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Butts Abandoned to Burn

By Lee Borrowman



Photo submitted

The cost of cigarettes just rose dramatically in Moraga. Four decades ago, a report by the U.S. Surgeon General warned that cigarette smoking may be hazardous to your health. This week's fire at 1100 Moraga Way demonstrated that it may be hazardous to buildings as well.

Late Wednesday afternoon the Moraga Orinda Fire District (MOFD) announced the cause of the three-alarm commercial structure fire that broke out on Tuesday, October 6th. According to Fire Marshal Michael Mentink, the fire ignited when smoldering cigarettes were left unattended in a plastic trashcan located on the exterior balcony of the building. Fire investigators from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms assisted MOFD personnel with the investigation into the cause of the fire, which started shortly before 7:00pm. Firefighters worked for two hours to bring the blaze under control and crews continued to extinguish hotspots into the early hours of Wednesday morning. Structural damage was estimated at \$1,000,000, with an additional \$300,000 in estimated damage to the building's contents. "This incident reinforces the need to be careful with the disposal of smoking materials. Cigarettes that may appear to be out may still be smoldering and, if left in contact with papers, plastics or other common combustible materials they can result in a fire hours after they are left," said Mentink.

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