

Making a Difference...Why We Do What We Do

Monitored fire protection helps save Boston-area woman in house fire

By Bob Tucker, Chief Storyteller, ADT

What started out as a home improvement project for Shrewsbury, MA resident Deborah Quinn could have turned tragic had it not been for monitored fire protection.

Deborah was in the midst of refinishing her home's hardwood floors when she decided to go to bed and complete the job the next morning. She left the chemicals, rags and other materials on the wood floor, not realizing the potential dangers of spontaneous combustion.



At 3:45 a.m., Deborah was awakened by blaring alarms, triggered by thick smoke. Venturing downstairs, Deborah saw what she describes as a 'blowtorch' shooting out of a tray she had used to stain the floor.

"The flames were as tall as me," Deborah recalled. "The smoke began overtaking me and I started to panic. Just then, my security company called."

On the line was Kathy Taylor from a monitoring center in Florida. In a recording of the call, Kathy's soothing, steady voice can be heard as it coaxes crucial information out of Deborah between her labored breathing and coughs.


Deborah told Kathy she needed the fire department. Three minutes later, firefighters arrived and put out the blaze before it spread.

"Early notification from the alarm system was key to preventing any deaths or injuries," said Shrewsbury Fire Chief Jim Vuona.

A few months after the incident, Deborah got to meet Kathy in person and thanked her, along with firefighters, for a job well-done.

"I lie awake at night thinking about what could have happened had you not called me," Deborah told Kathy.

"It was an honor to help you and to know that my professionalism helped save your life," said Kathy.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), an estimated 14,000 fires occur annually in the U.S. from spontaneous combustion. 

Share your life-saving stories with TMA members!

Have you or a colleague helped save someone's life in your role within the monitoring center? Let your story touch others and inspire more life-saving actions.

Submit your story and images to TMA Communications at communications@tma.us.

