

Financially+
Best 8.5% Savings Account

OPEN ▶

LatestLocal News LiveShows...

CBS NEWS



NEW YORK | NewsWeatherSportsVideoNew York Shows...

52°

LOCAL NEWS >

Lithium-ion battery caused deadly Harlem apartment building fire, FDNY says

CBS NEWS
NEW YORK

By Jennifer Bisram
Updated on: February 24, 2024 / 11:50 PM EST / CBS New York



NEW YORK -- A lithium-ion battery caused a deadly fire at a Harlem apartment building Friday, according to the FDNY.

One person was killed, 17 were injured and dozens of people were displaced.

The raging fire forced dramatic and rare rope rescues.

"People was coming out of the building. The fire at the top. Side, you see the police coming down with the people, people jumping out the window," neighbor Angie Ratchford said.

"Just what I have on me. My phone, my keys and this guy," said Akil Jones, a resident who escaped the fire with his father.

Residents at the St. Nicholas Place apartment building were so desperate, many were forced to jump or use the fire escape, like Jones and his 85-year old dad, Emmett, who is a former Marine and retired parole officer.

"Luckily he was there 'cause [otherwise] might be a different story," Emmett Jones said.

Emmett Jones says he was asleep while his son was cooking, but then the fire alarm went off.

"I didn't pay no attention to it, but then I smelled the air, and I was like, 'Maybe we should leave.' So I went down the hallway to wake him up. When I turned back around, the whole hallway was black," Akil Jones said. "We just gathered whatever we could, and we went out of the fire escape."



Fire officials say 18 people were rescued. Twelve were rushed to a local hospital, where one person, identified as 27-year-old Fazil Khan, died. Four victims remain in critical condition. Police sources say two of those victims had to be intubated.

We're told Khan was a journalist. His employer gave CBS New York the following statement: "We are devastated by the loss of such a great colleague and wonderful person, and our hearts go out to his family. He will be dearly missed in our newsroom."

A full vacate order has been issued by the Department of Buildings.

The Red Cross is assisting dozens of people with temporary housing at a school nearby.

Saturday, inspectors, firefighters and city officials were back at the building, assessing the damage and investigating.

Firefighters are reminding New Yorkers of the importance of keeping doors closed during fires.

"On the third floor, one of the apartment doors was left open where the fire was. The fire was so intense, if you could imagine, flames

coming out that door and blocking off the stairwell," FDNY Chief of Department John Hodgens said Friday.

An officer was able to go into the Jones family's fifth-floor apartment Saturday to get medication out, but it's still unclear when anyone will be allowed back in to get their belongings.

"They're saying it's gonna be a while because of the damage," one person said.

In September, [New York City started enforcing e-bike battery certification at retailers](#), which requires any mobility device using lithium-ion batteries to meet compliance standards before being sold.

[Earlier in February](#), FDNY Chief Fire Marshal Daniel Flynn sounded the alarm on Capitol Hill, urging lawmakers to pass legislation mandating safety standards for lithium-ion batteries.

"But if we in Congress do nothing or do too little, is it fair to say that the crisis will keep getting worse?" Rep. Ritchie Torres said.

"We cannot regulate devices that are coming into the city from surrounding areas," Flynn said.

"So ultimately, there's no substitute for federal legislation," Torres said.

"Yes, we really need that legislation enacted," Flynn said.

According to the FDNY, in 2023, lithium-ion batteries caused 267 fires, 150 injuries and 18 deaths in the city. They say as of Monday, there have been 24 lithium-ion battery fire investigations and eight injuries across the five boroughs so far this year.

More from CBS News



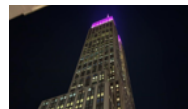
[New York City Council passes 2 new e-bike safety rules](#)



[NYC's first public e-bike charging station opens in the East Village](#)



[1 dead after fire at illegally converted home in the Bronx, DOB says](#)



[7 people rescued from stuck Empire State Building elevator, FDNY...](#)