



Statement from the Office of the Fire Chief Emily Rauscher

At 0953 Skagway Fire was dispatched to reports of a “big fire, black smoke and flames” at 9th avenue between Broadway and State. Command 2 was one of the reporting parties and conducted a scene size up of a large commercial complex with multiple mixed-use occupancies with a working large fire and requested an all call (secondary page out). Command 1 arrived, conducted a 360 of the building and established 9th Avenue command. The building was approximately 45% engulfed with fire origin appearing to be on the Bravo/Charlie corner. The fire had one exposure to the neighboring residence on the Bravo side of the unit.

Crews from Engine 23 simultaneously worked on establishing a water supply, conducting a primary search of the exposed residence, while other crews performed fire attack and extinguishment of the exposure. Next, crews worked on confining the large fire to its origin and protecting other exposures on the property and neighboring properties. During this time the electric company had shut down electricity at the block and north of the structure, due to the gridding system.

The secondary page out brought Engine 4 and that unit was assigned to perform exposure control and fire attack on the Bravo/ Charlie side of the building. Due to strong North winds, engines were not able to stage on the Charlie side (south side) of the building. Evacuations were conducted at the homes south of the commercial structure while Alpha side Fire crews worked on crowd control and evacuation of the structure involving the working fire.

This fire has been assigned to Alaska State Fire Marshal Richard Harrop and a fire investigation is undergoing. The fire scene has been secured and we will continue to monitor and secure the property until Fire Marshal Harrop makes it into Skagway for a sight inspection scheduled for 2/28/2023. We ask all residence to stay clear of the fire scene as to not interfere with the fire investigation.

Skagway Fire is a small department and all our crews worked diligently at bringing this fire under control and containing it to its structure of origin. We are continuing to work with the State Fire Marshal's office for the fire investigation, decontaminating our response gear and equipment and ensuring our rigs are ready for future responses. We ask that all news reporters or other inquiries allow time for the investigation to be completed and the report finalized. Until the investigation is complete, the Public Information Officer will be Borough Manager Brad Ryan. He may be reached at 907-983-2297.

On a personal note, many Fire Department's do not experience the support we had yesterday. We were aided with food and hot beverages from the Assembly of God. We had previous members return and aide in response. We had municipal management and our public safety chairman help work defensive hose lines. The Mayor and additional assembly members along with other adults and children arrived for the major cleanup. The community support was truly exceptional, and I will never be able to fully express my gratitude to all of you.

Assisting Agencies: Public Works Department, Skagway Police Department, Alaska Power and Telephone Company

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