

Fire Destroys Woodbury Businesses in Early Morning Blaze

By Christopher Twarowski

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Firefighters extinguish a massive blaze at Woodbury Colonial Center on Jericho Turnpike in Woodbury.

A fire spread throughout a strip mall in Woodbury on Thursday, April 9, destroying several businesses and shutting down Jericho Turnpike in both directions between Woodbury Road and Park Avenue during the morning rush hour.

More than 100 firefighters from about a dozen fire departments battled the blaze at Woodbury Colonial Center, located at 8243 Jericho Turnpike, which is home to eight businesses. Firefighters from Syosset, Jericho, East Norwich and Oyster Bay were among those departments on the scene. Smoke billowed from the windows and a large hole in the roof and witnesses reported flames reaching high into the air as first responders worked to get the blaze under control. Firefighters sprayed water on the building from hook and ladders and smashed several windows for ventilation. The blaze was brought under control at about 11 a.m., according to fire officials.

Fire officials at the scene said it appeared the fire started on the first floor, possibly in a salon.

Syosset Fire Chief Tom Feeney said his department received the call about the blaze at 9:01 a.m. and found the complex engulfed in flames and smoke.

“Heavy fire coming out of the second-floor windows in the rear,” described Feeney. “We had heavy smoke pushing out of the front.”

Linda Fiveson, who owned a nutritionist business in the basement floor of the complex, stood outside the charred building and watched in anguish as firefighters battled the blaze. Fiveson said she was inside her office working when a client’s mother called and said she saw flames and smoke coming from the back of the building.

“She called us and said, ‘Get out of the building, there’s smoke coming out of the building,’” said Fiveson, of Woodbury. “The building started to fill up with smoke. The flames were coming out of the back window of the beauty salon. They weren’t even open yet.”

Fiveson said she only had enough time to grab her pocketbook and flee for the door, leaving behind her 19-year-old business and many personal belongings.

“I lost my business,” said Fiveson. “Everything I have in my life is downstairs. I’ve been down here 19 years. All over.”

Several other businesses were also damaged. Fire officials said the cause of the blaze, the equivalent of a two-alarm fire, is under investigation.

“This was a very significant fire,” said Nassau County Fire Marshal Vincent McManus, at the scene. “It spread very, very quickly.”

Some eyewitnesses said they heard no smoke alarms as the buildings were engulfed.

“The building was full of smoke,” said Fiveson. “There was no alarms.”