

Blaze in Bliss

Spark causes fire in sculpture room

By DAN LEONE

The smell of smoke.

It still lingers in Bliss Hall, where a fire broke out late Wednesday afternoon when a spark from a grinding machine ignited a straw project in the sculpture room, first floor, Bliss Hall.

"We find it hard to sing because of the smoke," said Kassy Vogel, sophomore, FPA, who was rehearsing for a play Wednesday night, after the fire.

There were no injuries and damage was not extensive. Exact figures are not yet available since inventory hasn't been taken.

Six units from the Youngstown Fire Department (YFD) responded to the call, which came in at 3:50 p.m., and 25-30 firemen remained on the scene for about an hour.

Students had to be evacuated.

John Cretella, sophomore, FPA, who was assisting with a lab in the room, said that he dragged some of the burning straw outside, then got a fire extinguisher from a room down the hall.

Another extinguisher, from the sculpture room, was also emptied on the fire while a maintenance man activated the fire alarm and tried to get a hose in from the hall.

However, smoke and chemicals from the extinguishers made it "non-breathable," according to Cretella. He and the other two students present had to wait outside for the fire department.

"It seemed like a long time,"

said Cretella, "but actually it was pretty quick — five or ten minutes."

He said that the firemen put out the fire very quickly, and estimated that it lasted 15-20 minutes in all.

Evacuation went smoothly, according to Richard Mitchell, art chairman. He said people waited outside for about an hour.

"It will take a few days to determine the amount of damage," said Mitchell. "Lights, ceiling tile, and plastic parts will have to be replaced."

He added that a sprinkler system in an adjoining room where power tools are kept went off and may have caused damage to some of the tools.

Most of the damage was caused by the smoke, according to a YFD representative. Mitchell said that all that burned was straw, and also noted the lingering smoke damage.

"Most of the people thought it was a joke when they heard the fire alarm," said Vogel, who was in class on the second floor when the fire broke. "I smelled the smoke and then I realized it was a real fire."

Classes were held today as scheduled in Bliss Hall.

Edmund J. Salata, administrative services dean, said that no plans have been made yet to repair the damaged area, since the fire department was still looking it over on Thursday.

He said assessment of damages has to be made and turned over to the insurance company for inspection before repair work can be scheduled.