

Fire at Old Wingate School house was arson

Written by Staff Reports

Friday, 05 November 2021 04:42



Early on Wednesday morning a woman in Fort Wingate, N.M. got up to visit the bathroom and saw light coming from a structure near the Fort Wingate Old School Building at 322 Painted Horse Trail.

She dialed 911 and McKinley County Sheriff's Deputy Terence Willie responded.

The woman told Willie she sometimes sees light on at the school, but she didn't see anyone on Oct. 20. That morning she saw smoke and tall flames.

Willie reported that he could see the flames as he was approaching exit 33 on I-40. When he arrived at 3:30 am, he saw a single story structure fully engulfed and the area had heavy black smoke.

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Nearly two hours later, at 5:20 am, Deputy Chief Tim Berry with the McKinley County Fire Department called the fire suspicious.

Berry said there were no utilities to the home and no inclement weather, so the determination was arson. Berry said the area near the front door was where the fire started and the back door was closed and someone opened it.

The old Fort Wingate School is fenced off around the school with access roads closed by gates. The weather on Oct. 20 was clear. Everything pointed to arson.

The State Fire Marshal was contacted.