

## GPD: Arson cause of Budget Inn fire

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent  
Friday, 13 January 2017 04:48

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The Gallup fire and police departments responded to what is believed to be a deliberately set motel fire Jan. 10 that was done by an unknown person.

Accordingly, the cause of the fire has been determined as arson. There were no reported injuries in the fire.

Capt. Marinda Spencer, public information officer with the Gallup Police Department, said officers were dispatched to the Budget Inn, 3150 W. Highway 66, at 5:37 am. Spencer said officers observed smoke coming from west side of the building and from the first floor of the structure.

“There was a male in the room trying to put out the fire,” Officer John Gonzales wrote in the police report on the matter. “Gallup Fire arrived on the scene and put out the fire.”

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Gonzales recorded that he interviewed a witness at the scene who said she saw a male wearing black clothing “banging” on the door of Room 123, and said she saw the unknown male break the room window. The name of that person is not noted in the police report.

A guest of the motel initially called the police, according to Gonzales’ report.

Deepak Mehta, the owner and operator of the Budget Inn, said a female guest and a young male from North Carolina were checked into the room on Jan. 8 for two stays. He said he wasn’t exactly sure when the two checked out.

A guest interviewed at the motel said a young male is often seen “walking around doing nothing” and talking on a cell phone. He declined to give his name or any further information.

### **GFD RESPONDS**

Gallup Deputy Fire Chief Jesus Morales said firefighters arrived at 5:44 am and discovered light smoke coming from the interior of Room 123, which is a corner unit of the two-story hotel. At least one mattress and a box spring were removed from the room, Morales said. Morales estimated damages to the motel be around \$20,000.

Both police and fire personnel were on the scene for practically four hours, Spencer and Morales said.

The Budget Inn was the scene of another bad fire about three years ago. In that incident, an out-of-town woman who was renting a room died apparently of smoke inhalation after she smoked a cigarette and fell asleep with the cigarette still lit, officials said at the time.

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