

Explosion leads to car dealership fire, traffic jam

■ The Eugene Kia dealership loses offices, a carport and 22 cars to flames

By Sara Lieberth
Oregon Daily Emerald

Minutes before 4 p.m. Thursday afternoon an explosion in the repair shop of the Eugene Kia car dealership set off a large fire that spread quickly to the offices and adjacent carport at 1768 W. 6th Ave., as well as a nearby apartment building.

The Eugene Fire Department responded to the scene within two minutes, calling out a second alarm upon arrival. No injuries were reported.

Fire department spokesman Brian Terrett said eight fire trucks and more than 30 crew members were on hand fighting the fire that poured black smoke over West Eugene and choked rush-hour traffic where Sixth and Seventh avenues intersect Chambers Street.

"You couldn't even see the road; the smoke was so thick," Terrett said.

Though the specific cause of the fire is still unknown, firefighters re-

ported that after the flames took over the Eugene Kia office, they quickly engulfed the lot's carport, causing the roof to collapse. Firefighters estimate at least 22 cars were burned in the carport.

Shirley Mannion, a teller at a nearby U.S. Bank branch, was startled by a loud boom before the power went out in the bank.

"I noticed the smoke right away," she said. "And before you knew it, it was all up in flames."

Terrett said saving the apartment building directly east of the car lot was the immediate priority of firefighters when they arrived.

"No one's going to be sleeping there tonight," he said. "But we're calling it a save."

Dominick Voci is a tenant in the building at 1706 1/2 W. 6th Ave. and said from where he was standing it appeared his apartment and its contents had been ruined.

"Everything around it is toast," Voci said. "But they say my truck is OK."

Official estimates of damages to Eugene Kia and the apartment building are expected in a few days.



Firemen spent hours containing the blaze at the Kia dealership on West Sixth Avenue. The cause of the blaze remains unknown. Jake Ortman Emerald

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