



## Over 100 Calif. firefighters battle 8-alarm blaze

Fire in an affordable housing unit under construction in Redwood City began on the fifth floor

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<https://youtu.be/5i6DAqBhB1A>

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REDWOOD CITY, Calif. — A [fire that brought out more than a hundred firefighters for eight alarms](#) Monday destroyed an affordable living complex under construction and forced the evacuation of nearby residents, authorities said.

The blaze broke out about 10:15 a.m. at the construction site in the 2700 block of Middlefield Road and affected primarily one building, Menlo Park Fire District Chief Mark Lorenzen said. There were no reports of injuries.

The fire was under control but still burning as of about 3:30 p.m. Monday, said Jon Johnston, division chief and fire marshal for the Menlo Park Fire District. Firefighters were no longer putting water on the blaze at that time, he said.

<https://youtu.be/JXxRjJP45gU>

Fire crews also fought at least a dozen spot fires in the neighborhood south of the building caused by flaming pieces of insulation blown by the wind, Lorenzen said. One fourplex experienced some flames, which were extinguished by residents, Johnston said. All the spot fires were out by Monday afternoon, he added. No other buildings burned but the fencing around several homes was destroyed.

The site — a massive housing development still under construction — was a “tinder box,” Lorenzen said to reporters during a press conference in the early afternoon Monday.

Lorenzen added later that firefighters would work through the night to ensure that the flames did not flare up again.

The fire began on the fifth floor of the construction site, Lorenzen said. Crews arrived to find large clouds of black smoke flowing from the building and officials called a third alarm immediately, he said.

Construction workers evacuated the building.

<https://youtu.be/zhKsDfVFPwU>

Lorenzen said the blaze later rose to eight alarms because of the winds and floating embers and the attempt to protect nearby buildings. On the scene were all of the county's fire resources, he added — 26 fire engines and at least six ladder trucks. Officials called in mutual aid from Santa Clara County , getting an additional 10 fire engines from various departments.

Around 150 firefighters worked on the blaze as of Monday afternoon.

Johnston added that an additional two strike teams from San Jose helped extinguish the flames. Equipment also included two breathing units, four water tenders, two squads, two ambulances and 12 chief officers.

In a social media post, the sheriff's office said immediate evacuation orders went out for residents who live near the blaze on Pacific Avenue and Calvin Avenue . The evacuation notices later were expanded to include residents on Dumbarton Avenue from the train tracks to Middlefield Road .

Lorenzen said later that there were concerns that embers could spread fire to the neighborhood to the south of the burning building. "We're seeing a lot of embers going to that neighborhood," he said.

About 200 people in neighborhoods south of the fire were evacuated, Lorenzen said.

"Some of those evacuations were for precautionary reasons," said Assistant Sheriff Ryan Monaghan of the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office. "Others were because of the embers that spread and touched the area. Those folks are safe."

A temporary evacuation center was opened at the Veterans Memorial Senior Center, located at 1455 Madison Ave., according to the sheriff's office. Around 5

p.m., most residents were allowed to return home. Those who could not were connected with the American Red Cross.

Yanira Williams, a 39-year-old woman, evacuated from her job at Fair Oaks Health Center due to the fire. She recalled watching the flames grow taller and more dangerous as black smoke rose above the building.

“It’s very scary because you don’t know what could happen, like an explosion,” Williams said. She added that her car remained in a parking lot near the burning building.

Raul Ramirez, a 65-year-old resident of Redwood City, was riding the bus around 11 a.m. when he saw the burning building. He exited the bus to watch the blaze. “Everybody wants to see what happened,” he said.

The fire’s smoke also caused Garfield Community School to close early.

The city of Palo Alto [issued](#) an air quality advisory due to smoke drifting over from the fire. The Bay Area Air Quality Management District forecasted moderate air quality through Thursday, according to the announcement.

The building was planned to be a 179-unit affordable housing complex known as Middlefield Junction in North Fair Oaks , an unincorporated neighborhood south of Redwood City . The apartments were to be reserved for households earning between 15% and 80% of the area’s median income. Twenty apartments were set aside for people experiencing homelessness. Two units were for on-site managers.

The San Mateo County Fire Investigation Task Force had begun work Monday afternoon to find the cause and origin of the fire, according to Johnston.

“Trying to figure out where it started when the entire fifth floor doesn’t exist anymore would be a challenge,” Lorenzen said.

The total cost of the finished building was expected to be \$155 million. The building was a total loss, Lorenzen said, and would have to be rebuilt from the foundation.