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Fire Destroys 3 Downtown Businesses

Damages are expected to exceed \$300,000 from a fire that destroyed three downtown businesses Sunday morning.

Leveled by the fire were Katy's Cafe, 122 W. Fulton; Edgerton Electric, 120 W. Fulton; and the Village Inn Restaurant, 118 W. Fulton.

Two adjacent businesses, the Red Baron, 124 W. Fulton, and Oats Bin Tavern, 116 W. Fulton received only minor smoke and water damages.

Twenty-seven Edgerton firefighters were joined by squads from Milton and Stoughton in battling the blaze for more than six hours.

Firefighters were dispatched to the scene at 1:30 a.m. and remained at the site until 7:42 a.m.

Responding to a fire call were five units from Edgerton, three from Stoughton and one from Milton.

Flames leapt so high from the two-story structure that Stoughton firefighters reported seeing them from Highway 51.

Fire Chief James Neal, who was joined by a representative of the state Fire Marshall's office in investigating the cause of the fire, said he believed the blaze was of electrical origin.

Though it remains under investigation, Neal said he believes the fire started in the storage area in back of Katy's Cafe.

"There was wire that showed some arching where it had shorted out," Neal said.

Katy Fewell, owner of the cafe, said she closed her restaurant at 1:30 p.m. Saturday afternoon.

She was unable to salvage anything from the building after the fire. Damages to the restaurant were estimated at \$120,000.

After apparently starting in Katy's Cafe, the fire spread near the ceiling to Edgerton Electric and the Village Inn.

All three businesses, which were unoccupied when the fire broke out, were gutted. After the fire had ripped through the three wood and brick buildings, only a facade remained of the structures.

Fire losses for Edgerton Electric and the Village Inn were listed at \$90,000.

Firefighters evacuated the entire block, including the nearby taverns and the apartments above. Nobody was living in the apartments above the three burned buildings.

Two Edgerton firefighters, Mike and Brian Reynolds, were treated for smoke inhalation at Edgerton Memorial Community Hospital. The father and son were released on Sunday.

Calvin Wiersma, another fireman, slipped at the fire station and broke his arm shortly after arriving.

A thick black smoke quickly filled the downtown business district. The smoke cover was so dense it was difficult to see the entire block of buildings.

"When we first arrived at the scene, we had a lot of black smoke," Neal said. "There were no flames at all."

Neal said the fire did not break through the roof of the buildings until about 2:15 a.m.

"We never gained an inch on it (the fire) until the roof collapsed," he noted. "It was so damned stubborn because of the false ceilings. It went where it wanted to. As soon as the false ceilings collapsed, we had a way to get at it."

Neal said the intensity of the fire ruled out an interior attack of the blaze.

"We got chased out of there a

(Cont. on back page)



Three downtown businesses were ravaged by fire early Sunday morning.



Fire department officials believe the blaze started inside Katy's Cafe, which sustained an estimated \$120,000 damage.