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Hed order: 3 columns, 36-point across 2 lines

By Booker Brown

Knight Ridder Newspapers

FREEDONIA – A fire at a Freedonia State University residence hall injured two students and destroyed a room late Saturday night, authorities said.

The two students suffered smoke inhalation and second-degree burns caused by flaming popcorn, said Fire Chief Ashton Smith. Neither injury was life-threatening, and residents of Harpo Hall were allowed back into their rooms shortly before midnight, he said.

The fire on the second floor of the residence hall began at 10:30 pm., when a student dropped a lighted firecracker into bag of just-microwaved popcorn. The explosion sent the flaming bag and its contents in all directions, he said, and several kernels caught nearby drapes on fire.

“We were fortunate, because this could have been devastating,” Smith said.

Smith would not name the injured students, who he said were still being treated at Memorial Hospital.

Efforts to reach a hospital spokeswoman were unsuccessful, and campus officials would not comment.

A student in the room said he and his friends dropped the firecracker into the popcorn bag while celebrating Freedonia State’s victory over archrival Sylvania Tech.

“It was the smelliest, scariest thing I’ve ever seen,” said Louis Calhern, a sophomore. “We’re all grateful that we beat Sylvania and that the fire wasn’t worse.”

Hed Goes Here & Here   
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