

From: [Hicks-Richards, George](#)
To: [Sharry, Sharon](#)
Subject: Boiler fire update
Date: Monday, November 28, 2022 12:03:00 PM
Attachments: [boiler1.jpg](#)
[boiler2.jpg](#)
[boiler4.jpg](#)
[boiler5.jpg](#)
[boiler6.jpg](#)
[boiler7.jpg](#)

Good morning, Sharon-

This is a follow up to the building emergency on 11/27 (Sunday).

On 11/27, at approximately 2:30 pm, I received a call from the maintenance staff (Miguel) that Jose (scheduled maintenance staff) could smell intense heat and discovered flames shooting from the body of boiler #4. Miguel turned off the boiler (which stopped the flames) and called me. I called Grodsky, our HVAC contractor, and discussed the situation with their on-call tech. We determined that there was no imminent danger with the power and gas to boiler #4 shut off. Miguel remained on site for the remainder of the day to monitor the situation. The fire alarms did not go off, there was no excessive smoke, and the staff and patrons were not in imminent danger by being in the building. Had this gone unchecked, the fire system would have eventually been set off and staff would have evacuated the building.

After reviewing the damage, it has been determined that boiler #4 is not salvageable. The housing is destroyed and the firebox has holes and damage from melted metal. The blower motor also has damage from excessive heat. The damage is related to the age of the boiler. One of the side walls from the insert deteriorated and fell over, exposing the boiler housing to the heat, causing the damage. This damage happened over time and would not have been predictable in an annual inspection (which is performed as per state guidelines).

Boiler #4 was powered in tandem with boiler #3. We have instructed Grodsky to rewire boiler #3 so it may operate independently.

As for the remaining 3 boilers, we are unable to thoroughly inspect their condition without taking the risk of irreparably damaging them. But we can inspect the housings with specialized equipment through the fire inspection hole, to determine if any of them have similar structural damage to their housings that would create a similar situation. I've instructed Grodsky to schedule this procedure and will follow up with the findings.

We also discovered, through searches to determine if parts were available, that the boilers, themselves, are from the 1970's. They are also converted from oil to gas for this installation. It does not seem logical that they were installed in the building prior to the 1990's expansion so it must be assumed that they were purchased as retrofitted units to save money. This means that they are older than we assumed. It is possible to search archives to perhaps confirm this, but it does not change the current situation.

The bottom line, is that these units are on borrowed time, they cannot be repaired or partially replaced (replacing one boiler) without incurring costs beyond our operating budget. It does not make fiscal sense to have a single boiler built to work with the other 3 as the entire system is a modular design. Even given the age of the boilers, the inserts can be replaced if it is determined any others are damaged, but only if there is no structural damage to the metal housings. That could not be determined unless they are taken apart with replacement inserts on hand as the originals would be destroyed in order to inspect. We do not know the cost of replacement inserts but it will likely exceed our budget allowance. Because we are only operating on 3 of the 4 boilers, the remaining ones will be working harder to keep the building warm.

I will keep you updated as to what they find when they perform the inspection.

George Hicks-Richards

He/Him/His

Facilities Supervisor

Jones Library, Inc.

43 Amity St

Amherst, MA 01002

413-259-3174