

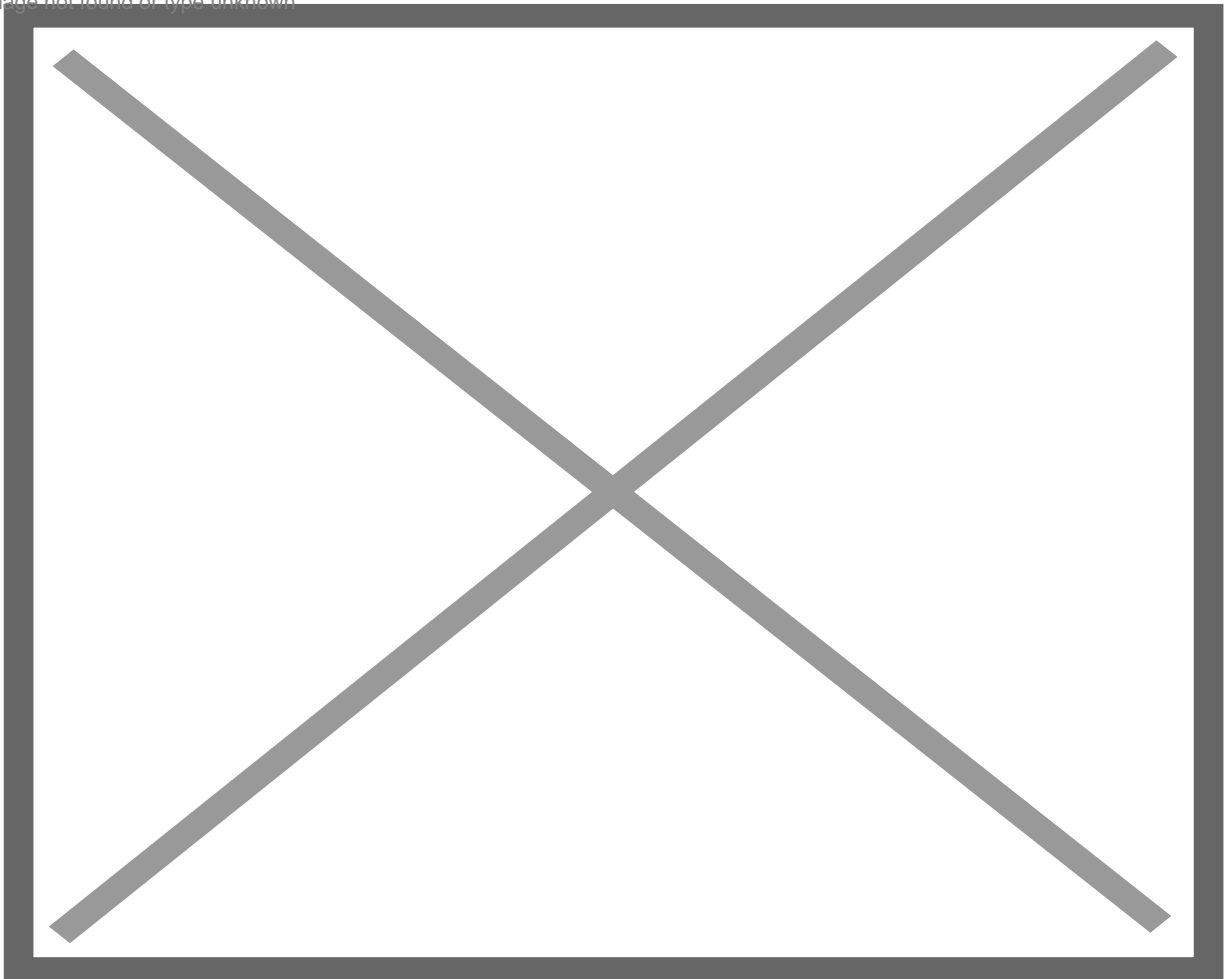
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Intense Fire Consumes 3-Story House in Frenchtown

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Fire consumes three-story house in Frenchtown, St. Thomas

ST. THOMAS — A three-story house in French Town, St. Thomas was consumed by a fire Friday that grew intense quickly, completely destroying the second and third floors of the building.

Videos and pictures of the fire were shared on various social media platforms, most prominently WhatsApp.

According to a release issued by V.I.F.S., at about 2:24 p.m. Friday fire units from the Omar Brown Sr. Fire Station at Barbel Plaza were dispatched to a reported structural fire, with possible entrapments, in the Frenchtown community. Additional reports to the 911 call center supported and confirmed the initial call of a structural fire, escalating it to a three-alarm fire (an intense blaze).

Units and personnel from the Emile Berry Fire Station in Dorothea, Fortuna Fire Station and George Scott Fire Station in Tutu were also dispatched to assist with the response.

Upon arrival, a three-story wood and masonry house was observed with fire and smoke coming from the doors and windows of the top and middle floors. According to the release, firefighting units were strategically positioned on western, northern and southern sides, with two 1-1/2-inch quick-attack lines deployed from each side.

V.I.F.S. said because all occupants of the building were safe and accounted for, the priority of the operations shifted to a defensive posture, protecting the surrounding houses from possible damage. On and off-duty firefighters, Fire Service retirees, members of the community, St. Thomas Rescue and V.I.P.D. worked feverishly to contain the fire.

Approximately two hours after firefighting operations commenced, the fire was brought under control, the V.I.F.S. said. Hot spots were identified and extinguished.

The Fire Service's Arson Prevention and Investigation Unit was dispatched to the scene and has begun investigating the cause and origin of the fire.

Five fire personnel were treated for dehydration and exhaustion, but there were no civilian injuries, according to the release. The first and second floors of the structure sustained major damage, and all occupants were displaced.

"Once again, I cannot thank the brave women and men of the VI Fire Service enough for their continued hard work in protecting the Virgin Islands community," said Fire Chief David Hodge. "I would also like to thank the Frenchtown Community for their support during the operations, along with the dispatchers at the 911 call center, Emergency Medical Services, St. Thomas Rescue, the Virgin Islands Police Department, Callwood's Water Delivery, and the American Red Cross for their assistance with the operations."

After expressing gratitude to everyone who assisted with the response, Chief Hodge called for the community to remain mindful of those impacted by the fire.

"Let's be reminded to keep the families and individuals that were affected by this life-changing event in our prayers," he said.