

Individually, read the case.

In teams:

Develop an Incident Map using sticky notes.

Take ____ min. Finish by ____.

Volendam Pub Fire

Introduction

It was New Year's Eve 2000 and the teenagers of the Dutch coastal village of Volendam were heading out to watch the first fireworks of the New Year. The Netherlands is one of the few European countries that allows people to light fireworks on New Year's Eve. After the celebrations they meet in the pubs to wish each other a Happy New Year and continue on with the celebrations. On the sea front of the Markermeer, three very popular pubs were situated on top of each other with a view of the sea. Located in the basement of the wooden cafe was De Blokhut, on ground level there was De Wirwar and above that was 't Hemeltje (Little Heaven), the place to be for teenagers on New Year's Eve.

What happened?

Midnight had not yet arrived and the pub was still quiet with only a few patrons. At exactly twelve o'clock midnight some 200 to 300 young revelers entered the pub. The place was quickly filled to beyond capacity and people had even positioned themselves on the stairs because there was no more room in the main areas. The barmen handed out sparklers and the lights were dimmed to enhance the festive atmosphere.

At a quarter past twelve a boy in the back of the bar lit three sparklers. The sparks spraying from the sparklers startled him and in a reflex action he threw up his hands in surprise. Four weeks earlier, in preparation for Christmas, the bar personnel attached an elaborately decorated fishing net across the entire ceiling, decorated with pine branches, small lights and paper bells. Despite safety instructions given by the municipality, the decorations had not been sprayed with a fire-retardant spray. The decorations were dry as dust and the fishing net had sagged down, hanging at a height of only 2 meters in many places.

Sparks from the boy's sparklers hit the dry pine branches, which instantly caught alight. The fishing net, only two millimeters thick, disintegrated almost immediately. Within 60 seconds the decorations crashed to the floor in a blaze with a temperature estimated between 800°C and 1000°C. Flaming debris rained down on the hundreds of young revelers. The fire spread quickly and the crowd panicked.

Some emergency exits were insufficient to handle the rush of people and others were inaccessible because of a railing. Others had emergency doors that did not open the right way. In some instances there was no fire escape at all. Ten people, ages 13 to 22, died and hundreds were injured.

