

Black Rock Forest shop fire still under investigation

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Last Thursday evening (August 14), Black Rock Forest executive director Isabel Ashton, who lives on the ground of the forest preserve, was out walking her dog. She saw something unusual on that walk – smoke and flames -- and immediately called 911.

It turns out a fire had broken out in the maintenance shop at Black Rock Forest's old headquarters area, on Continental Rd.

Emergency services – “a lot of them” responded very quickly to the scene, Ashton said this week. Fortunately, no one was injured in the fire.

On Monday, she met with investigators from both Black Rock's insurance company and the Orange County Fire Coordinator. She said they told her they may have more information about the cause of the blaze later this week. As of that day Black Rock Forest employees, including Ashton, hadn't yet been allowed into the building to check the damages and losses for themselves.

The shop “supports the upkeep

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of the forest's facilities, trails and infrastructure” and is an essential part of operations, containing equipment such as lawn mowers, a snow mobile, lumber and chainsaws, Ashton said. A portion of the building was damaged last year during the July storm event, but it was in the process of being repaired.

The fire was not affecting activities at Black Rock Forest this week, she added.

Black Rock Forest officials said this week they are grateful for the swift response from local firefighters and first responders, whose efforts prevented the fire from spreading beyond the maintenance shop.

“We thank the Cornwall, Cornwall-on-Hudson, Vails Gate, West Point, and New Windsor Fire Departments, the Cornwall and Cornwall-on-Hudson Police Department, Cornwall / New Windsor EMS, Orange County Emergency Services Battalion 4 Deputy Fire Coordinator and Fire Investigation Unit, Orange County Division of Emergency Communications, and Central Hudson Gas & Electric,” Forest Director Matthew Brady said. “We deeply appreciate the emergency responders who were there for us. Their efforts help us safeguard the environment and protect our drinking water, ensuring that the forest remains a vital resource for our community—a place for education, conservation, recreation, and connection with nature.”

For more information, visit blackrockforest.org.



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