Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
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Road Runner Motel shut down

The cause of a fire that shut down a local motel Aug. 11 can be traced to a trashcan inside one of the rooms, officials said.

Gallup Deputy Fire Chief Jesus Morales said the fire began in a trashcan in Room 215 of the Road Runner Motel.

“We’re still looking into what was in the trashcan that ignited the fire,” Morales said. “The investigation is not yet closed.”

Gallup police and firefighters responded to the blaze, which tore through the upper deck of the two-story structure. The south portion of the upper deck was burned away, along with parts of the attic and a section of the second floor.

Gallup fire and police spokespersons said a call about the fire came in at about 8:50 pm.

Residents at the hotel were given shelter at the Larry B. Mitchell Recreation Center along East Montoya Boulevard, courtesy of the American Red Cross. The motel housed mostly locals on a weekly and monthly basis.

Morales said the cost of damage to the motel, which is believed to have been built in the late 1970s, is significant.

Various area emergency-response agencies were at the scene, including city fire personnel, McKinley County Fire and Rescue, and the New Mexico State Police.

An accompanying café that sat on the same property was torn down about four years ago after a kitchen fire forced its closure.

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