smoked along the roadway leading from the theatre back to the dormitory's. All four performers left the theatre at approximately 2300 hours in normal operating condition.

8. Investigators further investigated as to why the sprinklers and fire hydrant were inoperable at the time fire fighters arrived onscene. The Doris Duke Theatre contained a wet sprinkler system which used water supplied from a nearby reservoir on the grounds. In close vicinity there was a pump house. The pump system had a digital recording device that logged all functions within the pump and sprinkler system. This data was reviewed and showed the jockey pump activated at 05:02AM in order to maintain appropriate pressure. Thus a sprinkler head within the theatre activated causing the jockey pump to start. The data shows the jockey pump working for approximately 32 minutes. After this time a catastrophic failure of a sprinkler riser occurs in which the main pump is activated. The main pump did not work or function appropriately. The main pump was not working. This was noticed when first arriving fire fighters attempted to attach fire hose to the nearby hydrant with no flowing water coming from the hydrant. This is a direct result of the pump not working.

9. It was discovered that the fire pump was inspected by Hampshire Fire Protection in July of 2020 in which the inspection report noted the pump strainer was clogged with weeds and algae. No known action was taken on this issue which may have contributed to the main pump not operational at the time of the fire.

10. Further Jacobs Pillow Theatre Group management was aware of an ongoing issue regarding alarm communication issues. Many of



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Synopsis - Continued

the facilities on the grounds have alarm features. These alarms are monitored by Lee Audio N' Security. There had been numerous false alarms and connectivity issues from what is believed to be water affecting the underground lines. In regards to the Doris Duke Theatre the last system test resulted in normal function was on 10/30/20. After this date the system failed to self-test and communicate. Lee Audio N'Security was advised by facility members to disregard the communication error from 10/31 until the date of the fire 11/17. Thus an inoperable alarm system within the Doris Duke Theatre contributed to the delayed activation of fire response causing greater loss than may have occurred with proper working alarm activation.

11. In Conclusion the fire at Doris Duke Theatre is ruled undetermined. Investigators cannot rule out numerous factors that may have contributed to the start of the fire. This is to include numerous electrical devices within the facility that may have contributed to an electrical event leading to fire. Due to the catastrophic damage from the fire, a limited scene examination was performed. Investigators were able to determine that fire protection systems within the Doris Duke Theatre were either inoperable or limited in their capabilities. This resulted in a delayed discovery of the fire, thus fire response arrived later than may have been with a working alarm system. This along with a inoperable pump system and hydrant, prevented fire suppression efforts and allowed greater damage to the structure There is no evidence of an incendiary act. As per NFPA 921 19.7.4 this fire to be ruled undetermined. Pending any new information this case to be considered closed.

Respectfully Submitted,
Tpr. Daniel Quigley #3864
Massachusetts State Police