Spokane Valley Fire Department
2120 North Wilbur Road, Spokane Valley, WA
(509) 928-1700

ORIGIN AND CAUSE FULL REPORT

Structure Fire Investigation

Incident Address:
2424 N. Cherry Street, Spokane Valley, WA, 99216

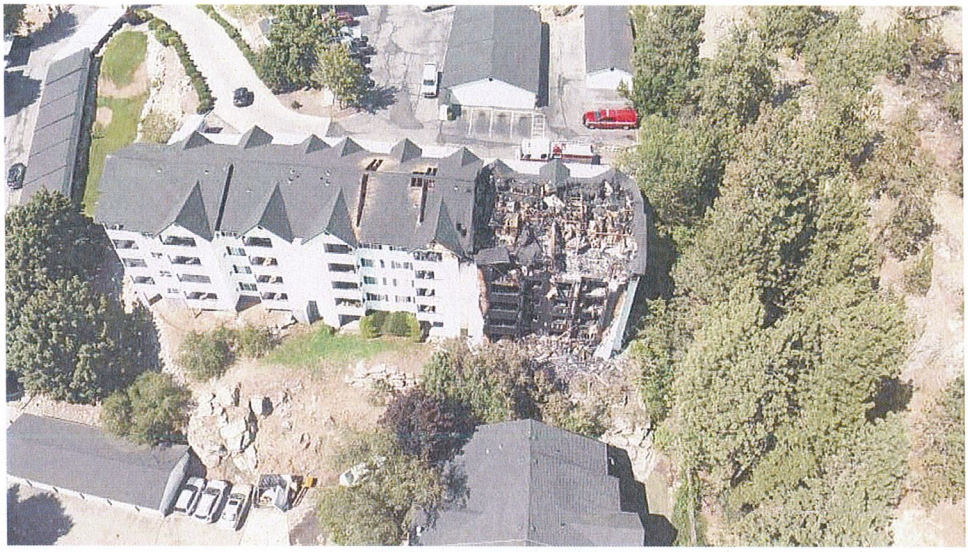


Figure 1: Front Elevation

Date of Fire Event: July 26, 2026

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1. RECEIPT OF ASSIGNMENT

I, Carson Parr, the on-duty fire origin and cause investigator for Spokane Valley Fire Department, designator, V-42 responded to a five alarm fire at 2424 N. Cherry St., Building Eight, hereafter referred to as Bldg #8. I checked on scene and contacted V21, who provided me with a briefing and tasked me with determining the origin and cause of the fire which occurred in the aforementioned structure. The fire was still actively burning and firefighting operations were still progress. Ken Johnson (Deputy Fire Marshal or DFM) responded to the incident address as well, per my request. DFM Johnson (V40) began taking drone footage. I began photo documenting the scene.

The fire scene examination was conducted under the authority of the International Fire Code (Chapter 1, Section 104. The scene had not been released by fire crews prior to my arrival.

2. SCOPE OF WORK & PROBLEM STATEMENT

The investigation was conducted and the report was drafted employing the 2024 edition of NFPA 921, "A Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigation," as well as the 2022 edition of NFPA 1033, "Professional Qualifications for Fire Investigators." as reference and/or guidelines.

3. INCIDENT SYNOPSIS

On 07/26/2026 at approximately 13:20 hours, the Spokane Valley Fire Department (SVFD) responded to a reported commercial structure fire located at 2424 N. Cherry Street. SVFD arrived on scene to find a large, five-level apartment building with most of the east half, including the attic, fully involved in fire. Fire crews extinguished the fire, which caused an estimated $1,500,000 in structural damage. The fire destroyed 12 units on the eastern half of the structure and rendered four additional units uninhabitable.

The fire is classified as undetermined. The likely area of origin was on the exterior, south side balcony of Apt. #165, fifth level, at the southeast corner of the structure; however, I was not able to rule out the fire starting on the balcony of Apt. #164, directly beneath Apt.#165. The ignition source was most likely a smoldering cigarette or cigarette ashes directly contacting combustibles, likely cured peat moss in a flower pot, which was mounted to the parapet of the balcony of Apt. #165. The fire spread to other available and/or adjacent combustibles and upward, through a nylon soffit into the attic space. At about the same time, the fire spread downward to ground level and greatly increased in intensity and size. SREC received multiple calls reporting the fire, who dispatched the initial SVFD response.

4. SAFETY ASSESSMENT

Upon my arrival, I contacted V21, the incident commander, to verify the scene was safe to enter; it was not. My scene survey was conducted from the stable, uninvolved sections of the building and the exterior.

5. WEATHER INFORMATION

Source of information: OpenWeather

Date and time of data collection: 07/26/2026 at 13:20 hours

Temperature: 79.45 °F

Humidity: 36%

Wind direction: Southwest at 238°

Wind speed: 5.99 mph

Skies: Clear sky

6. STRUCTURE DETAILS

The involved structure was a Type V-Wood Frame, 5-story residential multifamily occupancy. The structure was approximately 51 ft wide and 177 ft in length, with an approximate area of 45,135 sq ft. The roof was gable style. The roofing material was of asphalt/composition, affixed to a solid, wood laminate decking over an engineered, wood truss system. The exterior was clad in a faux, ship lap, nylon siding; the foundation was concrete which was sound and in good repair.

7. EXPOSURES

Exposures to the east: The structure fire spread to the forestland immediately east of the apartment complex. Washington State DNR responded and extinguished an approximate 0.5-acre fire. To the south lay Eagle Rock Apt Bldg. #5; I noted heat-distorted nylon siding on part of the north exterior, the side of Bldg. #5 which faced Bldg. #8. I saw no apparent structural damage. SVFD fire crews reported: Bldg. #5 interior was undamaged by fire. There was a west facing parking structure approximately 40 feet north of Bldg. #8. The southern exterior wall of the structure was also exposed to heat; however, I noted little

to no fire or smoke damage on the interior or exterior of the building. Another parking structure was west facing, and located approximately 60 feet to the northeast of Bldg. #8. It was exposed to heat from the fire on the south exterior wall. There was little to no fire or smoke damage on the exterior, or within the structure.

8. PHOTOGRAPHERS

Digital photographs were taken one scene. A total of 227 photographs were taken.

Photographer 1

Name: Parr, Carson L.

Photograph Type: Scene Photos

Number of Photos: 188

Photographer 2

Name: Ken Johnson

Photograph Type: Drone Aerial

Number of Photos: 39

9. ELECTRICAL MAIN UTILITIES

The electrical supply for the structure was located on the east side of the property and was supplied from an underground service, supplying a meter base located on the east side of Bldg #8. The electrical service was provided by Modern Electric Water Company. The building was energized at the time of the fire. During suppression operations, fire crews summoned Modern Electric to terminate service to the structure.

10. SOLAR SYSTEM

No solar service was in place.

11. ELECTRICAL SUBPANELS

Location	Condition	Geo Location	Wiring Type	Breakers Tripped	Single Pole	Double Pole	Amperage Range
One in each apartment	Affected by the fire		Copper	0	0	0	Varied

12. GAS UTILITIES

Natural gas service was provided to the structure. There was no observable damage to the gas meter. The Meter number was 587949. The gas service was provided by Avista.

13. ALARM SYSTEMS

- Pull station, which was monitored and in good working condition; it was activated upon discovery of the fire.

- The sprinkler and pull stations were both able to initiate a general alarm signal to the monitoring company.

14. WATER UTILITIES

All utilities were in normal operation at the time of the fire.

15. SMOKE ALARMS

There was no monitored smoke detection, only local smoke alarms within each unit. During my scene examination, observed and hear operating smoke alarms on the interior of several of the units. I was unable to confirm the operation of the alarms in the apartments on the east end, levels four and five, due to the complete destruction of the structure and smoke detectors.

16. EXTERIOR EXAMINATION

I started my exterior survey from the north side of the structure and worked roughly in a clockwise direction, proceeding from the north side to the east, then to the south, and concluded on the west exterior of the structure. Very steep terrain limited access to the building on all but the north side. I made observations and photo-documented the entire exterior. The north side of the structure was designated as the, "A" side.

The building was segregated into three sections with three alcove-style stairwells serving each respective section: one on the east, one at the central portion, and a third on the west. The south-side balconies each accompanied a single apartment, except for the lower two levels, which were townhouse style apartments and were coupled with two, southside patio/balconies.

North: The fire-affected area of the exterior of the north side of the structure was limited to the east third. The windows were intact, as was the siding and stairwells. There was notable heat distortion and soot staining and minor fire damage to the soffits and siding, beginning at the northeast corner of the structure, extending approximately 53 feet along the top of the walls to the west. Some of the windows stood open. Daylight was visible to the south through them, as the roof was burned off and had fallen in. Close observation of the roof, the overall structure, and the surrounding area were conducted with a DJI, Mavic 3T drone. I noted there were two sets of trench cuts in the roof which SVFD crews had cut to the west of the fire-affected area; the first was approximately 16 feet west, and the second set was approximately 26 feet west of the fire-affected area.

East: There was moderate to minimal fire and smoke damage along the bottom two-thirds of the east wall, as well as some minor smoke staining. In the gable section or portion of the east exterior wall, there was some direct fire damage, as the faux nylon lap siding from the top portion, or gable section, was heat distorted; several of the pieces had fallen from the side of the building to the ground.

South: The east third of the building was heavily damaged by heat and fire. There was a great deal of direct fire damage and involvement from ground to eave in the far eastern section and exterior corner. The fire damage originated on the southeast exterior corner and extended approximately 53 feet westward, approximately a third of the way along the south wall. There were five levels: one sublevel and four above grade. The building was constructed with attached, single balconies on the south exterior which were only accessed through a single, associated apartment in that section of the structure.

There were five balconies in the far easternmost section which corresponded with Apts. #165 (top level), #164 (fourth level), #161 (third level), and #159 (first and second levels). All five balconies were completely consumed by fire, as was the south exterior wall of the top level apartment (#165). There were an additional five balconies to the west of the eastern set, all of which lay in the eastern section, which were charred and heavily damaged by fire, yet remained largely intact. The upper balconies of this western set were more heavily damaged, and the top balcony was mostly consumed. I noted there was a large "V" fire burn pattern from ground level, sweeping up in a dihedral fashion to the eave line on the eastern third of the exterior south wall. West of the large "V" fire burn pattern, the remainder of the structure was well intact. To the east, the fire burn pattern terminated at the soffit/eave line on the southeast exterior corner.

I noted the greatest degree of fire damage was at the topmost balcony and the south exterior wall, near the top of the northeast corner of the structure, where Apt #165 had stood, and Apt. #163 beneath. Approximately 20 feet of the exterior south wall of the uppermost level where Apt#165 had been, was completely consumed by fire, as well as the roof assembly. The top floor deck (southeast and south area of apartment #165) remained; however, it was not stable. I was not able to access the area due to the degraded structural stability.

Beneath apartment #165 and Apt #163, the south exterior wall was damaged by fire and all of the exterior balconies were completely consumed by fire. However, the depth of char, degree of consumption, and intrusion into the south exterior of the structure was substantially less, relative to the damage above, on the exterior wall and balcony of Apt#165 and Apt.#163. A witness account placed the fire at or near the top of the south exterior wall, most likely on the balcony of Apt#165 and Apt. #163. He said the fire spread downward to ground level from the upper two balconies, which was consistent with my observations.

West: There was little sign of fire damage or smoke staining, heat deformation, or remarkable signs of fire.

Roof: Much of the eastern third of the roof structure had completely failed, fallen in, and had been consumed by fire.

Conclusion:

The greatest discernable damage, I noted was at top of the exterior south wall, particularly at the

southeast corner, at the two uppermost balconies, and extending upward to the attic space and roof. The entire east section of the structure was mostly destroyed by fire. Of the fire damaged portion of the structure, was approximately 20 x 20 sq. ft. area, within Apt. #165, near the south exterior wall and south east exterior corner of the top level, that was reduced to white and grey ashes, an indication of much greater heat and a more complete burn near the center of the area of white and grey ash. Outward from the the area of ash, the degree of fire damage diminished in every direction, indicating great heat, for the greatest length of time at or near the center of the grey and white ash, as the fire did not burn as long or as hot at more distance from the area near the center of the white and grey ash. Near the heart of the area of white ash lay the remains of the exterior wall adjacent the location where once stood the balcony of Apt. #165, and Apt. #164 just beneath. Of the two balconies, the balcony of Apt. #164 was the lesser affected and damaged by fire. The fire most probably started on the balcony of Apt. #165.

17. AREA(S) OF FIRE ORIGIN

The area of origin was most likely on the exterior balcony of Apt. #165, on the uppermost level, southeast exterior corner; however, I could not rule out the balcony of Apt. #164 directly beneath Apt. #165's balcony. The likely area of origin was completely destroyed by fire. It was not possible to conduct close, detailed examination.



Figure: Area of Fire Origin

18. IGNITION & FUEL SOURCES

Due to the complete destruction of the structure in or near the area of origin, little was left to examine. I was able to identify no heat source(s).

I could not rule out a cigarette or hot object, possibly a burning incense stick. The resident of Apt. #165 stated he occasionally smoked on the balcony and that he had done so sometime prior to the fire. He admitted he was in the habit of disposing of his cigarettes on the balcony, and had probably done so prior to the fire. He would not remark as to where he would place the hot ashes from the cigarettes. He claimed he would place the spent butts on the railing.

Refer to, "Scene Interviews".

Neither could I rule out an ignition source on the balcony of Apt. # 163. I interviewed the resident of Apt. #159, David and Margaret Carfield. Both of them stated they had found a charred incense stick on their ground-level patio, directly beneath Apts. # 163 and #165, at approximately 10:30. The fire occurred shortly after 1300 hours. The resident of Apt. # 163, Blake Moore, denied having any incense, or

anything that would produce heat, stored or located on his balcony. I was not able to find any sign of incense or possible sources of ignition associated with the balconies of Apt. # 163, or Apt. # 165. It is unlikely the fire started on the balcony of Apt. # 163, yet I could not rule it out.

19. POINT(S) OF FIRE ORIGIN

Point of Origin: Most probably on the uppermost balcony (Apartment #165).

Competent Heat Source: Most likely a smoldering cigarette.

First Material Ignited: Unknown

20. IGNITION SEQUENCE/HYPOTHESIS

Hypothesis #1:

Most Probable Ignition Sequence: A smoldering or hot object, likely cigarette or cigarette ashe, was placed in a receptacle full of combustible potting soil (peat moss). The ignition of the peat moss melted or escaped the receptacle and spread to available combustibles on the balcony. The combustibles most probably melted the composite, plastic decking and dropped downward onto the balcony below, started an additional fire which continued to spread downward in similar fashion, to ground level.

21. DOLLAR LOSS ESTIMATES

For this incident, the estimated total dollar loss is $1,500,000.

The table below summarizes pre-incident appraisal values, estimated loss, and estimated property saved for the property involved in this incident.

Category	Structure	Vehicle(s)	Contents	Total
Appraisal Value	$2,828,600	$0	$565,720	$3,394,320
Estimated Loss	$1,5000,000	$0	$282,886	$2,056,720
Estimated Property Saved	$1,328,600	$0	$565,772	$1,894,372

22. FIRE CAUSE CLASSIFICATION

The fire has been classified as undetermined due, most likely, to a cigarette or hot object being introduced to an unknown combustible material.

This report has been reviewed for conformance with accepted and tested scene processing methodology. Additionally, it has been reviewed for both form and content and agrees with or exceeds the recommendations of published materials and standards relating to the reporting of scientific information outlined in publications such as those published by the NFPA and ASTM.

The data contained in this investigation is true and accurate based on the information available at the time it was written. Findings, opinions, and conclusions may change if additional data collected is discovered after this report was authored.

Should additional data become available after this report was generated, the Spokane Valley Fire Department reserves the right to evaluate new information and adjust stated opinions as needed or dictated by industry standards and guidelines such as NFPA 921 or ASTM standards.

Artificial Intelligence Assistance Disclosure

This report may contain content generated or assisted by Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools.

The investigator is responsible for reviewing and validating all information, conclusions, and findings contained herein.

AI-generated content may not always be accurate or complete.

Use professional judgment and verify as appropriate.

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Signatures

Curtis L. Parr 8/27/26

CL Parr, Assistant Fire Marshal

Badge #296

Ken Johnson, Deputy Fire Marshal

Badge # 486