

Cause of blaze, damage estimate not yet determined

family room, carefully placing one foot in front of the other to test the security of the floor.

"When we pushed open the door, the whole room was involved," he said. "I went in 10 feet, feeling with my foot and went through the

doorway. There, my foot went right through the floor.

"You wouldn't want to be rushing in there, falling through the floor," Kocher said. "Our training helped prepare us for what we had to do."

He agreed that what they dealt with — going from the dramatic rescue to fighting a massive, raging structure fire — was something he's relived over and over again in his mind.

"It's not something you do too often," he said. "It goes over your mind again and again... things you could have done different."

Still, he said crews managed to get the fire under control in about an hour. High winds and cold temperatures made the task difficult. Eight trucks and more than 30 firefighters battled the blaze, which quickly spread throughout the home and into the roof. There were no injuries to firefighters. Fourth Line was closed in the area, south of West Lower Base Line, as tankers shuttled water to the scene.

The cause of the fire remains a mystery, and there's no damage estimate yet, said MFD fire inspection officer Steve Ellis.

"We haven't pin-pointed the cause because there's too much damage," he said. "It originated in the family room and you can speculate from there, but we may never know for sure."

Ellis said the couple had had a fire in the wood-burning fireplace earlier, but they had extinguished it before heading upstairs to bed from the family room, which was an addition to the original home.

Ellis said there were working smoke alarms in both the family room and the second floor.

"He woke to the smell of smoke, because all the doors are closed throughout the house," Ellis said. "He opened the bedroom door and tried to get down the stairs, but he was choked by smoke."

"Fortunately, he had a phone with him," he said.

Ellis, who was one of the firefighters on scene seven years ago at the senior Day's house fire, said the tragic circumstances of that blaze were eerily similar. That fire also took place around 4 a.m. on a cold night in early March. A cause was never determined.

For now, the Days are staying in a furnished apartment in Oakville that belongs to a friend of their son. He's not sure if they can rebuild, or whether they can renovate what remains of the house. And while they lost most of their furnishings, he said they were able to salvage old home movies and some CDs containing family photos.

He expressed gratitude to everyone who helped his family during the fire. "I have nothing but great praise for the police, the fire department, the paramedics and the doctors and staff at the hospital. They were so good, better than I had any right to expect."

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