

House fire in Brooklyn kills four

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A three-alarm fire that began early Monday morning gutted a single-family in the Homecrest section of Brooklyn with eight members of a family inside.

After the flames were put out, firefighters found the body of Aliza Azan, 40, near that of her 3-year-old daughter, Henrietta, and those of her two sons, Yitzhak, 7, and Moshe, 11.

The fire began on the first floor and quickly engulfed the three-story home, according to a statement of the New York City Fire Department (FDNY). “It was early morning, everyone in the house was asleep,” Fire Commissioner Daniel Nigro said. The fire “got a good start before a neighbor noticed and called us.”

Nigro also said that firefighters arrived within two-and-a-half minutes after the first call, but the flames were already consuming all three floors of the building. He explained that the fire confronted the firefighters at the front door. “The units, knowing there were people in the home, pushed in very aggressively.”

Around 100 firefighters battled the flames and assisted the injured. It took an hour to put out the fire. Five or six firefighters suffered minor injuries.

“The fire traveled very quickly,” Nigro said, “The fire went from the first-floor front, up the stairs the second, again up the stairs to the attic.”

One witness told the media: “The fire was like five feet on top of the house, that big was the fire.” Another witness saw the firefighters rushing right into the flames.

According to Nigro, to get out the mother and her three children on the second floor, firefighters would have had to go right into the fire. “They weren’t able to do that.”

The commissioner said that the father, Joseph Azan, 45, was able to get his two teenaged sons and a teenaged daughter to safety by pushing them from the roof. After Azan reached the ground, he entered the burning building and was severely injured as he

attempted to rescue his wife and other children.

Joseph Azan is in critical condition at Staten Island University Hospital, and his two teenagers “are in critical condition and fighting for their lives,” Nigro said. Both sons broke bones, and the daughter apparently broke her pelvis. A third son was able to escape through a side door with minimal injury. The bodies of the deceased are being flown to Israel for burial.

Azan is a manager at the Hat Box, a menswear store on Coney Island Avenue. The Azan family are members of the Syrian Jewish community in Brooklyn.

Although the cause of the fire still under investigation by fire marshals, the FDNY believes it was likely accidental, possibly set off by a menorah candle or oil that was used to celebrate the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah.

The Azan teenagers have told investigators that the menorah was left burning when they went to sleep and that the fire started nearby.

There was one smoke detector on the ground floor that was reportedly activated, but none on the floors above.

Mayor Bill de Blasio, in a statement, revealed, “Over the last couple of days, several other major fires have caused many injuries—some very serious—and displaced others from their homes.” The purpose of the mayor’s remarks was to place responsibility for safety entirely on the residents by urging them to be careful about “decorations, electric lights, candles, space heaters and other items.”



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