



By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

It was an uneasy first 30 minutes for officers with the Imperial Volunteer Fire Department (IVFD) at the scene of a trailer house fire early Sunday morning.

That's because they weren't certain at first whether someone was inside or not, said Imperial Fire Chief Nick Schultz.

"We were told by neighbors initially that they believed someone was inside," Schultz said.

As soon as they were able, firefighters with air masks were sent inside to investigate the south bedroom where the fire had not yet burned. The bedroom on the north was already gone, Schultz said.

No evidence of anyone inside was found, he said.

Also, with the help of the Imperial police, they were able later to confirm the trailer's occupant, Alfredo Avalos, was out-of-town.

Unfortunately, Avalos returned Sunday to a charred home with little left.

The single-wide, two bedroom trailer, owned by Avalos in the SeLoCySe, LLC Court at 2nd and Park Sts., was already ablaze when Matt Moser saw a glow from inside his home across the street.

Moser said he returned home about 2 a.m. Sunday and did not notice anything amiss across the street. About a half hour later, he noticed the glow and called 911.

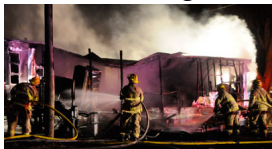
Likewise, Cody Prosser was driving by in a vehicle a block north and saw the fire, as well, and it was fully involved.

Both young men said the fire was heaviest near the front porch facing east.

State Fire Marshal's Office Investigator Ryan Sylvester of Ogallala was on the scene by 4 a.m. His preliminary determination indicates the cause was tied to an electrical problem and was accidental, Schultz said.

It is standard procedure to call in a fire investigator whenever a structure fire is involved, Schultz said.

The fire never burned into the south bedroom, which was saved. However, it sustained heavy smoke damage, according to the fire chief.



After arriving on the scene, Imperial called for assistance from the Lamar and Wauneta Volunteer Fire Departments, but those calls were cancelled shortly after.

The mutual aid calls were made, he said, because they initially were uncertain whether the fire would spread to the other trailers in the court. After the IVFD knew they were able to confine it to the one trailer, the mutual aid calls were cancelled, Schultz said.

Twenty-two IVFD firefighters responded to the call which kept them on the scene for over two

hours. Also responding was Imperial EMS, which is always summoned to structure fires.