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Fire out at building next to White House

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Building housing vice president's ceremonial offices evacuated due to fire
- Fire started in electrical closet or telephone bank area, fire spokesman says
- Fire spokesman: No injuries reported, but a lot of smoke

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WASHINGTON (CNN) -- Firefighters quickly doused a two-alarm fire Wednesday in the historic Eisenhower Executive Office Building, which houses the vice president's ceremonial offices and the majority of the White House staff.

Firefighting crews used axes to break windows on the third floor of the ornate building shortly after the

two-alarm blaze broke out after 9 a.m.

The fire started near the vice presidential offices, CNN's Kathleen Koch reported.

At its peak, heavy black smoke streamed from the building. [Watch smoke pouring from building »](#)

Within an hour, smoke had stopped pouring from the building and was replaced by a fine mist of water, which the firefighters used to ventilate the building until they could get fans set up.

Vice President Dick Cheney's working offices are in the West Wing of the White House, where he was at the time of the [fire](#).

The [White House](#) is adjacent to the Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

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There were no reports of injuries from the blaze, which appeared to be confined to the third floor, said D.C. Fire Department spokesman Alan Etter. Etter said the blaze appeared to have started in an electrical closet or a telephone bank.

"We have this under control," he said, adding that the building was evacuated.

The Secret Service and a number of other agencies were on scene, as were 15 fire trucks.

The building houses nearly all of the White House staff, including White House speechwriters, White House communications, senior staff from the Office of Management and Budget and the National Security Council.

It was constructed between 1871 and 1888 and has been undergoing renovations. Also called the Old Executive Office Building, the massive structure was originally built for the State, War and Navy Departments and is an example of the French Second Empire style of architecture, according to a government Web site.

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The building is the site of a number of events, including ceremonial signings, news conferences and photo opportunities.

It was designed by Alfred Mullett, the supervising architect of the Treasury Department, and its exterior is composed of granite, slate and cast iron. [E-mail to a friend](#)

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