

Home ruined in fire

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Thursday, 05 July 2012 14:01 -



Firemen taxed by heat

It was hot as blazes for the Gothenburg Volunteer firemen on June 26, both inside and out, when they slipped into heavy, protective gear to fight a house fire.

Temperatures were well above 100 degrees when the crew arrived at the home of Harvey and Betty Wing, 218 Ninth St., about 6 p.m.

“The fire was already exposed (outside) of the back and the side of the house when we got there,” Ballmer said. “It got air and was going good.”

Before their arrival, the fire chief said next-door neighbors had called in the fire and helped 80-year-old Harvey out of the home. His wife, Betty, and a younger relative also escaped unharmed. However a pet dog, found near the front door, died of smoke inhalation, he said.

Ballmer described the house as totalled because of extensive heat and smoke damage.

He attributed old wiring, that was overloaded, as the cause of the fire.

“There was too much demand than what the electrical system was set up for,” Ballmer said.

Although the visible fire was extinguished in about 15 minutes, he said clean-up took a couple of hours.

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“There was insulation in the ceiling that had caught on fire,” Ballmer said. “We wanted to make sure the fire was all out so we didn’t have to come back.”

Ballmer said protective gear, and the air packs fire fighters wear to prevent smoke inhalation, weigh about 50 pounds.

“With the heat inside and out, it took a toll on the guys,” he said.

Some of the firemen complained about new air packs they used.

“They said they took too long to get empty so they had to stay in twice as long,” Ballmer said with a laugh, noting that they rotated firemen in and out of the smoke-filled home to prevent heat illness and exhaustion.

Ballmer said American Red Cross officials took the Wings to a local motel to stay for a few days until more permanent housing can be obtained.



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