

Fire forces Advocates to move women, kids at shelter

■ *Twelve people displaced while Saukville area facility for abuse victims repaired*

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A dozen people staying at a shelter for victims of domestic abuse operated by Advocates of Ozaukee had to be relocated after an early morning fire Tuesday.

The four women and eight children staying at the shelter in the Town of Saukville have all been relocated to other shelters in neighboring counties, Advocates Executive Director Barb Fischer said.

They will remain at their new location as the shelter is repaired, a process she said will probably take several weeks.

“We will stay open and continue to work during that time,” Fischer said, noting the non-profit agency’s offices are at the same location, she said.

The office operations and counseling will continue while repairs are being done, she said, and Advocates will continue to answer calls to its hotlines.

Anyone who needs to be sheltered in the coming weeks will be housed at nearby shelters or in local hotels, Fischer said.

The fire was first noticed about 5:50 a.m. Tuesday by the overnight associate at the shelter, who smelled smoke and then evacuated residents, Fischer said.

Saukville Fire Chief Gilly Schultz said that when firefighters arrived, they found smoke throughout the attic.

Paint on one bedroom wall was starting to peel, an indication there was fire behind the

wall, he said.

“When they opened the wall, the flames came out,” Schultz said. Firefighters were able to extinguish the fire quickly, he added.

Firefighters also opened walls and flooring in the attic, where they found the fire smoldering, Schultz said.

Schultz said firefighters believe the fire started in the attic and spread into the walls of the shelter.

“We presume it was an electrical problem (that started the fire),” he said.

Fire departments from Saukville, Waubeka, Port Washington, Fredonia and Grafton responded to the scene, Schultz said, while crews from the Cedarburg and Belgium departments stood by at the firehouse.

The Thiensville ambulance was also at the scene, as was the Cedarburg emergency government department, Undersheriff Jim Johnson said.

“They really were a big help,” he said, noting they handled traffic in the area while sheriff’s deputies had their hands full responding to accidents on I-43 and county roads due to slippery conditions.

The icy conditions were the biggest impediment to firefighters, Schultz said. Not only were the roads slippery, causing firefighters to drive more slowly, the trucks had a hard time getting up the driveway to the shelter, he said.

Ozaukee County crews responded with salt, allowing the trucks better access, Schultz said.



DAMAGE TO THE CEILING at the shelter operated by Advocates of Ozaukee was inspected Tuesday morning by Dave Fischer, a member of the non-profit agency’s board of directors. *Photo by Sam Arendt*