



Fire fighters prepare to battle the blaze in a Nalcrest apartment building.

(Photos courtesy of Nalcrest)

Eight Nalcrest residents were left temporarily homeless after a fire damaged several units in one of the letter carrier retirement community's apartment buildings.

Shortly after noon January 28, fire fighters were dispatched to Nalcrest, located near Lake Wales, Florida, responding to a reported fire in a building attic.

A Polk County fire marshal told the *Lake Wales News* that the blaze appeared to have started when a worker's torch accidentally ignited some flammable material, although the official cause was still under investigation at press time.

No one was injured, but one building consisting of six apartments was destroyed. The newspaper reported a property damage estimate of at least \$400,000. Although Nalcrest has suffered hurricane damage, the fire is unprecedented in the community's 45-year history.

"The American Red Cross was able to provide immediate, short-term housing right after the fire for the displaced residents," said Nalcrest manager Jerry Kane, a former president of Jamaica, New York Branch 562. Subsequently, "two of the six were quickly placed in open Nalcrest apartments," while the others found temporary homes off-site. Kane said he hoped all the fire victims would be placed in other Nalcrest units by the time this magazine is delivered.

"Meanwhile, we've established a committee of residents to help collect clothing and furnishings to replace items destroyed in the fire," Kane said. He said Nalcrest's own restaurant, Dorothy's On the Go Café, which initially provided

uprooted residents with food vouchers, hosted a fund-raising dinner where \$6,700 was collected.

The manager said he is working with NALC President Bill Young as well as local and state building officials to determine how to deal with the damage.

"We're thankful no one was hurt in the fire," Young said. "Our hearts go out to those who lost their homes, their belongings and their cherished mementos."

Young took the opportunity to remind members that all carriers can turn to the Postal Employees' Relief Fund (PERF) for help. The charitable organization provides grants to active and retired postal employees who are victims of natural disasters, including fires. PERF does not provide immediate assistance, but helps cover losses remaining after insurance payments and any government relief.

Nalcrest opened for business in 1963 and consists of 500 apartments distributed across 66 buildings on 153 acres of land midway between Vero Beach and Tampa. No union dues are used to support the non-profit community, which subsists solely on rental income. ✉

A Nalcrest rental application was in the January *Postal Record* and is always available at nalc.org/nalc/members/nalcrest.html. For information on donating to or obtaining assistance from PERF, visit postalrelief.com.

Apartment units consumed by blaze



Property damage was estimated to be at least \$400,000.