

# Fires Claim 3 Houses In 24 Hours

Three Wilkes County homes were destroyed but no one was injured in separate fires in the Somers and Moravian Falls communities and in Wilkesboro between Friday afternoon and early Saturday morning.

## **On Somers School Road**

The first of the three fires, on Somers School Road in the Somers community of southeastern Wilkes, was reported at 1:36 p.m.

Wilkes Fire Marshal Kevin Bounds said the fire was in a two-story wood frame house built in 1898 and remodeled. Bounds said Bobby John and Angela Norman owned and lived in the house with their two children.

He said Mr. and Mrs. Norman had gone to a store and the children were in school when the fire started in the area of a utility room and an attached bathroom at the rear of the house. A neighbor reported the fire, which was in the Buck Shoals Fire District near the Yadkin County line.

Bounds said foul play isn't suspected but that he is still investigating to determine the cause.

The Buck Shoals and Ronda fire departments were dispatched. Bounds said that except for a few items that included photos salvaged by firefighters, all of the contents of the home were lost. He said the Normans had insurance on the house.

The American Red Cross assisted the Normans by providing lodging, food, clothing, seasonal garments and transportation.

## **Awakened by smoke alarm**

A brick home on Shady Lane in the Forest Hills neighborhood of Wilkesboro was gutted by a fire that started early Saturday morning, shortly after midnight.

Wilkesboro Fire Chief Jason Smithey said the cause of the fire in the home of Marie Davis hasn't been determined and is still being investigated, but he said there is no indication of foul play.

Smithey said Mrs. Davis and her granddaughter were asleep in the home when the smoke alarm went off and awakened the granddaughter.

He said the granddaughter and Mrs. Davis were up and realized the house was on fire when a neighbor knocked on the door to let them know.

He said they stayed in the house long enough to dial 911 for help and then exited through the basement door. While firefighters battled the blaze, said Smithey, they were at the nearby home of Mrs. Davis' son, Bobby Davis.

Smithey said the fire began above the front door area of the house and actual fire damage was mostly in the attic, but there was extensive smoke and water damage on the second floor, which is ground level coming in from the front.

Smithey said it was a difficult fire to fight because of where it started. He said water from fire hoses froze and created slick conditions.

A large portion of the contents of the house should be salvageable, said Smithey. Mrs. Davis owns and has insurance on the house.

The North Wilkesboro and Moravian Falls fire departments assisted. Firefighters were on the scene until about 5:30 a.m. Saturday.

Smithey said the fact that Mrs. Davis granddaughter was awakened by the smoke alarm demonstrated the importance of checking smoke alarms monthly to make sure they're working correctly and of changing batteries in them every six months.

### **On East Brocktown Road**

A house fire on East Brocktown Road in Moravian Falls, a short distance after the road changes from paved to gravel, was reported at about 4:45 a.m. Saturday.

The Moravian Falls Fire Department was dispatched and firefighters found a small wood frame house burned down to its foundations when they arrived, said Bounds. The fire was mostly around the structure at that point and firefighters extinguished it in time to prevent a forest fire, he said.

Bounds said he was told that the home belonged to the H.L. Pennell heirs and was supposed to be unoccupied, but that a man and woman with Alexander County addresses were living there. A man who lives farther out on East Brocktown saw the fire while he was driving home and reported it to the Wilkes Communications Center.

Bounds said electricity to the house wasn't activated, but people living there were using a gas generator and smoke was seen coming from the chimney Friday.

He said a four-wheeler, pickup and a 1998 Nissan had been seen parked outside the house, but only the Nissan was there when firefighters arrived.

Bounds said the Nissan, listed as belonging to a Taylorsville woman, appeared to have been rolled away from the fire to prevent it from being damaged. He said it was partly in Brocktown Road and that he had it towed away.

Bounds said he is still investigating to determine the cause of the fire and hadn't yet been able to reach the people who were living in the house. There was no insurance on the structure.