

Abandoned trading post collapses from fire

Written by By Beth Blakeman Managing Editor
Friday, 19 November 2021 09:32



Puerco Valley fire chief calls blaze ‘suspicious’

A fire in the area of the truck stop at I-40 exit 359 burned an old Lupton, Ariz. trading post to the ground. Known to those in the area as the Ortega Dome, it was leased from the Navajo Nation.

The Nov. 5 blaze was not the first for the Dome. About two years ago Puerco Valley Fire Chief Cliff Snyder said there was another fire there. But the building survived it. This time, it didn't.

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Snyder said by the time firefighters arrived in response to the call around 4:32 am, it was already too late to save the building. He thinks the fire is suspicious because there were no occupants and no utilities hooked up to the building.

“This time of year we get some people seeking shelter and sometimes they build warming fires,” Snyder said. “I don’t know if that’s what happened in this case.

“That’s something we’re familiar with in the area,” he said.

He explained that abandoned commercial structures are considered dangerous for firefighters. There is always a need to get inside. However, that was not an option with the Dome fire. He says there were no signs of people inside.

The fire was called controlled in a little over an hour using two engines and a water tender. But the fire department continued to work the fire until Nov. 7 to prevent it from spreading to an adjacent abandoned gas station and to contain it to the trading post structure.

Snyder said the cause of the fire is currently unknown.

The Navajo Nation Police Department will make final determinations concerning the fire.

By Beth Blakeman
Managing Editor