Planned blazes provide good training

Last week the needs of a general contractor and local fire departments dovetailed together nicely.

Wimco General Contractors, which is building a new Dollar General on Shelby Rd., needed an old brick house out of its way. The Kings Mountain Fire Department, for its part, is always looking for a structure to set on fire for training purposes.

On Thursday afternoon, after acquiring the proper approval from the state fire marshall and county authorities, firefighters from the city joined volunteers from the Bethlehem Fire Department, the Oak Grove Fire Department and the Grover Fire Department in placing pallets of straw tinder in the three-bedroom brick house. The training fires are a joint venture between local fire departments and the Cleveland Community College's fire training department.

Just after sundown, the structure was set ablaze and within minutes more than two dozen firefighters were presented with a valuable training exercise, according to Jamie Black, the assistant fire chief for the KM Fire Department. The garage next to the house was also part of the planned blaze.

Firefighters, both seasoned and new to the job, practiced ceiling sweep nozzle pattern techniques they would use in a real-life situation where lives and property could be on the line.

By 11 p.m. the site was reduced to smoldering rubble, with the exception of most of the house's brick walls. It was actually the second night in a row of good practice for local firefighters. The general contractor on the Dollar General had requested a burn of an adjacent building the night before.

Black said that most training fires are set during the day, but these two cases were different because of the schedule and time constraints of the contractor for the Dollar General site.

"It's good to have them at night, too," Black said. "It's actually fitting because we do encounter a lot of night-time house fires."

Fire (Thursday night): A firefighter monitors a planned training fire of a structure on Shelby Rd. Thursday night. Four local fire departments got some valuable training out of the brick house fire.

Next day (Friday): Blackened brick is almost all that's left after local firemen extinguished a raging fire on Shelby Rd. Thursday night that was set for training purposes.

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