

Two families displaced after fire ravages homes

Written by By Babette Herrmann Sun Editor
Friday, 01 July 2016 06:40



Investigation yields few clues on how it started

GAMERCO— Shortly before 9 pm on a Saturday evening, a Gamerco home at 202 S. Chino Loop went up in flames. Then a second home. What expectedly ensued next was complete panic for the two families impacted by the blaze, according to McKinley County Sheriff's Office Deputy Roxanne King's report.

Gallup Fire Department arrived on scene, and began to douse the flames. In a video submitted to the Gallup Sun, a small child could be heard saying it sounded like "popcorn" popping as memories and beloved belongings popped, melted, and burned to a crisp during the three-alarm fire June 25.

Dina Barron, one of the homeowners, arrived on scene and told King "that's my house." She then asked, "What happened? Can you get my car?"

For Barron, there was no going back to get the blue Chevy Camero from the driveway. The vehicle was eventually consumed by the raging flames. The only thing left was the frame and

Two families displaced after fire ravages homes

Written by By Babette Herrmann Sun Editor
Friday, 01 July 2016 06:40

surrounding ashes. Anthony Martinez, Barron's brother and neighbor, also lost his home to the fire.

According to GFD Chief Eric Babcock's investigative report, released to the Gallup Sun on June 29, Martinez said he and his wife smelled smoke, so he looked outside toward the west side of his home, and saw nothing out of the ordinary. Next, a neighbor stopped by his home to tell him his sister's house was on fire. When he looked outside again, toward the west side, "the entire south west corner of Barron's home was on fire, including two trees," the report states.

When Gallup Fire Department crews arrived on scene they began to extinguish the flames, and when their trucks ran low on water, they reached for the nearest fire hydrant.

Gamerco Water & Sanitation District Manager Francisco Cantu said he was at the scene, and the closest hydrant, at Chino and Hubble, was not in working order.

It resulted in the fire department having to hook up to a working hydrant about 1,000 feet from where fire trucks were situated near the property.

"I pointed out which fire hydrants were working," Cantu said

Chief Babcock said, "It impacted our ability to put the fire out," adding that he's not sure whether either structure could be saved at that juncture.

"The first one went up pretty quickly," he said. "Everything burned to the ground."

Crews from McKinley County Fire Department were also on scene and used their tankers to help extinguish the flames.

Two families displaced after fire ravages homes

Written by By Babette Herrmann Sun Editor
Friday, 01 July 2016 06:40

Meanwhile, Babcock said the cause is “undetermined after the investigation.” There was some speculation that fireworks could have set the home on fire, but Babcock discovered no such link.

As for the fire hydrant shortage, Cantu said Gamerco Water & Sanitation District has jumped through some hoops to get the funding, and “the politics” and red tape has caused delays, although he didn’t go into details. A *KRQE News 13* report revealed that 12 out of the 54 fire hydrants in Gamerco don’t work.

Cantu explained that the water has sought federal and local funds to replace the defunct hydrants, and have plans to begin the replacement process in July. He didn’t reveal or know of a dollar amount for the project off hand, but said “this is major money.”

The Sun was not able to reach Barron for comment as of press time.

By Babette Herrmann
Sun Editor