

Massive fire razes two structures north of Gallup

Written by gallupsun
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Smoke and flames filled the skies over Gallup on Aug. 1, as two structures – one behind and one next to Gas Max on 516 U.S. Highway 491, caught fire shortly before 7 pm.

McKinley County Attorney Doug Decker said in either building hay, fireworks, and a variety of oils, including ethanol, fueled the flames that burned well into the night.

“It’s not pretty like the fireworks we see on Independence Day,” Decker said. “It takes forever to put out a hay fire.”

Gas Max employees were safely evacuated, and the station sustained some minor damages.

“The gas station had some heat damage, but it’s still operable,” Decker said.

Traffic slowed to a crawl as witnesses stopped to observe the blaze. Highway 491 was shut down in both directions at milepost 4 as police and fire crews arrived. The highway stayed closed until about 11 pm.

In addition to firefighters from the City of Gallup and McKinley County, Apache County District 2 ordered 2,000 gallon, 5,500-gallon, and 8,000-gallon water tanks to assist in fighting the fire. In all, 55 firefighter and 22 firefighting “apparatuses,” were on scene to help fight the stubborn blaze, Decker said.

Multiple explosions were heard by witnesses, but the New Mexico State Police stated on Twitter that no injuries were reported at the time. However, Decker said two firefighters sustained minor injuries – one for heat exhaustion and the other tripped and fell. Both were treated on scene and returned to fight the fire.

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The cause of the fire is unknown at this time, but officials from the state fire marshal's office will be conducting an investigation of the scene Thursday. Decker said it's not clear at this time what items were stored together that could have created a potential fire hazard.

To view video/photos of the dramatic fire, visit the Gallup Sun's Facebook page.

