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Damage costs are significant

Fire ravaged an east side motel Aug. 9, forcing occupants to take shelter at a nearby gymnasium, officials said. The fire is being investigated by the Gallup Fire Department and Gallup Police Department.

The cause of the fire at the Road Runner Motel, 3012 E. Hwy 66, remains under investigation. There were no injuries reported. Deputy Fire Chief Jesus Morales said the estimated cost of fire damage is significant.

Morales said a call came into dispatch at around 8:15 pm regarding a structure fire at a hotel near Indian Hills.

“It was a general alarm call,” Morales said. “We got there within minutes.”

Morales said the fire initially broke out in Room 215 and rapidly spread, both inside and outside of other rooms. He said investigators don't yet know the cause of the fire.

Morales said the entire 31-room, two-story motel was immediately evacuated and will remain closed until authorities finish the investigation.

Diana Rodriguez-Beaugrand, a spokeswoman for the New Mexico Red Cross, said agency volunteers manned a shelter opened by McKinley County emergency management officials. Twenty-five people were displaced as a result of the fire, Rodriguez-Beaugrand said. Victims were taken to the Larry B. Mitchell Recreation Center at 700 E. Montoya Blvd.

"[Red Cross] volunteers are on the scene assisting, providing food, water, and a safe place to stay," Rodriguez-Beaugrand said.

On a weekly basis, the Road Runner Motel typically houses locals, but not many tourists frequent it.

The Aug. 9 fire is not the sole structure fire that has occurred on the Road Runner property over the years. About four years ago, a fire destroyed the Road Runner Cafe, which sat adjacent to the motel. The fire was reported to have originated in the kitchen.

A call put in to hotel management, seeking information about the fire, went unanswered as of press time.

Kevin Wall, 16, said he was riding his bike when, from the highway, he saw the fire begin to spread.

"It started small. Then the other rooms got on fire," Wall said. "I saw people, I think the police department and other people, carrying people to the first floor."

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