

Fire investigators expected here at least through this week



By Jan Schultz

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Emotions were still running strong Tuesday as owner Sid Harchelroad talked about the early Saturday morning fire that destroyed the Harchelroad Motors building in Imperial.

"There have been a lot better days," he said.

When Harchelroad arrived on the fire scene that morning shortly after 2 a.m., he said he was just devastated. On Tuesday, those feelings still left him numb.

"There were just a lot of pictures, memorabilia, plaques and awards gone. Just a lot of history gone," he said.

As he talked about the fire Tuesday, investigators hired by Harchelroad Motors' insurance carrier and a representative from the insurance company were on the scene. State Fire Marshal investigators were on the scene already on Saturday and returned for further investigation this week.

Harchelroad said the dollar loss "will be in the millions."

The cause of the fire, one of the biggest in Imperial in many years, is yet to be determined.

The 150 x 150-foot Harchelroad Motors facility at 316 Broadway included a showroom, offices, parts department, body shop and the service shop, the latter of which was being torn down.

Plans were to construct a new, larger service shop on the north side once the old shop was gone.

"The rest of the building was in great shape," Harchelroad said.

While four hoists had been moved to Harchelroad's building across the street to the west, they still lost the shop's alignment rack and other equipment there.

All of the parts department was lost, which included three levels for parts inventory, as well as the car wash and equipment, and tools and equipment in the body shop.

Harchelroad said the paint booth in the body shop was valued at \$100,000 alone.

Since Harchelroad's had moved things out of the shop prior to the start of demolition, there were no vehicles in the shop or showroom.

The city of Imperial lost the Expedition used by its police department. It was in the body shop being repaired from hail damage.

Koellner Enterprises' large excavator and skid loader were severely damaged in the fire, as well.

