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Metro

# Fire destroys Lynn apartment complex

By **Matt Rocheleau** and **John R. Ellement** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT AND GLOBE STAFF MARCH 25, 2013

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MATT ROCHELEAU FOR THE GLOBE

**The raging fire at 145 Lewis Street in Lynn was at times heavy, with flames pouring out of the building's windows and consuming the building's roof.**

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A raging four-alarm fire in Lynn gutted an apartment building and left dozens of people homeless.

The blaze broke out at 11:54 p.m. Sunday, quickly going to four alarms as flames engulfed the roof and top floor of the 25-unit, three-story wood-framed building at 145 Lewis St.

"People were being helped out through windows and got out through the first floor," said Lynn Deputy Fire Chief Bill Murray. No injuries were reported.

Red Cross spokeswoman Kat Powers said this evening that her organization was already helping out 44 people and had been informed by Lynn officials that a total of 75 people had been left homeless by the fire.

She said the Red Cross was guessing that there could be another seven families who could use the agency's help and asked displaced residents who need help to call 800-564-

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1234 to get services, which could include help finding shelter and mental health counseling.

Murray said it took more than two hours to bring the blaze under control. The homeless were taken to the nearby Brickett Elementary School where a temporary shelter was set up.

During the blaze, firefighters were ordered out of the building as heavy flames consumed the top floor.

“The whole roof was burned off and the third floor was destroyed as firefighters poured water on the building from the outside,” said Murray.

One of the building’s residents, Jennifer Duggins, 50, said she awoke to the sound of her apartment buzzer. Her 21-year-old daughter had come home to find the building on fire and was frantically trying to alert her mother to get out of the top-floor unit they share.

“Mom, c’mon, c’mon! Get out, get out!” Duggins said her daughter screamed through the intercom.

Duggins said she opened the door, found the hallway filled with smoke, and made her way downstairs.

“I was scared,” she said, while standing across the street from the building, wrapped in blankets, as ashes soared overhead.

She and other neighbors said the building had been evacuated previously within the past week or so, after a much smaller fire started on the first floor.

Duggins moved to the United States about a decade ago from St. Kitts, a Caribbean island. She said she moved to this building just three months ago and had received naturalization papers in the mail a week ago. Duggins, who said she has no other family in the area, presumes her documents are casualties of the flames.

“All my documents, everything is gone,” she said. “My stomach hurts.”

Susan Gately, 59, and her boyfriend were watching TV in their apartment on the building’s first floor. They



## Fire destroys Lynn apartment building

▶ Video: Four-alarm fire in Lynn

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heard alarms and ran outside.

“It was already raging by the time we got out,” she said, sitting on a curb across the street with her boyfriend and dog.

Some of the residents of the building were evacuated to at least one waiting MBTA bus, where they sat, huddled in blankets. Other residents chose to linger outside the bus as firefighters continued to battle the blaze.

The Red Cross said it was moving its shelter from the elementary school, which had closed so the residents could shelter there, to the Salvation Army at 1 Franklin St. Twenty people are expected to stay there tonight, Powers, the Red Cross spokeswoman said.

*Globe correspondent Mary Pavlu contributed to this report. Matt Rocheleau can be reached at [mjrochele@gmail.com](mailto:mjrochele@gmail.com).*

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