Albany Street fire threatens MIT warehouse

By Robert W. Leibman and Burt Kaliski

A fire in a storage shed behind the Lynn Sign Moulded Plastic Co., Inc., on Albany Street, endangered but did not seriously damage an MIT Warehouse (Building NW30) Tuesday night. Ed Foulur of the Cambridge Fire Department Arson Squad said the fire would be investigated as "one way or another," as to whether the cause was arson. The owner of Lynn Sign, Robert Suleski, estimated total losses at about $20,000.

The shed was "a ball of fire," according to Lt. Keithan of Engine Company 2, when the Cambridge Fire Department arrived at 2:30 Albany St. at 9:42pm. The flames from the shed had jumped across to Building NW30, igniting signs and frames on the side of the brick warehouse, and had also spread to some windows at the rear of the building, according to Sgt. James Mahoney of the MIT Campus Police.

The Cambridge Fire Department reported that seven fire companies, including two ladder companies, responded to the call. The fire around Building NW30 was quickly extinguished and the fire in the shed was brought under control soon afterward. All flames were extinguished before 10pm, but the plastics stored in the shed smoldered for about an hour before firemen were able to quench it, according to witnesses.

Lawrence W. Pickard, manager of Ground Services for MIT Physical Plant, noted that the MIT warehouse was severely damaged by the fire, since the flames never reached the building's interior. Building NW30 houses the MIT Equipment Exchange, spare dormitory furniture, and old student financial aid records.

The shed is owned by Lynn Sign, and was used to store red, black, and white plastic powder, according to Suleski. He added that a new shipment of the fiberglass powder valued at $500 had just been added to the storage area.

The fire was reported to the Campus Police at 9:40pm by a Westgate resident whose apartment faces the area, according to Campus Police. Foulur said tests would be done to find out whether an accelerant was used to start the blaze, and if one is found, samples would be sent to the state crime laboratory. Foulur said the investigation would be able to determine "within inches" where the fire started.

Newspapers sue BC

By Burt Kaliski

Boston College's student newspaper The Heights has filed an injunction against Boston College to obtain access in campus police logs, according to Steven Reynolds, editor-in-chief of the publication.

Reynolds said, "We want to report as accurately as possible the severity and extent of crimes on campus." He noted, "Students can become ignorant of these crimes if they are not properly reported."

In an official press statement, Kevin P. Duffy, Vice President for Student Affairs at Boston College, said that the police logs "usually include the names of suspected and other involved parties as well as specifics with respect to time, place, and type of incident. In order to protect the privacy of complainants, victims and other allegedly involved in the police log is treated as a confidential file. The fact that the university volunteered information concerning "possible rape" on an application to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for a public report, continued Duffy, "constitutes a breach of the Campus Police's duties to the students and faculty who may be involved in such cases."

"We have concerns that the privacy of complainants, victims and other allegedly involved in the police log is treated as a confidential file. The fact that the university volunteered information concerning "possible rape" on an application to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for a public report, continued Duffy, "constitutes a breach of the Campus Police's duties to the students and faculty who may be involved in such cases."

The brief also includes a statement of MIT's position. MIT stresses that "MIT is neither able, nor does it have the ability to solicit, to isolate its community, to control the public out, or the third thing is to say that a private university can choose to allow people on campus, and control what they say." Reynolds explained, "We don't think that there are any cover-ups but we want to remove the possibility."

"The school has twenty days to respond to the Open Records Act, then a hearing date will be set. The case will be argued in front of a judge. We have no final details yet," Reynolds concluded.

MIT may be affected by Supreme Court decision

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(The Court could rule that) the university must allow the public to have the right to free speech on private property, or (the university has the right to) keep the public out, or the third thing is to say that a private university can choose to allow people on campus, and control what they say." Reynolds explained, "We don't think that there are any cover-ups but we want to remove the possibility."

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