# **After Action Review:** *1811 S Quebec Way*

**Date: March 24, 2018 Time: 17:04 Incident Number: 18-031123**

**Address: 1811 S. Quebec Way**

Numerous 911 calls were received reporting visible flames outside of a townhome building at 1811 S Quebec Way. At the time of this incident, extremely strong winds were blowing out of the South. On arrival, Companies encountered heavy smoke conditions in the parking lot of the townhome complex. Gusty winds were pushing the smoke from the fire towards the North, creating zero visibility conditions in the parking lot and making it difficult to find the fire building. Once found, Companies encountered a 10-unit, 2 story townhome building with heavy fire on the Charlie side (South side) of the building. The flames on the Charlie side were being fanned by the wind and were extending over the roof towards the Alpha side. First-in Companies were unable to spot their apparatus in front of the building due to heavy smoke conditions and almost zero visibility. What followed was an aggressive interior attack, interior

search and evacuation of all townhome units in the building, vertical ventilation, along with hose lines extinguishing the exterior fire on the Charlie side. At one point, interior Companies in 2 of the units found themselves in a dangerous wind driven fire event when the windows on the Charlie side failed due to heat and flame impingement on them. Simultaneously, Engine 19's apparatus had a pump gear issue that resulted in interior handlines not being charged. Interior crews were able to withdraw quickly and re-engage the fire with charged hose lines soon after. A second alarm response was called for and the fire was held to four townhome units (3 of them total losses and 1 with fire contained to the attic). The Red Cross responded and assisted the displaced occupants of 4 of the townhome units. A fire watch was instituted throughout the rest of the shift, utilizing a fresh Engine Company every 4 hours, to ensure that the fire did not rekindle.

**Risk vs Benefit:**

Occupied townhomes and time of day required an offensive interior attack. Lightweight frame construction and heavy winds from the Charlie side increased the risk and rate of fire spread dramatically making a quick, interior attack even more necessary.

**Units Initially Dispatched:**

E19, E13, E22, E18, T19, TR22, R02, D04, D03, Ops2, E05(RIT)

**First Arriving Unit:**

E19

**Additional Units Requested:**

2nd Alarm (E16, E24, TR15, T08, D02) Note: This is one Engine short, but the initial assignment was one Engine heavy.

**Initial Assignments:**

**IC:**D04 **RIT:** E05 **Safety Officer:** Ops2

**Chief: D03, Charlie Division**

**Engine 19:** interior attack **Tower 22:** primary search then Charlie Division

**Engine 18:** interior attack **Truck 19:** primary search **R02**: Roof Division

**Engine 22:** interior attack

**Engine 13: Charlie Division**

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**Initial Strategy:**

Offensive Interior Attack along with exterior lines on Charlie side

**Initial Supply Line:** One 3**”** **Supply Engine:** E18 **Humat:** Yes

**Attack Lines:** Multiple, multiple sizes

**Back-up Line:** All lines used were attack lines

**Was the building laddered:** Yes, roof **2 Means of egress:** Yes

**Building Size:** 150X40 **Type:** Wood frame

**Occupancy:** Townhome **Stories:** 2

**Involvement Upon Arrival:**

Heavy fire Charlie side exterior of 3 townhomes, heavy fire interior (floors 1 and 2) of 3 townhomes, fire in attic of 4th townhome.

Command Structure: Initial structure consisted of Single Resources, later in the incident resources were grouped into Divisions (Charlie, Roof, and Delta). Interior Companies were kept as Single Resources due to constant movement between different units.

**Communications:**

TAC3A main channel, Command 3 for non-tactical communications with Dispatch. Normal communications difficulties were encountered at this incident (feedback from nearby radios during transmissions, etc.). Roof Division also had high winds to contend with, in addition to being on air, making their communications difficult.

Special Challenges and Hazards: Very high winds, zero visibility in parking lot, wind driven fire in 2 units, pump gear issue with first-in Engine Company.

**Safety Issues:**

Pump gear issue with Engine 19. See detailed explanation on page 5.

## Evaluation and Summary

**Goals:**

Extinguishment of a rapidly growing fire (offensive interior attack combined with exterior extinguishment on Charlie side), search and evacuation of an entire townhome building.

**Positive Accomplishments:**

- All Companies accomplished their objectives quickly and efficiently.

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- An interior attack was crucial as this was an occupied residential structure, but an exterior attack was also needed, these 2 types of attacks at the same time were coordinated well.
- Exterior Companies extinguished fire on the Charlie side without pushing fire onto interior Companies.
- E19's apparatus did not go into pump gear, but Companies overcame this obstacle quickly by using lines from E22 and by E18 working on E19's hydrant and pumping through E19.
- The fire was extending quickly through the attic of this building, vertical ventilation combined with interior Companies pulling ceilings on the 2nd floor and extinguishing fire from inside kept the fire from extending into 3 additional units on the Delta side.
- All efforts resulted in a quick stop and limited loss to 4 units.

## Areas for Improvement/Recommendations:

- At rapidly escalating incidents such as this, an Incident Commander can quickly lose accountability regarding number of apparatus on scene, crew locations and tasks, etc. Recommended that all District Chiefs be familiar with and use some type of Incident Management Tool (Tablet Command is the current DFD management tool). Familiarity with and use of this type of tool at the start of an incident greatly assists with maintaining control of an incident.
- At this incident, Engine 19 would not go into pump gear. After the incident, the repair shop checked the apparatus thoroughly and it was functioning normally. Personnel at the repair shop stated that this situation, while not common, does occur occasionally with all the older Engines in use at this time. More current models do not seem to have this issue. The cause is a lack of gears synchronizing. If this situation is encountered, the apparatus transmission can be placed in Neutral, then Reverse, then Neutral, then back to Drive and that should allow movement of the gears enough for them to synchronize. Our standard operations helped us greatly at this incident. Having an Engine back at Engine 19's hydrant allowed all of their handlines to be supplied even though their Engine at the fire was not functioning normally. Also, having a 3rd Engine (E22) at a different hydrant allowed for adding more handlines quickly.
- On the initial 1st alarm response an extra Engine was added to the call. When the IC called for a 2nd Alarm, only 2 Engines (instead of 3) were added which achieved a 2nd Alarm level of Engines. This was acceptable, however, initially only one Truck (instead of 2) was dispatched on the 2nd with an additional one being added later. At a rapidly expanding incident it is sometimes difficult for an IC to verify that the correct amounts of additional apparatus are responding. Thus, it is incumbent upon Dispatch to doublecheck greater alarm responses soon after they are dispatched.

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## Summary

A fast-moving fire with an extreme growth rate due to very high winds was encountered at a 10-unit townhome building. All personnel at this 2 Alarm response worked quickly and efficiently and by using an offensive interior attack, vertical ventilation, and an exterior attack on the Charlie side this fire was contained to 4 units.