

Chief: Lit Candle Started Fire That Heavily Damaged North Wilkesboro Home



A large North Wilkesboro home was heavily damaged Tuesday night by a fire that began from a lit candle, said North Wilkesboro Fire Chief Jimmy Martin.

The North Wilkesboro Fire Department was dispatched at 9:30 p.m. to the two-story wood frame home at 609 F Street after the Wilkes Communications Center received a report of heavy smoke coming from the structure. The Broadway Fire Department was dispatched to assist at the request of the North Wilkesboro Fire Department.

Martin said the fire was initially recognized as suspicious because the house didn't have electricity. He said the home was supposed to have been unoccupied since the late Frieda Young, who owned it and lived there, died two or three years ago.

Based on the possibility of someone living there without authorization, he said, North Wilkesboro police remained on the scene after firefighters left around midnight.

Martin said police officers were there early Wednesday morning when a man arrived and admitted when interviewed that he had been staying there and left a lit candle in a second story bedroom when left the house on Tuesday

Martin said firefighters had difficulty reaching the blaze on the second floor until they were able to cut a hole in the roof to vent heat and smoke. He said firefighters had tried but hadn't been able to enter the house before then due to heavy smoke and heat.

Martin said the fire destroyed about 90 percent of the second floor, but the first floor only had water damage.

There were no injuries.

Martin said the Cricket Fire Department was on standby for the North Wilkesboro Fire Department while North Wilkesboro firefighters were tied up with the F Street fire.