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Cigarette May Be Cause Of Fire At Huge Orlando Hotel

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ORLANDO, Fla. -- A cigarette may be to blame for a fire at one of Orange County's largest hotels. Hundreds of tourists were forced from their rooms in the middle of the night when the fire started at the Renaissance Orlando Resort near SeaWorld.

Investigators said a guest at the 700-room hotel tried to snub out a cigarette in a planter on his balcony. But in that planter was decorative plastic foliage planted in it, and it went right up in smoke. He came to Orlando to attend a convention.

"Scary, pretty scary, 'cause you never know what's outside that door," said hotel guest John Moran.

Moran got more than he bargained for Sunday night when the fire alarms went off and he saw thick smoke right outside his window. His room was near the top of the line of balconies looking into the atrium of the Renaissance at SeaWorld.

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Investigators said the guest right beneath Moran **put out a cigarette in a balcony planter filled with fake plants. They caught fire, dropping burning debris onto balconies below, igniting their planters.**

Hotel management said they evacuated hundreds of guests around 1:30 early Monday morning as security guards attacked the flames with fire extinguishers, putting the series of fires out before fire trucks arrived seven minutes later.

The hotel has been around for more than 20 years and, during that time they said, they've never had a problem with the plastic plants, which adorn each balcony facing into the atrium. Monday, though, they said they're getting rid of the decorative foliage to make sure it never happens again.

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