

4 Weekend Fires Severe



One house fire resulted in a man being taken to a hospital, another caused the loss of four dogs and a cat and a third, which is under investigation, gutted a large brick home this weekend in Wilkes County.

The fourth and last of the unrelated weekend fires destroyed a pickup and backed up traffic for miles on U.S. 421 West on Sunday afternoon.

In Finley Park

The North Wilkesboro Fire Department was dispatched to the first of the weekend fires, at 515 Coffey Avenue in the Finley Park neighborhood, a few minutes before 10 a.m. Saturday. The Knotville Fire Department was called to

assist with manpower after North Wilkesboro firefighters arrived.

North Wilkesboro Fire Chief Jimmy Martin said the fire was in the attic over a center two-story section of the 4,272-square-foot brick house but was quickly extinguished. He said most of the damage Saturday morning was from water sprayed on the fire and smoke.

A passing motorist reported the blaze after seeing smoke coming from the top of the house.



Niki Hamby, fire investigator with the Wilkes Sheriff's Office, said the fire Saturday morning appeared to have started from an electrical problem. He said he was told electrical work had recently been done on the house. Duke Energy cut off the electricity late Saturday morning, Hamby added.

Martin said firefighters removed insulation and other materials in or near flames as part of making sure the fire

was completely put out.

The chief said he was confident the fire was extinguished, but North Wilkesboro firefighters were dispatched to the scene again at 4:06 a.m. Sunday after a neighbor reported that the house was burning.

Martin said flames were coming through the roof when firefighters arrived and the house was too fully engulfed in flames for firefighters to enter, so the fire was fought from outside until it was safer to enter the structure.

North Wilkesboro's aerial ladder truck was used and the Broadway Fire Department was dispatched to assist. Firefighters were on the scene until around 8:30 a.m. Sunday.

Hamby said fire consumed the entire second floor of the middle section of the house and the stairway from the first to the second floors. He said the fire appeared to have started on the second floor.



Hamby said the fire is suspicious and that the investigation is continuing.



Other firefighters said that if a fire was still smoldering in the house after the North Wilkesboro and Knotville departments left Saturday morning, it should have produced enough smoke for passing motorists to see Saturday afternoon.

The home belongs to William C. "Bill" Ingle, but neighbors said Ingle hadn't been staying there lately. Hamby and Martin said the house is insured.

