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Chief Roy Parrish



Host chief for the USFA conference was Chief Casper of San Francisco.

Chief Tells of Fighting MGM Fire

"It was unreal. It was like a science-fiction movie," Chief Roy Parrish of Clark County, Nev., said of his first view of the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas as he responded to the fire there that took 84 lives.

Of these, 18 died on the first floor, six others died in elevators and one woman fell to her death while sliding a rope.

"We did not have three people who jumped to their deaths," Parrish stated.

Elevators were never used for fire fighting and rescue operations, he said. Stairs, ladders, elevating platforms and helicopters were used to rescue people and a welder's basket was commandeered by a worker who rescued 25 persons.

The initial phone call on the fire was received by the Clark County Fire Department at 7:17 a.m. last Nov. 21. A second alarm was struck and also mutual aid was supplied by the Las Vegas, Boulder City, North Las Vegas, Nellis Air Force Base and Henderson Fire Departments.

Master streams used

Dripping plastic, intense heat and flames kept fire fighters from entering the casino, now fully involved in fire, until flames sweeping the extensive canopy over the exterior entrance had been beaten back. Master stream appliances were used effectively, Parrish commented.

By 8:30 a.m., the fire was under control, the Clark County chief said, although "total evacuation of the building was not accomplished until about 12 noon." He said that evacuation of the hotel rooms was complicated by the movement of some guests to floors that had previously been searched and cleared.

Parrish praised the effectiveness of automatic sprinklers, which were only in certain parts of the hotel. Three sprinkler heads at the entrance to the showroom area kept out flames in the casino and sprinklers also protected the

arcade from an invasion of fire from the casino, the chief reported.

Parrish commented that in all areas where "sprinkler systems were installed, the fire was stopped in its tracks." He said the fire started in the Deli and quickly spread to the casino, which was not protected by sprinklers.

Speaking on the EMS aspects of the MGM fire, Mike Olsen of the National Fire Administration said that "a single location fire can have all the elements of a disaster," but most plans don't consider a single location disaster. He reported that "the deaths and injuries continue to be from products of combustion." At the MGM Grand Hotel, there were deaths more than 20 floors above the fire in the casino.

Because of the need, two triage areas were set up and this, Olsen said, was a lesson to be learned. Fortunately, Clark County school buses, used to transport fire victims, were equipped with two-way radios and the fire occurred at the time of shift change in both the hospital and fire department, so extra personnel was available. □ □



Gordon Vickery, USFA administrator who resigned Feb. 5, tells conference session he got "a clean bill of health" after a mild transient coronary ischemia on the Friday before the conference that put him in a hospital until the final day of the conference.