



# Daily News-Miner

THE VOICE OF INTERIOR ALASKA SINCE 1903

**Inside Today** Yukon Quest holds Meet the Musers event as the countdown to race day continues. » A4

## Fire guts apartment building



The Fairbanks Fire Department ladder truck continues to douse the remains of an apartment complex and second-hand furniture store on Geraghty street Wednesday morning. ERIC ENGMAN/NEWS-MINER

**GOOD MORNING**

**The weather.**  
Clear, with lows below zero again  
High today .....9  
Low tonight .....-13  
**WEATHER » A9**

**Aurora forecast.**  
Auroral activity will be moderate. This information is provided by the Geophysical Institute at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

...

**SOURDOUGH JACK:**  
"73 percent? That there's a sad stat if you ask me."

### Man critically burned; more than 50 displaced

By Tim Mowry  
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One man suffered critical burns and several others were taken to the hospital with minor injuries after a fire gutted an 18-unit apartment complex and second-hand furniture store in west Fairbanks early Wednesday morning.

Firefighters using ladders rescued several people from the second-floor of the burning Geraghty Street building because they weren't able to reach the hallway to escape, providing the makings of a dramatic scene, said assistant fire chief Ernie Misewicz with the Fairbanks Fire Department.

"They were either standing at windows or on balconies to apartments, and we helped them down the ladder," he said.

One man who made it outside the building before firefighters arrived suffered critical burns and was medevaced to the Harborview Burn Center in Seattle.

As of 4:30 p.m., firefighters were still digging at the scene for any indication of unaccounted-for occupants of two of the 18 apartments. There's a "possibility" someone else might have been in the building, Misewicz said earlier in the day.

Several occupants of the building were taken to Fairbanks Memorial Hospital for treatment for minor injuries such as smoke inhalation, burns and cold-related injuries after fleeing the burning building without shoes and socks in 15-degree temperatures.

FIRE » A10



Area firefighters and fire investigators along with the state fire marshal look through the debris of the 18-unit apartment complex and second-hand furniture store gutted by fire Wednesday. SAM HARREL/NEWS-MINER

### Residents report hearing explosion; shelter set up

By Robin Wood  
FOR THE NEWS-MINER

Many residents reported hearing a loud explosion before realizing their 18-unit apartment complex on Geraghty Street was on fire.

Bill Simmons, 50, had lived in the apartment complex since he moved from Las Vegas to Fairbanks three years ago. Simmons, wearing a red-and-white flannel jacket while clutching a coffee cup in a shelter set up in the basement of University Community Presbyterian Church on College Road, recounted the event.

He said he was asleep when a big bang, "like ice falling off the roof," woke him.

"My wife came in yelling 'There's a fire.' I opened the front door, real thick black smoke started rolling in. I got my wife and cat and sat on the roof," Simmons said.

Simmons, like many others, was forced to wait for a ladder to arrive from Fairbanks Fire Department to escape the burning building.

RESIDENTS » A10

## 73 percent of Alaska fourth-graders can't read proficiently

By Weston Morrow  
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Nearly three-quarters of fourth-grade students in Alaska can't read proficiently, according to a report released Tuesday by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving public policy and human service reforms for children.

**INSIDE »** Senate Education Committee discusses bill on reading program for kindergartners through third-graders. » A10

The foundation report is based on the most recent data and standards from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, known as the nation's report

card. The 2013 NAEP results for fourth- and eighth-grade math and reading were released in November.


The NAEP assesses students in every state and many U.S. territories. Only four states had lower rates of reading proficiency for fourth-graders than Alaska, though California, West Virginia and Nevada also had 73 percent of students below proficient.

The numbers paint a much bleaker picture for low-income students in Alaska, of whom only 15 percent were declared proficient in fourth-grade reading last year, according to the NAEP results. On the other side, 40 percent of "higher-income" students were declared proficient.

READING » A10

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