

Firefighters Limit Flames to Attic Area in Ferrellgas Building Fire

Early detection of a fire in the Ferrellgas office building on Wilkesboro Boulevard in North Wilkesboro early Friday morning played a key role in limiting damage, said North Wilkesboro Fire Chief Niki Hamby.

The North Wilkesboro Fire Department was dispatched after a passing motorist reported seeing smoke coming from the building about 2:17 a.m. Friday, said Hamby.

"If it had been reported 10 or 15 minutes later, the building probably would have been lost," he said, adding that the fire started accidentally in an electrical panel in a rear hallway.

Firefighters kept the fire contained to the attic and were aided when flames burned through the roof, thus venting the fire and making it easier to apply water more directly on it, said Hamby.

He said the building's metal roof, which had just been completed, also helped limit damage by keeping heat contained.

Firefighters had the fire under control in a little more than 10 minutes, he added.

Hamby said damage was limited to the attic, but offices were damaged when wet insulation fell from the ceilings. Including needing a new roof and replacement of office equipment, he estimated the cost of damage at \$100,000 to \$150,000.

He said no one was injured and the company's propane gas tanks were too far away from the fire to be a significant risk.

The Cricket Fire Department was dispatched to assist and the Moravian Falls Fire Department assisted with its air truck for refilling firefighter air tanks.

Hamby said firefighters cleared the scene about 5 a.m. Friday.