

Alton Fire Department extinguishes fire in seconds, but deceased woman discovered

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - A 75-year-old woman was found deceased in an Alton home early Thursday morning by Alton Fire Department members after extinguishing a fire in mere seconds.

The front of the home didn't display much outer damage. The fire was confined to the living room where the woman was discovered, Alton Fire Chief Bernie Sebold said.

"This morning at 5:37 a.m., the Alton Fire Department was dispatched to a structure fire at 3208 Duco Street," Sebold said. "We were notified there was a 75-year-old female inside and she had activated her life line medical alert to make notification of the fire. When she came on the line, she spoke to the operator that she had a fire inside her home. The Alton Police Department Police Department dispatcher sent us to the location in Alton.

"An Alton Police officer arrived seconds before we did and the firefighters saw fire in the window and the crews pulled a hose line and entered in the living room through the front door. The fire was very quickly extinguished; it might have taken 30 seconds. Upon a search, the firefighters did find one deceased female in the living room. It was unfortunate most of the damage to the home was in the living room where the woman was found. All the other rooms have smoke damage, but no actual flame damage."

Fire Chief Sebold said at the present time he couldn't release the name of the victim because of the next-of-kin notification process that was underway.

Sebold pointed out this is the first time since 2013 that Alton has had a fire fatality. He said that year there were two fatalities. He also said to have two fire fatalities two days consecutively in the area was very difficult. A woman died in a fire in Bethalto the previous day.

"This was very difficult for the emergency responders," he said. "Our mission is to save people, while there was nothing we could do in this instance. It can be very difficult for firefighters to cope with the loss of a civilian in a fire or on an emergency call. We do take the mental health and welfare of our emergency responders very serious and we always make sure we follow up with them to make sure they are OK and aware that there is assistance of a counselor available. We will do a lot of follow up with the crews on the scene over the next few days."

Sebold said because of all the safety precautions people now take with smoke detectors, etc., fire fatalities in general are not the norm.

"Fire fatalities have decreased nationwide over the last 20 years," he said. "A lot of this is due to the proactive fire departments and fire prevention. It has been a tough week for River Bend fire departments coping with the loss of two of our residents."