



## **Fire at Wilkes Towers results in evacuation**

**by Staff**

(Photo caption) Patricia Anderson/staff photo-FIREMEN enter Wilkes Towers building at Main Street just before 9 p.m. Monday after fire was reported in the building.

A fire at Wilkes Towers on Main Street in North Wilkesboro just before 9 p.m. Monday resulted in all residents being evacuated, North Wilkesboro Fire Chief Niki Hamby said.

The fire in the trash collection bin in the basement of the seven floor Towers building, the former Hotel Wilkes building was quickly contained, Hamby said. There was smoke, in varying degrees of intensity in the building, Hamby said, which caused the evacuation of 60-70 residents.

Hamby, who is also the Wilkes County Sheriff's Department fire investigator, said the fire apparently resulted from smoking materials being placed in the trash chute which leads to the basement trash collection bin.

There was minimal fire damage in the basement, but he said the heat from the fire caused the first floor sprinkler system to activate and there was some water damage there, particularly to the carpets and accumulation of water in the basement when the firemen got the fire out.

Cricket and Wilkesboro Fire departments were dispatched by Wilkes Communications Center to assist North Wilkesboro Fire Department.

"It was primarily a need for more manpower in getting the smoke out of the building, assisting the residents in evacuating, and knocking on each door of the apartments on the seven floors "to make sure that each resident knew about the fire and was leaving or had left the building."

Some 40-45 of the residents went to the North Wilkesboro Police Department where, Hamby said, there is an agreement with North Wilkesboro Police Chief Randy Rhoades that the former town commissioners' room on the second floor can be used temporarily by Wilkes Towers residents if they have to evacuate that facility. There is an elevator in the building and restroom facilities on the second floor.

Some of the residents needed help in walking, and Wilkes EMS and firemen helped them, Hamby noted. Other residents stayed on streets near the Towers building until they were allowed to return to their residences between 10:30 and 11:00 p.m.

Hamby praised the work of the North Wilkesboro Fire Department in quickly getting the fire out and all firemen involved for quickly getting the smoke out of the building, going to each door of the residents to alert them about the fire and to make sure they were leaving or had left the building. He thanked Wilkes EMS for its service in transporting some residents to the North Wilkesboro Police Department and standing by during the emergency situation.