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House destroyed, one dead in Archer Circle fire

By Nick Marnell



Archer fire contained Photo courtesy Felipe Baretto, MOFD

lines.

Shortly before dawn on Oct. 30, Ferenc Kovac heard pops and sparks, looked out his window and saw smoke and flames shooting from a house afire in a nearby Moraga cul de sac. Kovac called in the alarm at 4:48 a.m. and within six minutes, Capt. Mike Rattary and his engine company from Moraga-Orinda Fire District Station 41 arrived at 9 Archer Circle to a house fully engulfed in flames.

Battalion Chief Felipe Baretto immediately called for a second alarm because of the potential for the fire spreading into the adjacent trees and uphill to neighboring homes. A total of 41 firefighters from MOFD and the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District responded to the incident. Because drums possibly containing nitric and hydrochloric acid were reported in the garage, the Contra Costa County Hazardous Materials Team was called to the scene. Wires were reported down and PG&E secured the electrical and gas

"I was impressed that they could contain the fire to the one structure," Kovac said.

One resident was rescued from the rear of the structure and transported to John Muir Hospital. The victim later died due to the severe burn injuries he received in the fire, according to Interim Fire Chief Jerry Lee. Another resident escaped unharmed.

Total property damage was estimated at \$1 million. The fire remains under joint investigation by officials of MOFD and the Moraga Police Department, who have yet to announce the cause of the fire.

The Alford family evacuated their nearby home because of the Archer Circle fire danger. In 2016, the Alford family evacuated their country club home on Augusta Drive after it was red-tagged as uninhabitable because of landslides along a regional park trail.

"This time, it was only for 30 minutes," Ray Alford said.

Reach the reporter at: nick@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

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