

Fire Sprinkler Save

Rochester firefighters face pythons at apartment fire

Firefighters responding to an apartment fire alarm got a little more than they bargained for Monday afternoon — in the form of snakes.

According to Larry Mueller, assistant fire marshal for Rochester, a sprinkler activation tripped an alarm about 2 p.m. at Summit Square Apartments, 836 41st St. N.W. A second-floor apartment had smoke showing; when firefighters entered a back bedroom, they found a small smoldering fire.

In addition to the fire, they discovered three snakes — ball pythons, Mueller said. Two were still alive; one was dead. The fire was kept in check by the sprinkler head in the closet of the room, he said, but firefighters needed some assistance with the 3-foot reptiles.

Officials with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources were able to corral the two snakes, Mueller said.

The cause of the fire has yet to be determined, but Mueller said it appeared the apartment resident, a 25-year-old man, had laid heating elements under the plastic bins in which the snakes were kept; one tub ignited.

No injuries were reported; Mueller estimated the damage at \$15,000 to the property, \$7,000 to the contents. The apartment resident was displaced; Red Cross is assisting.

Mueller once again emphasized the role played by the sprinklers in keeping the fire from spreading throughout the apartment or surrounding apartments.