



UPDATE: Fire claims life of 89-year-old Montclair woman



Firefighters stand outside of a burned house on Walnut Crescent Friday afternoon, Feb. 21. One person has died as a result of the fire, officials said. ERIN ROLL/STAFF

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A Montclair woman has died following a fire at her home on Walnut Crescent Friday afternoon, Feb. 21.

The Essex County Prosecutor's Office has identified the woman as Delia V. West, 89.

As of Saturday afternoon, the investigation into the cause of the fire was ongoing, according to prosecutor's office spokesperson Katherine Carter.

West lived alone at the house, Carter said.

Neighbors said the two-alarm fire broke out shortly before 2:50 p.m. Units from Montclair, Bloomfield and East Orange responded.

No injuries were reported as of 4:30 p.m. Friday to first responders or to other civilians, Deputy Fire Chief Robert Duncan said. The house sustained heavy fire damage, while a neighboring house had its vinyl siding partially melted.

Marilyn LaVergne, whose family lives three doors down, said her daughter Avery came home from school that afternoon and saw heavy smoke coming from the back of the house.

LaVergne said her husband Lance tried to get into the house to help West, but the electricity was out and the smoke was too heavy. Another neighbor attempted to help, but also could not get inside, and other neighbors called 911. By the time fire crews arrived, the right side of the house was engulfed in flames, LaVergne said.

"It seemed like it caught so fast," she said.

Other neighbors described seeing heavy smoke and flames coming from the house.

Montclair had three engines and two trucks respond to the fire, and other companies provided three engines and two trucks as well. Walnut Crescent was blocked off while crews responded. Other fire companies provided fire coverage to Montclair while crews were responding, Duncan said.