



North Dakota Office of the State Fire Marshal (ND)

INCIDENT REPORT

Official Law Enforcement Report - Unauthorized Dissemination is Prohibited

Incident Type: Fire / Accidental

Agency Incident ID: NDSFM25-009

BATS ID: 1544071

Investigation Title: CENTER WEIL FIRE



Incident Date/Time/Location

Status

Investigation Closed

Jurisdiction

Primary

Start Date/Time

1/28/2025 05:30 Tuesday

Address

2510 30th Ave

City/State/Zip

Center, ND 58530

County

Oliver County

Investigator Information

Name

Kaylyn Lucas

Phone

701-227-3112

Email

klucas@nd.gov

Title

Deputy State Fire Marshal

Property Use or Target Information

Type

Residential

Status

Occupied And Operating



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Scene Details

Damage and Casualties

Number of Fatalities

1

Miscellaneous Information

Latitude

47.053359

Longitude

-101.128646



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Person/Organization Information

Name

KELLER, MAGNUS

DOB

2005

Race

Ethnicity

Age at time of Incident

19

Juvenile

No

Relationship(s)

Deceased, Occupant, Victim



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Name

WEIL, GENE

DOB

■■■■ 1972

Sex

M

Juvenile

No

Relationship(s)

Owner, Victim

Race

Ethnicity

Age at time of Incident

52



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Name

ORGAARD, NICKOLETTE

DOB

1978

Race

Ethnicity

Sex

F

Age at time of Incident

46

Juvenile

No

Relationship(s)

Owner, Victim



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Attachments

Filename	Description	Date
NDSFM25-009-1 CENTER WEIL FIRE.pdf		3/20/2025

No image specified



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NDSFM25-009-2 CENTER WEIL
FIRE.pdf

3/20/2025

No image specified



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NDSFM25-009-3 CENTER WEIL
FIRE.pdf

3/20/2025

No image specified



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Narrative(s)

Title

Contacts

Author

Kaylyn Lucas

7012273112

klucas@nd.gov

Description

Distribution List: Fire Chief Austin Weigel, Oliver County Rural Fire Protection District:
olivercountyruralfire@gmail.com

Special Agent Matt Hiatt, Bureau of Criminal Investigations: mrhiatt@nd.gov



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Investigator/Agent - Lucas, Kaylyn

Date

Approving Official

Date



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INCIDENT ORIGIN & CAUSE NARRATIVE
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Identify the Need

Call for service (dispatch, request, date, time):

On January 28, 2025, at approximately 05:29 MT, I, Deputy State Fire Marshal (DSFM) Kaylyn Lucas, was contacted by State Radio in regard to a structure fire that occurred in Oliver County. Oliver County Rural Fire Protection District was requesting assistance with an Origin and Cause Investigation.

I contacted Deputy Wenning, Oliver County Sheriff’s Department, and was told the structure was fully engulfed, collapsed into the basement, and the fire department was actively extinguishing the fire. Preliminary information was one person was not accounted for and presumed inside the structure. Deputy Wenning informed me that heavy equipment would be available on scene.

I contacted Fire Chief Austin Weigel, and it was agreed that the investigation would occur at approximately 0930 CT. The investigation start time was provided to Oliver County Sheriff’s Department, North Dakota State Fire Marshal’s Office, and Bureau of Criminal Investigation.

North Dakota Century Code 18-01-07 states; “An investigation of each fire must be made by the officers required to report the occurrence of fires under section 18-01-06.”



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Define the Problem

Nature of Incident/incident overview:

On January 28, 2025, a fire occurred at a residential home at 2510 30th Ave SW, Center, ND. See Figure 1.



Figure 1: Photograph 2 - North Side of Structure

A fatality resulted from the fire. The fatality was recovered from the structure after the fire was suppressed.

SFMV1 evacuated the house and flagged down a passerby driver to call 911 to report the fire.

The call was dispatched to Oliver County Rural Fire Protection District at 05:50 CT.

Oliver County Sheriff's Department responded.



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Authority to Enter/Search:

I arrived on scene at approximately 09:45 CT.

The scene was held by Oliver County Rural Fire Protection District and Oliver County Sheriff's Department.

Oliver County Rural Fire Protection District, Oliver County Sheriff's Department, Bureau of Criminal Investigation, and North Dakota State Fire Marshal's Office were on scene and a briefing was held regarding investigation and examination of the fire scene.

It was agreed that I would be lead Origin and Cause Investigator; DSFM Jordan VanBerkum and Bureau of Criminal Investigation would assist.

The investigation was conducted under exigent circumstances through the Oliver County Rural Fire Protection District. The fire was reported at approximately 05:48 CT. At approximately 0805 CT, Fire Chief Austin Weigel reported the fire was approximately 85% contained and the fire department would still be suppressing hot spots inside the structure until my arrival.

After the fire scene examination was conducted, the scene was returned to the Oliver County Rural Fire Protection District and Oliver County Sheriff's Department. A discussion was held with the Fire Chief regarding safety concerns and hazards of the property. All involved parties were informed that the scene should not be altered or items removed from the property prior to an insurance agency being informed.

I cleared the fire scene at approximately 1410 CT and traveled to the Oliver County Sheriff's Department to meet with Bureau of Criminal Investigation Special Agent Matt Hiatt. I arrived at the Oliver County Sheriff's Department at approximately 1445 CT and cleared at approximately 1545 CT.

Assisting Persons/Agencies:

Name	Agency	Case Reference if Available
Austin Weigel, Fire Chief	Oliver County Rural Fire Protection District	2025-1
Matt Hiatt, Special Agent	North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation	BCI25-00042
Doug Pierre, DSFM	North Dakota State Fire Marshal's Office	NDSFM25-009-2
Jordan VanBerkum, DSFM	North Dakota State Fire Marshal's Office	NDSFM25-009-3

Fatalities/Injuries:

Name	Fatality/Injury:	Notes/Other Information:
Magnus Keller	Fatality	Located within the structure. Transported to UND School of Medicine Pathology Department for an autopsy witnessed by DSFM Doug Pierre.



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Data Collection

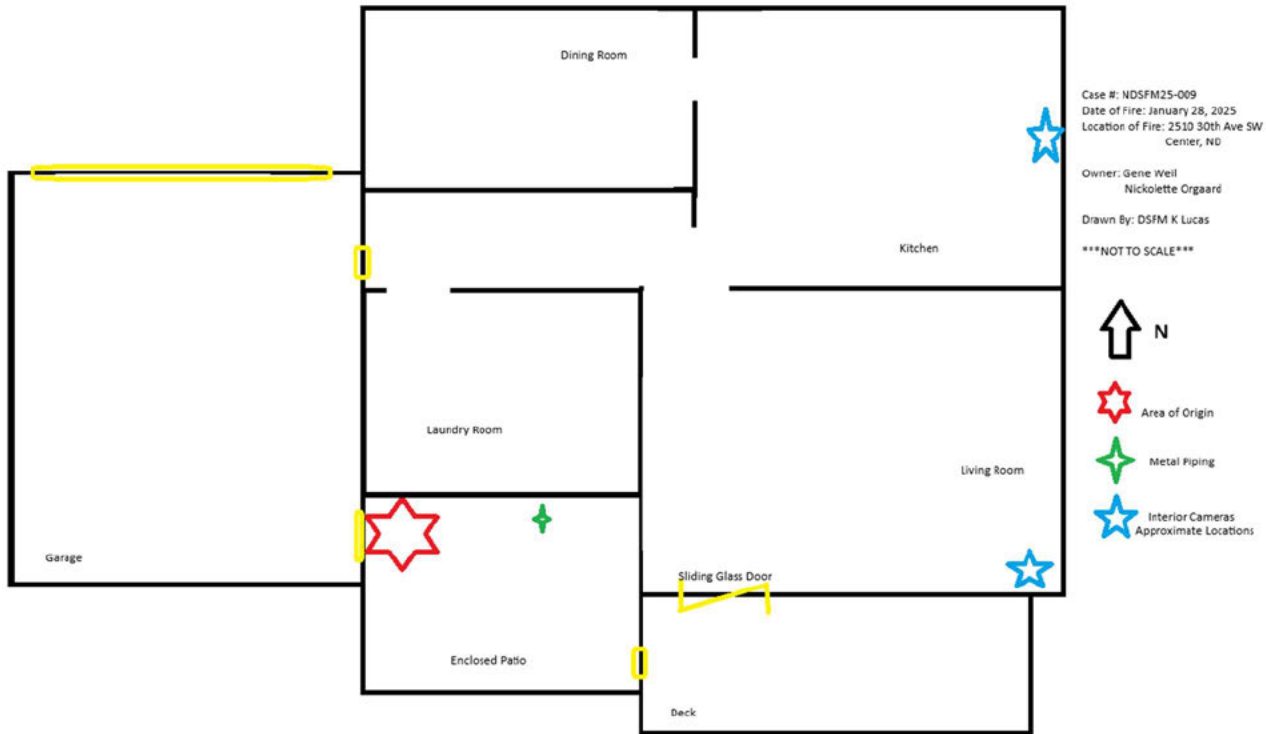
Photographs:

The fire scene was documented photographically in the condition in which it was observed. During the scene examination, layering process, and body recovery, a series of 132 photographs were taken. The photographs and photograph log will remain with the file.

The property owners provided two exterior photographs of the structure’s south side and still photographs taken by an interior security camera. The photographs will remain with the file.

Drawings/Sketches:

The following basic rendition was drawn by DSFM Kaylyn Lucas, based upon a drawing provided by the owner, Gene Weil, and video footage, and is not to scale.



Gene Weil provided sketches of the interior of the structure that will be included in the file.



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Exterior Scene Examination:

The structure was a two-story residential home with a basement. The house was oriented east/west with an attached garage on the west side. A detached garage was located to the west of the house.

The examination began with a 360° walk around that started on the north side and went in a counterclockwise direction. The structure sustained mass consumption and had collapsed to the basement. See Figure 2.



Figure 2: Photograph 14 - Northeast View of Structure, Collapsed into the Basement

A 1,000-gallon propane tank was located south of the detached garage. The propane tank had threaded metal fittings connected, similar look to a 'u', and two lines extending from the first stage regulator. One line went to the house and the second line went to the detached garage. No fire, heat, or smoke damage was viewed upon the tank.

A pole with a meter box and a main electric disconnect was located to the west of the detached garage. Adjacent to the pole was a pad mounted transformer. The meter box did not sustain any fire, heat, or smoke damage. The electric disconnect was in the 'OFF' position and locked in that position with a silver metal lock.

It was unknown during the scene examination where the electricity entered the structure.

Metal roofing material was seen on the ground on all sides of the structure. The metal siding had sustained oxidation, heat induced color change, smoke and soot deposition, and deformation. See Figure 3.



Figure 3: Photograph 11 - Southeast View; Metal Roofing Material

No cigarettes, smoking materials, or smoking paraphernalia were viewed upon the ground around the house, garage, or detached garage.

The east side of the detached garage/shop sustained melting and thermal damage to the plastic building components.

The layering process occurred to the patio area located on the south side of the structure. In the patio area, a metal table and chairs, miscellaneous artifacts, and a lawn care appliance were located in the patio area. A freezer was located in the vicinity of the patio. The table and chairs sustained oxidation, heat induced color change, and distortion. The lawn care appliance sustained mass consumption and discoloration. The freezer sustained smoke and soot discoloration and distortion. Greater amount of damage sustained to the freezer was seen top down and the sides. The east half of the patio was layered first. After layering, metal piping extending from the ground was located near the structure's south foundation wall. The piping sustained deformation and heat induced color change. The pipe was bent over towards the northwest and extended back towards the southeast along the ground. The piping was not attached to anything at the time of the examination. See Figure 4.



Figure 4: Photograph 107 - Metal Piping Located on South Patio

The layering continued on the west half of the patio. Electrical wiring, a breaker panel door cover, and charred wood materials were located. Amongst the fire debris, two ceramic base sockets and two metal clamps were located. The ceramic base sockets were intact. The metal clamps sustained heat induced color change. One ceramic base socket and metal clamp were located still connected. The other components were not connected together at the time of discovery. Charred wood material and wiring were located amongst the fire debris connected together. Material fragments, similar to fabric, was located on portions of the wood material. Both sides of the wood material had similar charring and mass loss patterns. The wiring did not have any insulation. The electrical wiring located in the west half of the patio was not all intact, as multiple different wire fragments were located amongst the debris. Globules were located on various wire fragments. The electrical panel door cover located in the area sustained oxidation and heat induced color change. See Figure 5.



Figure 5: Photograph 110 - Items Located During Layering Process



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Interior Scene Examination:

Due to the extent of the damage, safety concerns and the collapse of the structure into the basement, the interior examination was limited to the areas that were cleared using heavy equipment during the search for the unaccounted-for adult victim. See Figure 6.



Figure 6: Photograph 18 - Southwest Interior View of Structure

The interior of the structure sustained full room involvement throughout all compartments. All rooms and contents reached flashover during the fire. A uniformity in the fire patterns was witnessed throughout.

The majority of combustible materials were consumed within the structure and the non-combustible materials, such as the remains of appliances were viewed throughout the interior. See Figure 7.



Figure 7: Photograph 19 - South View of Interior

The adult victim was located in the west portion of the structure, approximately in the center of the west wall that was oriented north/south. The location of the body remains corresponded with the staircase location in a provided house interior diagram. The body was located in an east/west orientation. The body was recovered and removed from the structure and transported to the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Services.



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Interview #1:	
Name:	Oliver County Rural Fire Protection District Personnel
Interview Date:	01.28.2025
<p>Notes: The following are notes from an informational interview with Oliver County Rural Fire Protection District Personnel. The interview took place at the fire scene. Oliver County Rural Fire Protection District Personnel were informed that they did not have to answer any questions and that they could withdraw from the interview at any time. The interview was non-custodial and was not recorded.</p> <p>Oliver County Rural Fire Protection District Personnel reported the structure being fulling involved upon arrival on scene. The south side of the structure had flames from ground level up into eaves. The Oliver Country Rural Fire Protection District Personnel had to give a large amount of berth around the south of the structure prior to attacking the south exterior based upon the size of the fire when arriving on scene. Oliver County Rural Fire Protection District Personnel stated that the structure was still standing upon arrival, but the building collapsed into the interior within a short amount of time of being on scene. Oliver Country Rural Fire Protection District was provided information that a person was unaccounted for and may still be inside the structure.</p>	

Interview #2:	
Name:	Roughrider Electric
Interview Date:	01.30.2025
<p>Notes: The following are notes from an informational interview with Laurie Miller. Laurie Miller was a Database Mapping Manager with Roughrider Electric, Hazen, North Dakota Office. The interview took place over the telephone. Laurie Miller was informed that they did not have to answer any questions and that they could withdraw from the interview at any time. The interview was non-custodial and was not recorded.</p> <p>Laurie Miller reported that a fuse on the transformer had blown at 2510 30th Ave SW, Center, ND, prior to a technician arriving on scene. A silver ring is the lockout precaution Roughrider placed on the meter. Laurie Miller reported nothing out of the ordinary was seen on the meter or transformer by the technician on scene. No surges or extra power being used was documented. No alerts were reported to Roughrider Electric regarding power outages or issues.</p>	

Interview #3:	
Name:	Terry Richter
Interview Date:	02.11.2025
<p>Notes: The following are notes from an informational interview with Terry Richter. Terry Richter was an insurance Agent with State Farm Insurance, Bismarck, North Dakota. The interview took place over the telephone. Terry Richter was informed that they did not have to answer any questions and that they could withdraw from the interview at any time. The interview was non-custodial and was not recorded.</p> <p>Terry Richter stated that Gene Weil and Nickolette Orgaard had insurance on the house with State Farm. The following information was provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective date of December 5, 2016. • Policy Number: 34-BH-E008-1 • Claim Number: 3479W727C • No changes or updates to the policies. • No previous fire claims. • Current and up to date on premiums 	



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Video:

North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation

- Interior security camera video footage was provided to the North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation by the property owners; Gene Weil and Nickolette Orgaard.
- Video footage was reviewed by the North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation and North Dakota State Fire Marshal's Office.
 - North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation will retain the video(s).
- Timeline incorporates approximate video footage times from the interior security cameras located within multiple rooms of the residence. The security cameras were located in the kitchen, living room, dining room, and basement. The camera in the laundry room took still photographs when motion was detected.

* Designates video footage used within the timeline.

Weather Reviewed:

Weather data was reviewed for January 28, 2025, from approximately 1:52 am CT to approximately 6:52 am CT. The nearest recording station was located in Bismarck, ND, and was approximately 26 miles away. The following information was learned:

Temperature Range: 31°F – 33°F – 37°F
 Wind Speed: 10 mph – 13 mph – 22 mph
 Conditions: Fair, Fair/Windy

The wind was from the west.
 The weather did not cause the fire.

Weather data was reviewed from:

<https://www.wunderground.com/history/daily/us/nd/bismarck/KBIS/date/2025-1-28>



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Times:

Hard Time Description	Time	Soft Time Description
	5:15-5:20 am	Gene Weil & Nickolette Orgaard arrive on main level of house
	5:25 am	Gene Weil & Nickolette Orgaard leave for work
*Living Room – no fire glow is seen	5:35 am	
*Living Room – fire glow is visible in the hallway	5:41:39 am	
*Living Room – fire glow from sliding glass door	5:41:53 am	
*Dining Room – fire glow is seen	5:42:33 am	
*Kitchen – fire glow seen in the hallway and laundry room	5:42:53 am	
*Laundry Room – smoke is seen (still photograph)	5:43 am	
*Kitchen – smoke alarms are heard	5:43:27 am	
*Kitchen – smoke is seen in the hallway	5:43:52 am	
*Basement – fire glow seen outside the window	5:44:20 am	
*Dining Room – smoke is seen	5:44:21 am	
*Kitchen – smoke reaches the camera	5:44:45 am	
*Living Room – smoke is seen	5:44:50 am	
*Living Room - large smoke plume enters the room	5:45:07 am	
*Kitchen - Smoke covers the camera lens	5:45:08 am	
*Living Room – smoke covers the camera lens	5:45:11 am	
*Dining Room – smoke covers lens	5:45:12 am	
*Kitchen – screams heard within the residence	5:45:16 am	
*Dining Room – video stops	5:45:43 am	
*Living Room – video stops	5:45:47 am	
*Kitchen – video stops	5:46:06 am	
*Basement – smoke is seen	5:46:15 am	
911 call from SFMV1	5:48 am	
Dispatch time to law enforcement	5:50 am	
Dispatch time to fire department	5:50 am	
	5:50 am	Gene Weil dropped Nickolette Orgaard off at work
*Basement – video stops	5:52:00 am	
	5:53 – 6:00 am	SFMV1 called Nickolette Orgaard to report a fire at the house

Oliver County Sheriff's Department arrived on scene	6:06 am	
Oliver County Fire Protection District arrived on scene	6:06 am	
	6:25 am	Deputy Wenning reported the structure was into the basement
	6:29 am	State Fire Marshal's Office contacted by State Radio
	9:38 am	DSFM Jordan VanBerkum arrived on scene
	9:45 am	DSFM Kaylyn Lucas arrived on scene
	12:43 pm	Deceased victim was located and recovered
Oliver County Sheriff's Department cleared the scene	2:03 pm	
	1:55 pm (13:55)	Victim transported to the ME in Bismarck
	2:12 pm (14:12)	DSFM Kaylyn Lucas & Jordan VanBerkum cleared the scene
Oliver County Fire Protection District cleared the scene	2:33 pm (14:33)	

* Designates video footage recovered from interior security cameras.

Evidence identified/collected/preserved:

Heat lamp components were located in the northwest corner of the south patio. Two ceramic housings and two wire clamps. One set of metal clamps and ceramic housing were located in a separated fashion, the other clamp and ceramic housing was connected. See Figure 8.



Figure 8: Photograph 98 - Connected Clamp & Ceramic Socket Housing

No evidence was collected or removed from the scene by the North Dakota State Fire Marshal's Office.



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Data Analysis, hypothesis development, hypothesis testing, select final hypothesis

Other Forms/Documents/Reports Reviewed:
<p>RECALL https://www.cpsc.gov/Recalls No recall information was found regarding heat lamps. Owners did not know the brand/manufacturer or age of the heat lamps. No recall information was found regarding chest freezers. Owner did not state the brand/manufacturer or age of the freezer.</p> <p>Oliver County Rural Fire Protection District Incident 2025-1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House was fully engulfed on all four corners. • 30 mph SE winds. • Civilian Casualty: 1 • Times <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alarm Time: 05:50 CT ○ Dispatched: 05:50 CT ○ Arrived: 06:06 CT ○ Cleared: 14:33 CT <p>Oliver County Sheriff's Department Calls For Service: OL-25-0102</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fire Call • Roughrider electric was contacted. • State Fire Marshal was requested. • 1355 hours – victim was transported to the ME in Bismarck. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Deceased Victim: Magnus Keller • Times <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Received Time: 05:48 am CT ○ Dispatched Time: 05:50 am CT ○ Arrived Time: 06:06 am CT ○ Cleared Time: 02:03 pm CT <p>Bureau of Criminal Investigation Case Report BCI25-00042</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security camera footage from interior cameras located in multiple rooms provided by Nickolette Orgaard. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Timeline(s) of footage provided from the living room, kitchen, dining room, basement, and laundry room cameras. • Interior layout diagram was drawn and provided by Gene Weil. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Laundry room was adjacent to the patio. ○ Living room was adjacent to the deck. • Exterior photographs provided by Gene Weil and Nickolette Orgaard. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ West view of the south side of the structure. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Roof overhang with vertical wood looking material on the west and south sides underneath. ○ Southeast view of the south side of the structure. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Roof overhang with vertical wood looking material on the east and south sides underneath. A doorway/cut out located on the east side, adjacent to a deck. ▪ Sliding glass door opening onto a deck.

- S/A Hiatt received and reviewed the 911 call placed by SFMV1.
 - SFMV1 reported a house fire and being on the roof
 - SFMV1 heard Magnus Keller inside the structure. Unsure if mother and stepfather were still inside the house.
- Deputy Wenning reported the structure was all the way burned into the basement by 6:25 am (CT).
 - SFMV1 escaped and called 911.
 - SFMV1 escaped through SFMV1's upstairs bedroom window.
 - SFMV1 reported hearing Magnus Keller was heard screaming prior to escaping the house.
 - Gene Weil and Nickolette Orgaard were the parents and had left at approximately 5:25 am (CT) for work in Bismarck/Mandan area.
- Gene Weil and Nickolette Orgaard Interview(s)
 - Downstairs between 5:15 and 5:20 am morning of the fire.
 - The dryer was not ran the morning of the fire.
 - Coffee pot was not used the morning of the fire.
 - Nickolette Orgaard was in the laundry room prior to leaving the structure and did not see any fire or smoke.
 - Left for work at approximately 5:25 am (CT) and did not observe anything out of the ordinary.
 - Nickolette Orgaard was dropped off at work at approximately 5:50 am.
 - Received a telephone call from SFMV1 about a fire at the house shortly before (5:53-6:00 am) 6:00 am.
 - Returned to the scene.
 - House was heated by propane heat with electric backup, only being heated by propane on the day of the fire.
 - Two heat lamps were used outside on the deck for stray cats.
 - Heat lamps were silver domed with the red bulb.
 - Were given 6 heat lamps, two were not damaged and those two were used.
 - The two heat lamps were plugged into an extension cord that ran into the garage.
 - The cord being ran into the garage was to prevent damage from the animals.
 - Located in a covered section of the deck.
 - Cat area was covered in front and top but not sealed, to provide shelter from the wind.
 - An old heating pad, that was not plugged in, and blankets used in the area for the cats.
 - Electrical Issues
 - If the dishwasher was running, heating fan in the ceiling, and the lights in the upstairs bedrooms were all on, the breaker would sometimes trip. All electrical sources were on one breaker: not a constant occurrence.
 - Last time on the patio was the night prior to the fire, January 27, 2025.
 - Gene Weil checked the freezer.
 - Nickolette Orgaard fed the outside cats.
 - Neither person recalled anything out of place or any odd smells leading up to the fire.

UND School of Medicine & Health Services

Case Report A25-036

- Acute thermal and inhalational injury
- Gross evidence of soot present within the trachea, bronchi, and esophagus.

State Fire Marshal's Office

NDSFM25-009-2

- Recovered remains weighed 35 pounds
- Soot was observed in lungs and airways

Kirk's Fire Investigation, Eighth Edition, References:

The following was reverred from Kirk's Fire Investigation.

- Chapter 4, Section 3 Secondary Ignition Sources
 - Section 4.3.4 Radiant Heat

"... As a primary ignition source, radiant heat alone is less frequently encountered. Radiant heat from fireplaces, stoves, and heaters has been seen to bring *nearby* cellulosics to their ignition temperatures and thus start fires. When devices are permanent fixtures, their remains will usually still be detectable after the fire. ... Radiant heat from floodlights (particularly quartz halogen), projection lamps, heat lamps, and flameless torches can be enough to ignite cellulosic fuels at close range. ..."
- Chapter 4, Section 4 Utility Services and Appliances as Ignition Sources

- Section 4.4.2 Portable Electric Appliances
“Electricity represents a source of ignition in the form of arcs, electrically heated wires, and heating elements, and even lighting. Heat-producing electric appliances can cause ignition of susceptible fuels even when operating normally. Electric heaters, toasters, or toaster ovens with exposed Nichrome (resistance) heater wires offer an ignition source with surface temperatures on the order of 600°C (1150°F) or greater. These hot surfaces are not able to ignite most flammable gases or vapors but can ignite most cellulose (including foods) if they come into contact or near contact with them. ... The radiant heat produced by most portable electric heaters is approximately 10kW/m² or less at the wire guard. This may be enough to ignite cellulose or char elastomeric and thermosetting materials if contact is prolonged. Cellulose fuels that are most brought into contact with the heater element itself are likely to be ignited quickly. ...”

Fire Protection Handbook, Nineteenth Edition Volume II

- Chapter 5 *Fibers and Textiles*
 - Section 8, Table 8.5.5
 - Natural Fibers
 - Ignition Temperatures: 490-750°F and 1060-1110°F
 - Burning Temperatures: 1560°F and 1720°F
 - End Uses: apparel, furnishings, towels, blankets, carpets ...
 - Manufactured Fibers
 - Acrylic
 - Ignition Temperatures: 860-1050°F
 - Burning Temperatures: 1560°F
 - End Uses: Apparel, furnishings, blankets, pile fabrics ...
 - Polyester
 - Ignition Temperatures: 840-1040°F
 - Burning Temperatures: 1290-1330°F
 - End Uses: Apparel, furnishings, blankets ...



North Dakota State Fire Marshals Office (ND)
INCIDENT ORIGIN & CAUSE NARRATIVE
Official Law Enforcement Report – Unauthorized Dissemination is Prohibited



Incident Type: Fire

Agency Incident ID: NDSFM25-009-1

BATS ID: i-1544071

Investigation Title: CENTER WEIL FIRE

Area of Origin:

Based upon the systematic examination of the fire scene, the area of origin was determined to be in the northwest corner of the covered patio area, on the south side of the structure. The following supports this:



• **Fire Effects**

- Greater amount of smoke and soot staining to the patio pavers and the foundation at and around the northwest corner of the patio area compared to the northeast corner.
- Greater amount of discoloration occurred at and near where the patio pavers and foundation came into contact along the garage (west wall).

• **Fire Dynamics**

- Smoke and soot staining lessened on the patio pavers as fire extended outward and upward.
- Smoke and soot staining on the foundation was in an up and out direction away from the northwest corner area.
- Discoloration was at ground level up along the west foundation and extended upwards compared to no discoloration at the east foundation.

- **Witness Statements**

- SFMV1 reported a fire at the house.
- Fire Department reported the house was fully engulfed on all four corners.
- Gene Weil and Nickolette Orgaard reported having two used electric heat lamps in the covered patio area for the outside cats.
 - Covered patio is located outside the laundry room exterior wall.
- Interior security video footage indicating the fire began outside the structure.
 - Video footage of fire glow and smoke was provided by cameras in the kitchen, living room, dining room, and basement.
 - Kitchen footage:
 - Fire glow seen in the hallway and laundry room at 5:42:53 a.m.
 - Smoke alarm heard at 5:43:27 a.m.
 - Smoke seen in the hallway at 5:43:52 a.m.
 - Living room footage:
 - No fire glow seen at 5:35 a.m.
 - Fire glow in hallway at 5:41:39 a.m.
 - Fire glow through sliding glass door 5:41:53 a.m.
 - Smoke seen at 5:44:50 a.m.
 - Large smoke plume visible at 5:45:07 a.m.
 - Dining room footage:
 - Fire glow seen at 5:42:33 a.m.
 - Smoke seen at 5:44:21 a.m.
 - Basement footage:
 - Fire glow seen outside the window at 5:44:20 a.m.
 - Smoke seen at 5:46:15 a.m.



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Incident Type: Fire

Agency Incident ID: NDSFM25-009-1

BATS ID: i-1544071

Investigation Title: CENTER WEIL FIRE

Cause Hypothesis Development and Testing:

The following were identified as the most credible potential fire causes within the area of origin:

- Ignition of ordinary combustible materials such as blankets and an old heating pad, by contact or radiant heat from electric heat lamps.
- Nickolette Orgaard described being in the laundry room prior to leaving the house the morning of the fire.
 - Nothing out of the ordinary was noticed.
 - There was no visible fire or smoke smell noticed by Nickolette Orgaard.
 - The dryer was not started or ran the morning of the fire.
- Gene Weil and Nickolette Orgaard reported having two used heat lamps in the outside cat shelter.
 - Six heat lamps were given to Gene Weil and Nickolette Orgaard, only two were not damaged.
 - The two used heat lamps were silver domed with red bulbs.
 - The shelter was enclosed but not sealed to provide protection from the wind for the outside cats.
 - The shelter was located in the northwest corner of the covered and wood material enclosed patio, located on the south side of the residence.
 - The heat lamps were plugged into an extension cord that ran into the garage and was plugged in.
 - The cord was run into the garage to prevent damage from the animals.
- Nickolette Orgaard fed the outside cats the night prior to the fire.
 - Nickolette Orgaard did not report any issues with the cat shelter area.
 - Nothing out of the ordinary was noticed.
- Heat lamp components were located in the northwest corner of the covered patio area.
 - Kirk's Section 4.3.4 "... Radiant heat from ... heaters has been seen to bring *nearby* cellulose to their ignition temperatures and thus start fires. When devices are permanent fixtures, their remains will usually still be detectable after the fire. ... Radiant heat from ... heat lamps ... can be enough to ignite cellulosic fuels at close range. ..."
 - Physical evidentiary remains of heat lamps were located.
 - Two ceramic base sockets.
 - Two wire clamps.
 - Kirk's Section 4.4.2 "... Heat-producing electric appliances can cause ignition of susceptible fuels even when operating normally. Electric heaters ... with exposed Nichrome (resistance) heater wires offer an ignition source with surface temperatures on the order of 1150°F or greater. The hot surfaces ... can ignite most cellulose if they come into contact or near contact with them. ..."
 - Nickolette Orgaard reported blankets and an old heating pad inside the cat shelter.
 - Fire Protection Handbook Table 8.5.5 "... natural fibers, acrylic, and polyester have end uses of blankets and apparel. Ignition temperatures range from 490°F to 1110°F.
 - Nickolette Orgaard reported blankets and an old heating pad inside the cat shelter.
 - No recall information was found regarding heat lamps.
 - Unknown the brand or age of the heat lamps used.
- Charred wood and adhered fabric like material was located amongst the fire debris layered in the northwest corner with the heat lamp components.
 - Wiring fragments were observed on the charred materials.
- Still photographs depicting smoke in the room was provided by a security camera in the laundry room.
 - Photographs were taken at approximately 5:43 am.
- Video footage of fire glow and smoke was provided by cameras in the kitchen, living room, dining room, and basement.
 - Kitchen footage:
 - Fire glow seen in the hallway and laundry room at 5:42:53 a.m.

- Smoke alarm heard at 5:43:27 a.m.
 - Smoke seen in the hallway at 5:43:52 a.m.
 - Living room footage:
 - No fire glow seen at 5:35 a.m.
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 - Dining room footage:
 - Fire glow seen at 5:42:33 a.m.
 - Smoke seen at 5:44:21 a.m.
 - Basement footage:
 - Fire glow seen outside the window at 5:44:20 a.m.
 - Smoke seen at 5:46:15 a.m.
- This hypothesis cannot be eliminated.
- Ignition of ordinary combustible materials such as siding or wood material by overheating of a freezer or electrical components.
- A freezer was located in the room of origin.
- No recall information was found regarding chest freezers.
 - Unknown the brand/manufacturer or age of the freezer.
- The freezer sustained smoke and soot discoloration and distortion.
- The visible fire damage on the exterior of the freezer was from fire impingement.
 - Greater amount of damage was located on the top and the sides.
- Gene Weil reported checking the freezer the night prior to the freezer.
 - Nothing was out of the ordinary.
 - Gene Weil did not report any electrical issues with the freezer.
- A breaker would occasionally 'trip' when the dishwasher was running, heating fan in the ceiling was on, and the lights in the upstairs bedrooms were on.
 - It is unknown at the time of the examination if the receptacle the freezer was plugged into was on the same circuit.
- This hypothesis can be eliminated.

Final Hypothesis/Conclusion:

The area of origin was in the northwest corner of the covered patio area, on the south side of the structure.

Based upon the systematic examination of the fire scene, fire patterns, witness statements, interviews, located physical evidence, and video footage, the cause of the fire was the ignition of ordinary combustible materials such as blankets and an old heating pad by contact or radiant heat from electric heat lamps.

The fire was classified as accidental.

The opinions expressed in this conclusion are based on data and evidence collected to this point. The opinions are subject to change based upon relevant, significant and credible information discovered or provided in the future.

References:

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Kirk's Fire Investigation. Eighth Edition. 2018. Pearson Education, Inc. New York, NY

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