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Fire Destroys Humane Society

Most Dogs Were Saved; Many Cats Died

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JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – A massive fire overnight destroyed the Jacksonville Humane Society on Beach Boulevard.

According to the Jacksonville Fire-Rescue Department, the fire broke out about 2 a.m. The roof of one of the buildings collapsed in flames.

"The firefighters immediately began pulling dogs out of the kennels left and right to the best of their abilities and as quickly as possible," fire department spokesman Tom Francis said.

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department for saving as many lives as they did.

"We thank ever so much the extra effort the fire department made in saving all the animals they could," Sheddon said. "In fact, several firefighters suffered injuries – not life-threatening injuries – in saving animals, and certainly they are heroes to us."

Four firefighters were hospitalized with minor injuries. The most seriously injured was in the building when the roof collapses. He was transferred to the Shands-Gainesville burn unit.

In addition to losing animals and kennel facilities, Sheddon said the Humane Society lost medical equipment and its supply of medications.

Fire investigators said it appeared the fire was accidental and began in the laundry room.

Francis said the shelter is a complete loss with replacement cost estimated at \$1 million.

On Monday, a Humane Society Fire Fund account will be available for donations at all Wachovia Bank branches.

Sheddon said the Humane Society's thrift store on Beach Boulevard and Foster Drive will also accept cash, check and credit card donations.

The Red Cross also responded to the scene to provide mental health counseling to anyone who needed it.

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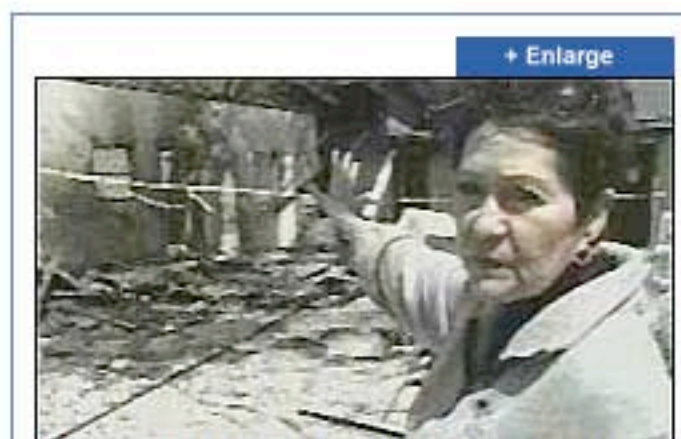
Humane Society Fire
COURTESY: JFRD

Jacksonville Fire-Rescue Image
One building of the Jacksonville Humane Society was totally engulfed in flames when firefighters arrived about 2 a.m. Saturday.

Officials said all but two of the dogs were rescued, but many of the cats did not make it out alive.

"Knowing that animals that were here in our care died in our care in a no-kill shelter breaks our heart," executive director Leona Sheddon said.

Sheddon said that about 200 animals were in the shelter when the fire broke out. She praised the fire



Jacksonville Humane Society executive director Leona Sheddon praised the fire department for saving as many lives as they did.