

Fire significantly damages South Tahoe hotel



The Deerfield Lodge and hotel guests' vehicles were destroyed July 23 by fire. Photo/Susan Wood

By Kathryn Reed

Two people were injured when the Deerfield Lodge in South Lake Tahoe went up in flames Wednesday night.

The fire that swept through the Ski Run Boulevard two-story hotel displaced all of the guests. Thirty-five people were taken to Lakeside Inn for the evening and are expected to return today.

The back building that had six rooms was completely destroyed, while the front is intact and does not have smoke damage.

South Lake Tahoe Fire Chief Jeff Meston estimated the damage at between \$2 million and \$2.5 million.

Also gone are four guest vehicles and two cars parked on

Spruce Avenue, about 25 feet away from the hotel.

The people who were injured jumped from the second story balcony. Meston told *Lake Tahoe News* they were taken to Barton Memorial Hospital with significant injuries, but did not have further details.



Firefighters on July 24 assess the damage to Deerfield Lodge and investigate the cause.
Photo/Susan Wood

The fire started at 11:45pm July 23 and was brought under control at 2:35am. Assisting South Lake Tahoe were firefighters from Tahoe Douglas and Lake Valley, along with an engine from CalFire. The cause is under investigation.

Tahoe Douglas' ladder truck was used because South Lake Tahoe's new one is still not in service because it was damaged when the manufacturer had someone drive it from Louisiana to Tahoe in four-wheel drive.

Susie Horst, who lives across the street on Spruce Avenue, had her windows knocked out from the fire. She had to evacuate.

Horst told *Lake Tahoe News* it was like she was having a nightmare because she could hear all of these people screaming.

A guest woke up Jerry Birdwell, owner of the Black Bear Inn located next door to the Deerfield, to tell him about the fire.

A truck was spraying water from the side street next to the Black Bear across the bed and breakfast's property to the Deerfield.

"I looked and my god it was blazing," Birdwell told *Lake Tahoe News*. "They protected our property. The manner in which the firefighters worked, the police worked and when [City Manager] Nancy [Kerry] got on scene and handled the situation with Deerfield guests ... it was absolutely professional."

It was Kerry who arranged for a BlueGo bus to take the people to Lakeside Inn and was calling all over town before she was able to secure rooms for the night at the Stateline casino-hotel.

The city is coordinating relief efforts for guests – adults and teenagers – who lost everything. Anyone who can assist with clothing, lodging or other amenities should call 530.542.6016.



The Deerfield Lodge goes up in flames. Photo/Denis Bellocq

The Red Cross is not much help in situations like this because

their focus is on people who live in a town, not tourists.

The Deerfield used to be the Dream Inn until Eric and Robin Eichenfield bought it in May 2006 for \$800,000 and then invested more than \$1 million to turn it into an upscale boutique hotel. New owners took over a year ago this month. No one was answering the phone this morning at the Deerfield.

This was the third South Lake Tahoe hotel fire in a last few weeks. On July 20 the Highland Inn was affected by the fire at Mountain Mike's T-shirt shop. Then there was a small fire at Lake Shore Lodge that started in a dryer.

Susan Wood contributed to this story.