

Avante Skilled Nursing And Rehabilitation Center Evacuated

Residents and staff of Avante at Wilkesboro, a skilled nursing and rehabilitation center on College Street, were evacuated Monday afternoon due to a small fire.

Wilkesboro Fire Chief Jason Smithey said the Wilkesboro, North Wilkesboro and Moravian Falls fire departments were dispatched at 4:53 p.m. in response to a fire beneath a gas-powered hot water heater inside the facility.

Smithey said there were flames showing but Avante staff put out the fire with a fire extinguisher.

He said firefighters cut off the gas to the hot water heater and started the evacuation process so the building could be vented. He said this included venting contents of the fire extinguisher.

He said about 100 people, including residents and staff, remained out of the building and in a back parking lot for about 30 minutes. Smithey said they were allowed back inside the building as soon as possible due to cold weather.

Two residents fell while they were being evacuated from the building and were transported by Wilkes Emergency Medical Services to Wilkes Regional Medical Center with minor injuries, he said.

He said numerous family members came to Avante to check on residents and were allowed inside the facility for visits after residents were returned to their rooms.

Wilkes EMS was on the scene with four ambulances. The Wilkesboro Police Department and Wilkes Rescue Squad also were there.