



City of Madison Fire Department

News Release

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Spontaneous Combustion Cause of Restaurant Fire

City of Madison Fire Department investigators have determined that spontaneous combustion of cotton towels caused the fire at Dimitri's Gyros last night.

Firefighters were called to the restaurant at 3502 East Washington, at 10:11 p.m.

Investigators learned that towels containing grease and oil from cleaning the restaurant were taken to a laundromat, washed, and dried, then placed in a bag. Spontaneous combustion refers to a chemical reaction that likely occurred when the oily residue on the still warm towels were confined to the laundry bag and returned to a storage closet near the kitchen around 9 p.m. The fire was discovered by a passerby about an hour later.

Engine Company 8 was first on scene. They arrived to find smoke from the eaves and ventilation system surrounding the building. No fire was immediately visible, but all windows were blackened from the smoke, preventing firefighters from seeing anything inside.

Firefighters forced entry through a rear door on the west side of the building. They were met with heavy flames in the restaurant kitchen.

The restaurant was closed for the night and there was no one in the building at the time of the fire. Firefighters from Ladder 1 ventilated the roof, and the fire was knocked down by 10:22.

Damages are estimated at \$150,000 including the building and contents. The fire damage was contained to the kitchen, but there is smoke damage throughout the restaurant.

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