

# Cops: 2 men cooking drugs cause explosion in S. Tahoe

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By Kathryn Reed

A suspected drug lab exploded in the middle of South Lake Tahoe on Wednesday afternoon.

Barrek Madden, 23, of South Lake Tahoe was flown to UC Davis Medical Center in Sacramento with third-degree burns to his face and upper torso. Schuyler VanFleet, 22, of South Lake Tahoe had his hair, eyebrows and beard singed. He was arrested on felony charges of unlawfully causing a fire and operating a drug lab.

At about 3:15pm Oct. 3 an explosion could be heard coming from a bottom floor unit of the Forest Manor Apartments at the corner of Forest and Wildwood avenues.



Firefighters enter the apartment just before 4pm Oct. 3. Photos/Kathryn Reed

“They had butane as part of the process and it caught fire,” Police-Fire Chief Brian Uhler said.

He said the suspects were cooking or refining the hashish.

Because fire crews did not know what all was inside the apartment they took their time before entering. At first they let the fire smolder a bit.

“We withdrew personnel because of a possible drug lab and materials,” Uhler said.

A family who lives above the suspected drug lab fled down the street after hearing the explosion, which they described as loud.

“I see smoke and one guy on fire. I don’t know him. I just got my family out,” the resident, who did not want to give his name, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

All the units were evacuated.



South Tahoe firefighter Doug Bailey hooks the hose to the hydrant.

The extent of the damage to the one unit is not known, nor is it known if other units experienced smoke damage. However, the entire complex at 3754 Forest has been deemed unsafe at this point. The fire department has requested the American Red Cross provide temporary shelter for the displaced residents.