

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



**City of Duluth - Fire Department**

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**DATE: 10/18/2021**

**SUBJECT: Duluth Fire crews put out homeless encampment fire below I-35**

**BY: Kate Van Daele, PIO & Assistant Chief Dennis Edwards**

**NATURE OF INCIDENT: Structure Fire**

**CASE NO.: 11805000**

**INCIDENT DATE: 10/18/2021**

**INCIDENT TIME: 6:00 p.m.**

**INCIDENT LOCATION: I-35 near Mesaba/Superior Street Exit**

**Duluth Fire crews put out homeless encampment fire below I-35**

[Duluth, MN] Just after 6:00 p.m. this evening the Duluth Fire Department responded to the report of a fire below I-35 near the Mesaba/Superior Street exit. Dispatch reported that there were several calls made from drivers both on the highway and driving off of Railroad Street.

Once on scene crews found billowing smoke coming from below the interstate. It was clear from crews on arrival that what was burning was a large homeless encampment. Crews conducted a primary search in the area where they could, and did not find anyone.

An AMES Construction crew who was in the area at the time, assisted Duluth Fire by providing water from their tanker truck to put out the flames. The use of the tanker truck prevented the Fire Department from laying a hose line across active railroad tracks.

A variety of debris was found beneath the structure. Firefighters removed several propane tanks, one of which had released propane and had accelerated the fire. Several of the spaces below the freeway were on fire at the same time making it hard for firefighters to extinguish.

"Firefighters were challenged by the dangerous space and unsafe conditions due to drug paraphernalia and multiple sources of fuel including propane and gasoline," Assistant Chief Dennis Edwards said. "I appreciate the fast thinking by the Ames Construction crew and the assistance that they provided. Thanks to them we were able to extinguish the fire a lot faster than we would have without their help."

Crews were on scene for an hour and twenty minutes extinguishing the flames.

Members of the Duluth Police Department and Minnesota State Patrol assisted Duluth Fire crews to search areas unaffected by the fire to ensure that anyone left in the area was safe. No one was found in the fire scene, and no one was injured.

Crews from Headquarters, and Lincoln Park responded to the call. The Duluth Fire Department would like to thank Ames Construction for the use of their tanker truck. We would also like to acknowledge the assistance from members of the Duluth Police Department and the State Patrol during the fire. The Duluth Police Department also helped with traffic control during the incident.

BNSF was made aware of the fire at the time. The railroad tracks were shut down for the duration of the incident.

This fire is under investigation by the Duluth Fire Marshal's Office. No additional information is available at this time.

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