

MIDDLETOWN

Fire drill to close road of vacant home

The closing will not affect access to any homes or businesses, a fire chief said.

BY CHRIS ENGLISH COURIER TIMES

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A 400-yard stretch of North Flowers Mill Road in Middletown will be closed from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday and from 7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Thursday so firefighters can conduct "live burn" training in a vacant house.

Langhorne-Middletown Fire Chief and assistant township Manager Frank Farry said the house is the only structure on that stretch, so the closing will not affect access to any homes or businesses.

The closed stretch of North Flowers Mill Road will be from immediately after Shasta Road and the entrance to Tareyton Estates, up to the intersection with Winchester Avenue, Farry said.

The Middletown supervisors granted permission for the road closing at a recent meeting, though board member Robert McMonagle said he did so reluctantly because he didn't want to inconvenience motorists.

However, Farry said not closing the road might pose safety hazards for both motorists and firefighters because hoses must be stretched across North Flowers Mill Road to fire hydrants on the other side of the street.

He said lighting a house on fire and fighting the blaze under controlled conditions is invaluable training for firefighters. "Live burn" training is also mandated by the state, Farry added.

"The best training is in a dwelling, that's where you can recreate real conditions as closely as possible," he said. "Having live burns affords our folks the opportunity to keep their skills up to the level they need to be."

Farry said individual rooms in the house will be lit on fire using an accelerant called Excelsior, and firefighters will fight blazes one room at a time. The exercise should not create a lot of smoke billowing out to outlying areas, he said.

The house was formerly owned by the Newbold family and will be demolished after the training to make way for a new townhouse development to be built by McGrath Homes. Owners John McGrath Jr. and Patrick Flanagan granted permission for the burn, Farry said.

"They do a lot of things to help out the fire companies, and providing this kind of training resource is excellent," he said.

Participants in the drill will be firefighters from the Skyline Fire District, which is the four fire companies that serve Middletown. The Skyline fire companies are Langhorne-Middletown, Parkland, Penndel and William Penn.