



Contra Costa County Fire Protection District
Incident Notification

DATE: 10/22/2025

TIME OF ALARM: 5:00 PM

TYPE OF ALARM: Electric Vehicle Fire

LOCATION: City of Walnut Creek

RESPONSE: Commercial Alarm: 6 Engines, 2 Trucks, 1 Rescue, 3 Battalion Chiefs, 1 Safety Officer, 1 Investigator, 1 Breathing Support, 1 District Chief

ASSISTING AGENCIES: Walnut Creek PD, AMR, PGE

TOTAL FIRE PERSONNEL AT SCENE: 40 Fire Personnel

Contra Costa County Fire Protection District (ConFire) crews responded to reports of an electric vehicle (EV) fire in the underground parking garage of the California Plaza building. Upon arrival, firefighters encountered heavy smoke coming from the garage entrance and confirmed that at least one electric vehicle was burning one level below ground.

Due to the complex challenges of EV fires in below-grade structures, a second alarm was requested for additional resources. Fire crews made a rapid entry into the smoke-filled garage using thermal imaging cameras to locate the fire and deployed hoselines to begin suppression. Simultaneously, additional crews evacuated the upper levels of the garage and the main building as a precaution, given concerns that smoke might enter occupied areas.

Electric vehicle fires are uniquely hazardous. They generate **especially toxic smoke** and can be difficult to fully extinguish due to the **internal battery chemistry**, which can lead to a dangerous condition known as **thermal runaway**—a process where battery cells repeatedly ignite themselves, continuing to emit smoke and heat even under active firefighting efforts.

ConFire's Hazardous Materials Team was deployed to address both the fire and the associated chemical and gas risks. Air monitoring and hazard assessments were conducted continuously, and safety perimeters were established to protect the public from exposure. The **Community Warning System** was activated by the on-scene District Chief to alert nearby residents and request that they **shelter in place**.

Although the visible flames were extinguished relatively quickly, crews remained on scene for several hours to ensure the EV battery had sufficiently cooled to prevent re-ignition. Firefighters were decontaminated on-site, and their protective gear was sent for off-site cleaning due to potential contamination from hazardous materials. Once the vehicle was fully cooled and the garage ventilated, a specialized tow service was brought in—since EVs damaged by fire can **reignite unexpectedly, even hours or days later**.

Thanks to a fast, aggressive fire attack and coordinated hazardous materials response, damage was minimized, and no injuries were reported. This incident highlights both the complexity of modern fire hazards and the effectiveness of ConFire's rapid emergency response systems.

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