

Christmas Tree Blamed For Fatal Fire

NORTH WILKESBORO, N.C. -- North Wilkesboro firefighters responded to a three-story house fire Sunday morning that they said started with a Christmas tree.

Authorities with the North Wilkesboro Police Department said the fire started at about 4:30 a.m. at a home on E Street in North Wilkesboro. They said the home is owned by Dawn Settle, and the son of the owner, Mark Settle, was living there.

Monday morning, authorities confirmed that Mark Settle, 49, died in the fire. Authorities said Jeffrey Scott Adams, 39, was renting a room there and survived the fire. "One of the neighbors called in at approximately 4:30 a.m. that she saw flames and smoke coming from the place," said North Wilkesboro Police Maj. Scott Teague.

More than two dozen firefighters from Broadway, North Wilkesboro and Mulberry Fairplains fire departments responded to the fire, officials said.

"Apparently, (it started with) a Christmas tree. We don't know if its lights shorted or it was dried out. Whatever the case is, it started with a Christmas tree," Teague said. "It was as is with most Christmas tree fires. They usually go up very quickly, usually anywhere from 45 seconds to a minute and a half to be fully engulfed, so it started very quickly and spread very quickly."

"If you have a real tree in your house, the biggest lesson to learn would be one to keep it watered while you have it in there, keep it fresh and then as soon as Christmas is over remove it from your home as quickly as possible," Teague said.