



## CHARLOTTE FIRE DEPARTMENT

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*The Charlotte Fire Department is called to serve all people by minimizing the risk to life and property through professional response, mitigation, prevention, education, planning, and community partnerships.*

### **Charlotte Fire update on May 18, 2023, fire at 7700 block Liberty Row Rd.**

**JUNE 6, 2023**

**CHARLOTTE, NC:** At approximately 9:00 a.m. on May 18, Charlotte Fire Alarm received calls about a fire at the 7700 block of Liberty Row Rd. Charlotte Fire arrived within minutes with heavy smoke showing at a construction site. Firefighters rescued 15 people who were trapped in the building, including one worker who was trapped 210' above ground in a crane.

On May 19, Charlotte Fire investigators discovered the remains of Demonte Sherrill and Ruben Holmes, who were construction workers.

Currently, there is no new information about the specific ignition source of the fire. However, we have determined that it began in a trailer on the first floor of the building. Fire Investigators determined multiple accidental heat sources were in the trailer.

Information regarding the four damaged fire trucks is still limited as they undergo damage assessments. Charlotte Fire will ensure the complete safety of all apparatus before returning them to service. With those apparatus temporarily removed from service, there has been no lapse in emergency response to Charlotte residents, and Charlotte Fire is fully capable of achieving our mission.

***Per Section 3313 of the North Carolina Fire Code.*** *In buildings required to have standpipes by Section 905.3.1, not less than one standpipe shall be provided for use during construction. Such standpipes shall be installed prior to construction exceeding 40 feet (12 192mm) in height above the lowest level of fire department vehicle access.*

No active standpipe was installed, and Charlotte Fire cannot provide documentation showing a standpipe was installed and operational on any floors.

A standpipe or riser is a type of rigid water piping built into multi-story buildings in a vertical position or into bridges in a horizontal position, to which fire hoses can be connected, allowing manual water application to the fire.

***Per Section 3308.2 North Carolina Fire Code,*** *the owner is responsible for developing and maintaining an approved pre-fire plan.*

For the construction type and size of this building, the General Contractor is obligated by Mecklenburg County to contact the Charlotte Fire Marshal's office before construction exceeding 40ft in height on construction sites. Typically, once a building reaches 40', the general contractor is required by

Mecklenburg County to contact Charlotte Fire Prevention to inform the Fire Marshal's office of their progress.

At the time of the fire, the building was at six stories, four (4) of which were of wood frame construction.

With that, the Charlotte Fire Marshal's office hadn't received communication from the contractor/builder before May 18, 2023, so no fire inspection had been performed.

At the point of this building's construction, a minimum of one exit was required by code. The building did meet that requirement.

***Per Section 3311.1 North Carolina Fire Code, Stairways Required. Where a building has been constructed to a building height of 50 feet or four stories, or where an existing building exceeding 50 feet in building height is altered, not less than one temporary lighted stairway shall be provided unless one or more of the permanent stairways are erected as the construction progresses.***

There has not been an uptick of fire in the Charlotte area, but there has been much better local media coverage of fires that affect our Charlotte neighbors.

As information develops, Charlotte Fire will continue communicating relevant, new material to the public.