The fire originated in the first-floor room to the right of the white barrel in the center of the photo. Flames exposed the balcony of the room directly above. PHOTO-GRAPHIC

MOTEL FIRE KILLS TWO, INJURES ELEVEN

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AS A RESULT OF DELAYED REPORTING, an early morning fire on October 20, 1973, in the Holiday Inn Motel at Meadville, Pennsylvania, killed two occupants. Nine other occupants and two fire fighters suffered minor injuries.

The *U*-shaped, two-story motel had no sprinklers, no fire detectors or alarm system. It did have a local manual evacuation alarm system. The building had concrete outer walls and eight-inch masonry walls between rooms. All other partitions, including corridor walls, were of wood-frame construction finished with ¼-inch plywood wallboard. The room doors opening into the corridor were of hollow core wood. The corridor had rubber-backed carpeting and a suspended combustible acoustical tile ceiling in metal channels. A one-story section of the building contained a lobby, meeting rooms, restaurant, and cocktail lounge.

The occupants of Room 137 on the first floor of the motel left at 12:30 am. At 2:30 am, the occupant of the room across the hall saw smoke coming from

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Part of the undivided 500-foot-long first-floor corridor through which the fire spread. Walls were plywood and the ceiling consisted of combustible tiles. PHOTO-GRAPHIC

This report is based on information gathered by John A. Sharry, who visited the scene. He gratefully acknowledges the cooperation of Meadville Fire Chief Peter Kelyman.

who man the central station equipment benefit most directly from good lightning protection. But in the long run, it is the average citizen who benefits the greatest from a fire alarm system that has an added measure of protection so that it is not out of operation at the time that it is needed most. △

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The room where the fire started. PHOTO-GRAPHIC

under the door of Room 137 and notified the desk clerk. Instead of calling the Fire Department, the clerk went to investigate. He opened the door to the room; as he did, hot air rushed out and a flash fire erupted, breaking the window in the room. The clerk shut the door and pulled the evacuation alarm, mistakenly thinking that it alerted the Fire Department. The clerk then alerted the occupants of both floors by banging on the room doors.

An employee called the Fire Department at 3:27 am. Fire fighters of the two responding volunteer companies found the entire undivided, 500-foot-long, *U*-shaped first-floor corridor involved, with fire also curling up out of the broken window of Room 137, exposing the second floor.

The second floor was fully charged with smoke that had spread to the second-floor corridor because the doors on the three stairways were propped open. Fire fighters simultaneously attacked the fire on the first floor with 2½-inch hose lines and began search and rescue operations on the second floor, where two bodies were found, one in a room and the other in the corridor. (It was later learned that the man whose body was found in the corridor had escaped, then returned to get his watch.) The fire was extinguished by 4:00 am.

The second floor showed smoke damage, but no fire damage. The first-floor corridor and those first-floor rooms whose doors were left open experienced severe fire damage. The first-floor rooms whose doors were left closed received only smoke damage.

The fire was assumed to have been caused by smoking materials discarded by the occupants who departed at 12:30 am. Between the time that it was discovered at 2:30 am and reported at 3:27 am, the fire burned through the plywood-covered, wood-frame wall into the corridor and spread on the wall and ceiling in both directions. The estimated property damage was $1 million. △