

Two residents escape as fire damages house

An electrical problem is suspected as the cause of the Royal Avenue blaze

By SAUL HUBBARD
The Register-Guard

A burnt-out couch, a charred wooden rocking chair and a sticky mess of white pillow feathers were strewn across the damp lawn in front of a single-story house on Royal Avenue in west Eugene Wednesday afternoon. One of the house's front windows was smashed in and the others were blackened by smoke and ash.

But the worst was avoided as the house's only two inhabitants — Rhonda Davenport, 69, and her daughter, Darcee Pierce, 44 — escaped unscathed from a fire that caused \$100,000 worth of damage to their residence.

"We're both fine, just a little shook up, that's all," Pierce said, wide-eyed, after the fire had been extinguished.

Davenport called the Eugene Fire Department at 3:42 p.m. after she heard popping behind her while lying on her living room couch and discovered a fire.

She left the house and was waiting on the lawn as fire engines arrived.

Pierce, who was in a second building behind the main house, was first alerted of the fire when she heard fire engines pulling up.

Fire Capt. Derek Grafton said the house suffered significant smoke and heat damage.

"The fire appears to be electrical in nature," he said. "It appears to have happened unintentionally, but we will investigate its cause further."

Four firefighting vehicles, one medical unit and two chief officers responded to the call.

Asked about the potential cause of the fire, Pierce said, "It might have been the heater or something else. It's an old house."

She and Davenport have lived in the house since 1995. It was previously owned by Davenport's parents, who purchased it in 1957.

A neighbor took in the two women Wednesday evening, because the house was too damaged for them to return, while Red Cross and agents from Willamette Valley Restoration provided them with emergency assistance.