

Contra Costa County Fire Protection District

Press Release

**Subject: Fire Sprinklers Control Fire in Commercial Building
1200 block of Montego Way, Walnut Creek**

Release Date: 12-16-2011

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The Contra Costa County Fire Protection District responded to a fire in a two story commercial office building in the 1200 block of Montego Way in Walnut Creek at approximately 1:00am on December 16th. The office building is occupied by Wells Fargo. The first arriving fire crew found the fire alarm system activated and smoke on the first and second floor. A security officer had exited the building prior to the arrival of the first fire crew.

A total of 15 firefighters from 3 engines, 2 ladder trucks and 2 Battalion Chiefs responded to the fire. The fire involved the contents of three cubicles in an open office area on the first floor. The majority of the fire was contained by the building's automatic fire sprinkler system and the fire was extinguished with a single hose line from a fire engine. Smoke had spread throughout both floors and water from the sprinkler system drained into rooms in the basement that housed computers and servers. Fire crews shut down the sprinkler system, replaced the sprinkler head, and re-activated the system. Fire crews used blowers to remove the smoke from throughout the building and covered the computers and servers in the basement with plastic to prevent damage from the water.

Damage to the structure and contents is estimated at \$50,000.00. The cause of the fire appears to be accidental and may be attributable to overloaded extension cords or a space heater that was left turned on. There were no injuries reported.

Space heaters should only be plugged directly into outlets and should not be placed near combustibles. Space heaters should be equipped with automatic shut-offs and should always be turned off when not in use. Power strips should be used sparingly and care should be taken not to overload them. In no case should extension cords be used for space heaters or in place of permanent wiring.

"The fire sprinkler system activation prevented the building and its contents from significant damage and contained the fire as it was designed. Because of the small size of the fire, crews were able to

concentrate on removing smoke from the building and protecting sensitive equipment from water damage, further reducing the damage from this fire. The relatively small fire required only a moderate commitment of resources for a short duration and allowed for our crews to get back in service quickly to protect the community. Had the building not been equipped with fire sprinklers, the fire would've easily grown in size requiring significant resource commitment, draining available resources from the surrounding areas, and causing major damage to the building and its contents." Fire Marshal Broschard stated.