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Orinda teenager dies in early morning house fire

By Nick Marnell



Heat damage to a helmet worn by an MOFD firefighter responding to the Orinda house fire
Photo courtesy MOFD

A teenage girl died and three people were injured after a single-family home in Orinda went up in flames in the predawn hours of Nov. 18.

According to fire officials, just before 4 a.m. Moraga-Orinda Fire District units responded to a structure fire at 524 Moraga Way in south Orinda near Ivy Drive. The first arriving unit found the residence engulfed in flames and immediately went into rescue mode after determining that there was an imminent threat to life. Once firefighters got 10 feet inside the building, the fire flashed, and everything inside the building became combustible.

Two additional occupants and one firefighter were injured. An MOFD firefighter suffered second-degree burns to his shoulder and ear - through his turnout gear - and was treated and released from John Muir Medical Center.

A total of nine engines responded and the fire was controlled at 5:08 a.m. Units from the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District assisted MOFD firefighters on the scene.

The confirmed fatality was Luca Gero, 16, a student and member of the debate team at Miramonte High School. A GoFundMe campaign has been created for the teenager's family and as of the final week of November had raised more than \$160,000.

"The incident is currently under investigation as is standard for all fatality fires," MOFD Chief Dave Winnacker said. "The district will not be releasing additional information until the investigation is complete." Due to the complexity of the incident, the chief gave no timetable for the release of the information.

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