



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 27, 2020

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Man Arrested for Arson for Setting Fire to King County Operated Shelter Located at Renton Red Lion

Renton, WA – Just before noon on November 25, 2020, Renton Regional Fire Authority and surrounding fire jurisdictions, providing mutual aid, responded to a reported high-rise fire located in room 614 at the King County operated shelter located at the Renton Red Lion. Upon entry, crews discovered a large amount of smoke and reduced visibility on the 6th floor. In addition to the fire and smoke conditions, crews found five non-ambulatory residents in wheelchairs trapped on the 5th floor and unable to evacuate. The fire sprinkler system and quick actions of our firefighters quickly put the fire out and limited damage to the immediate room and surrounding area.

An investigation into the origin and cause of the fire was completed jointly between the Renton Regional Fire Authority and Renton Police Department. The origin of the fire was located on the floor of room 614 and included the burnt remains of a cardboard box, a pile of papers, bedding a cushion from a fold out bed in the room. A burnt roll of toilet paper was located sitting on top of the TV and is believed to have been used to light the fire on the floor. The fire spread from the papers to the carpeting and the bedding and then finally to the cushion, generating enough heat to activate the fire sprinkler head that was located directly above the fire area. The cause of this fire has been determined to be incendiary. The 46-year-old resident of the room had made threats to burn down the building earlier in the day and was arrested for Arson by Renton Police Department.

“This fire had every potential to be deadly, based on the current use of this hotel as a shelter and the ongoing fire and life safety concerns we have expressed. Since being advised of its change in use we have repeatedly expressed concern around the ability to evacuate residents – and this fire demonstrated exactly what those issues are – we had five residents in wheelchairs stuck on the 5th floor during an active fire that required firefighters to evacuate them. Fortunately, the quick work of our firefighters and the fire sprinkler system provided valuable time to ensure a safe resolve.” States Fire Chief Roy Gunsolus.

Fire and life safety issues at the facility have been an ongoing struggle for the Department, from documented exits being chained shut, to failures to evacuate during emergencies, to tampering with fire and life safety systems and of most concern, fire setting behaviour that has been observed in the facility.

Chief Gunsolus also recognized the continued strong partnership with Renton Police Department and the effective work the departments do together “The arrest of this individual further demonstrates the strong partnership between Renton Police and the Renton Regional Fire Authority and is but one example of both Departments working together to provide a safer community”.

Estimated property loss of the fire is \$25,000.

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