



LAKELAND FIRE DEPARTMENT

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Lakeland Firefighters Respond to Home Fire near Handley Park in Lakeland

Lakeland --- At approximately 8:15 PM, the Lakeland Fire Department responded to a home fire at 1408 Phyllis Street, Lakeland, FL. Fire crews breached the front door to find heavy smoke conditions and a bedroom on the east side of the home consumed in flames. Crews extinguished the fire without incident but upon searching the structure for occupants discovered 3 pets; a large dog and two cats.

The home was occupied by siblings Thomas Watkins and Pamela Burton, neither of which were home when the fire began. The fire is believed to have begun after Watkins briefly left the home for a walk. Upon returning Watkins discovered the fire and entered to rescue the aforementioned pets. Mr. Watkins was assessed and air lifted from the scene to Tampa General Hospital for treatment.

Extensive resuscitation attempts were made on all three of the pets by LFD firefighters. One cat was revived after being administered oxygen, however the second cat and the dog perished from their injuries, even after resuscitation attempts by crews which included full intubation and *Advanced Life Support* treatment. The LFD crews are trained and all of the department's rescue apparatuses are equipped with specialized equipment designed for pet rescue and resuscitation.

It is important to remind pet owners that however difficult it may be to do, please do not enter a burning structure to save a pet. If a building is on fire or shows signs of fire, like smoke, stay out! Pets are very much loved and seen as members of the family but people should not jeopardize their safety in the event of a fire or other emergency. Responders are specially trained to rescue everyone, including pets.

LFD's fire investigator determined that the fire was started by smoking materials in the affected bedroom and was accidental. The fire caused \$25,000 in damage to the home.

8 apparatuses and 24 firefighters responded to the incident.

If any further information is needed contact Janel Vasallo.

Gary Ballard, Fire Chief

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