



FIRE PREVENTION DIVISION Fire Investigation Report

Incident # 2026051044 Incident Date 6/16/26 Time 12:17
Location 4008 N Upriver Bend Lane Report Date 7/24/26
SCSO Report # 2026-10081731

This is an investigative report and is subject to public records requirements of RCW 42.56.240. This report may also contain information regarding identity and medical condition of patients, the release of which is regulated under RCW 70.02.020. Parties using this report must ensure that the provisions of RCW are followed in release of information contained herein.

SYNOPSIS

1. Spokane County Fire District 9 (SCFD-9) was called to respond to a wildland fire that reached 212 acres. Investigation by Washington Department of Natural Resources under RCW 76.04.015 indicated that the fire originated in a structure at 4008 N Upriver Bend Lane. Under RCW 43.44.050, and an interlocal agreement with Spokane County, the structure fire was to be investigated by SCFD-9. This report covers the origin and cause investigation for the structure where the fire originated.

PARTICIPATING FIRE INVESTIGATORS

2. Assistant Chief Doug Bleeker (IFSAC CFI) was the fire investigator assigned by SCFD-9. SCFD-9 received assistance from John McDonald (WA DNR) who was supported by Mike Sprenger (BATFE), C. Todd Smith (former BATFE), and Jared Harms (SCFD-4).
3. A concerted effort to notify involved parties was conducted to avoid spoliation in accordance with NFPA 921. Clifton Mehaffey (Hart & Mehaffey Consulting) and Scott Roberts (YA Group) had been contracted by insurance companies to investigate and both were on scene for investigation. Dustin Bruffett from Inland Power and Light was also involved. Additionally, Spokane County Sheriff Detectives Mike Drapeau, Christina Ennis, Phil Pfeifer, and Dean Meyer supported the investigation. Chris Allen was the cadaver K9 handler that also supported the investigation through affiliation with SCSO.

PROPERTY OWNERSHIP INFORMATION

Property/Building Owner

4. The property is owned by Robert Dubasik (DOB 5/23/26). He resides at 1118 E. Palm Ln, Phoenix, Arizona, 85006. I interviewed Bob by telephone on 6/18/26 at 15:05. Bob indicated he had purchased the house approximately two year prior (2024). It had belonged to his wife's great grandfather. Bob had intended to come to Spokane the week prior to the fire but events had not allowed that to happen. Bob had pretty much cleaned the house out. The only items left were a vacuum cleaner, a ladder, two chairs, a few canning jars and dishes, the gas furnace, and wood

cook stove in the kitchen. While the building had electricity on, Bob kept the breaker panel main switch in the 'off' position. While at the house working or cleaning, Bob would turn power on and use only the outlet in the kitchen by the west kitchen door. Bob was paying the minimum fee for keeping electricity on (\$30 per month) and was watching his monthly bill to ensure no one was in the house using electricity. He had seen no additional use of electricity. On 6/24/26, Bob brought his latest electrical bill to the scene and it showed no electrical usage. There was no running water. The house had been built by Rolla Jones in 1890, with additions to the structure in 1903 and 1907. Google Earth satellite photos dated 2023 indicate roof damage. Bob said he had tried to get a roofer to repair the roof in 2024 but most roofers had enough work that none of them wanted to take on an old restoration project. In August of 2024, Bob was able to get Rick Fleck to tarp the 1st story portion, repair the 2nd story portion, and patch the valleys in the roof. Bob said the roof no longer leaked after that.

Occupants

5. The building had not been occupied since 1996.

Insurance Company

6. There was no insurance on the property and the owner owned it, so he was making no payments on the structure or property.

Value

7. For the 2027 tax year, Spokane County Assessor listed the structures as worth \$150,400. The Assessor's office data indicates the house was built in 1900 and the first floor was 1,408 square feet in size.

BUILDING CONSTRUCTION

8. The house was standard wood frame residential construction with ship lap walls, heavy timber beams, and a metal roof.

WEATHER

9. Felts Field weather observations for 6/16/26 at 12:53 indicate a temperature of 83°F, relative humidity of 24% with winds out of the WSW at 14 mph gusting to 33 mph. Visibility was ten miles with no sky cover. As the afternoon wore on, temperature would climb to 84°F, relative humidity would dip to 17%, and winds would climb to 26 mph with gusts to 43 mph.

WILDLAND

Fire Restrictions

10. Spokane County had not yet applied outdoor burning restrictions at the time of the fire.

Fuel / Terrain / Aspect

11. The predominant fuel model in the area was grass from knee height to waist height with some deciduous brush and some trees around the origin area. Based on USGS maps the terrain sloped roughly south with roughly 5% grade. There was a small draw to the west of the house that sloped southwest and then turned south.

Fire Size

12. Finished fire size was 212 acres.

GPS Coordinates

13. The house under question lies at 47.695, -117.319.

FIRE DISCOVERY

911 Caller

14. According to Spokane Regional Emergency Communications (SREC) records, the first 911 call was from 509-714-5702 at 12:17:40. That call came from Chris C. Bary (no DOB) who resides at 7208 E. Bridgeport, across the Spokane River to the south. I interviewed Chris by phone on 6/26/26 at 16:30. Chris first saw small white smoke, but with the winds at the time, it blew up pretty quickly. Chris saw a white truck parked roughly 250 yards east of the fire at that time, and that vehicle was still parked in that area when Chris and I spoke. Chris also said that she and her daughter had cell phone pictures of the event and she texted those to my phone. Chris said her neighbors, Jim and Bernie Miller also called 911 after Chris did. Chris' photos did not have a clear view of the origin due to trees screening that view.
15. SREC dispatch records also show a phone number that was answered by the tower at Felts Field. On 6/26/26, no one was in the tower who had seen the fire on 6/17/26. The tower called back indicating that Kelly Wild had been on duty up in the tower at the time of the fire. I talked with Kelly on 7/7/26 at 14:23. While Kelly noted smoke when it was small, his viewpoint did not provide him an unobstructed view of the fire due to trees obscuring his view even from the tower.

First Citizen On Scene

16. The first citizen on scene appears to have been Matthew J. Collin who resides at 4004 N Upriver Bend Lane. I interviewed Matt on 6/18/26 at 14:30. He can be reached at 509-482-0867. Matt said that on the morning of the fire, his wife noted smoke and came to alert Matt. Matt walked up the driveway toward the smoke (at 4008 N Upriver Bend Lane) and saw fire coming from the middle of the house. The fire was moving to the apple house. Matt said it looked like the fire had started in the house and was spreading from there. Matt tends crops on property nearby (within view of the house). So he was probably the last person to see the house on the day prior to the fire. He had not actually been inside the house since October of 2025.

Other Witnesses

Last Person to be in Fire Area Prior to Ignition

17. Matthew J. Collin tended crops on property adjacent to the house. He indicated in a phone interview on 7/7/26 that he had probably looked at the house the day prior to the fire. He is probably the last person that we can find who had eyes on the house prior to the fire.

FIRE SUPPRESSION ACTIONS

First Arriving Crew Observations

18. The fire first came in as a smoke investigation with only V21, E94 and B94 sent to investigate. Once it was realized that this was a fire, it was changed to a brush fire high response and a number of other firefighting apparatus were dispatched. Dispatch records indicate that first alarm assignment of fire apparatus arrived on scene in the following order:

V21	12:27:07
940	12:28:07
920	12:30:21
B94, E94, & 941	12:31:23

B92	12:43:12
WT94	12:47:00
WT96	12:51:24
SE2	12:53:37
930	12:53:47
E94	12:31:23

19. Initial observations by V21 (Chief officer from Spokane Valley Fire Department) was that there was wildland fire up the road, a house was involved (4008 N Upriver Bend Lane), and it appeared to him that may have been the origin of the fire. V21 and fire engines were not able to get up the driveway due to a cable across the driveway and dense fuel creating hazards. They were able to gain safe access and attacked the fire from the house to the west.

Tactical Actions Taken

20. The initial alarm assignment was assigned to stop spread of the wildland fire. Unified command was established with WA DNR (Washington Department of Natural Resources) and air assets were requested from DNR. Units were deployed under V21 with orders to contain the wildland fire. After some point, they reported that the fire had escaped initial attack and was moving north with winds from the south. A second alarm was requested and evacuations were begun.
21. The mobile data console showed 930 located on the north side of the approaching fire in the vicinity of Valley Springs and Thierman Roads. I contacted 930 by radio to let him know he would be getting resources to set up structure protection at that location. Second alarm resources were directed to respond to 930's area. Two more Chiefs were sent to that area to take command (904 and 820). They were instructed to protect structures, stop the fire on the north and see if we could stop it on the east side. Eventually 904 notified me by radio that winds had kicked up from the west and the fire was running east. DNR advised that fixed-wing air assets were not able to work under the smoke and heat column being laid over to the east by winds and only helicopters with buckets could work the east side of the fire. A third alarm assignment was requested. State Mobilization of resources was requested through the Area Coordinator.
22. 941 (a Division Supervisor trainee) was assigned to the east side of the fire (now the head) and third alarm resources were assigned to him to get in front of the fire as it approached the Northwood neighborhoods to protect structures and try to stop the fire. There were no other avenues to attack the fire west of the Northwood neighborhoods. That area is steep with dense timber fuels and no access points for brush engines.

INJURIES/FATALITIES

23. There was one person unaccounted for the night of the fire who had not evacuated. See the fatality investigation report for information on that investigation.

INTERVIEWS

24. Matthew J. Collin resides at 4004 N Upriver Bend Lane and was interviewed at his home on 6/18/26 at 14:30. The house at 4008 N Upriver Bend Lane had been built by his great grandfather around 1890. It had been added onto after that. Matt had lived there with his family March 1988 to February 1996. After that he had used the kitchen of the house to sell produce from his farm. In 2022 one of Matt's cousins purchased the house while it was empty. After she died it passed to the cousin's husband Robert Dubasik. There was no regular yard maintenance going on. To the northwest of the house was the apple house. It was double-wall construction with shavings and

sawdust between the walls for insulation. The roof for the apple house collapsed in 2009. Then the apple house floor collapsed and the north wall was ready to collapse next. Matt had noted the door to the house was left open in spring of 2025. In March of 2025 Matt had noted that blinds were up, when they had been down previously. This was when he first noted any forced entry. In October of 2025 he had noted that one of the door panels had been kicked in. In the summer of 2025 the owner (Robert Dubasik) had visited the site and said not much had been taken. July of 2025 was Mr. Dubasik's last visit to the house. Mr. Dubasik had left the power on to the building. Matt last looked inside the house in October of 2025. Matt did have keys to the house. Matt said that metal roofing had been flopping around on the house the prior year and had been nailed down. Metal roofing on the west side of the house (near the electrical service masthead) was flopping around in the spring of 2026. On the day of the fire, Matt's wife notified him that she saw smoke. Matt walked up the driveway to investigate. He said fire was coming through the roof of the house near the middle of the house and was moving to the apple house at that time. It appeared to him that the fire started in the house and was spreading out from there. Eventually Matt unlocked the gate so fire service could access the house.

25. On 7/8/26 at around 14:30, Matt called me back to tell me that he recalled a pile of wood debris roughly half-way between the house and the apple house that was left from a 2023 attempt by the owner to repair the roof. Matt wanted to ensure I was aware of that fact.
26. Robert A. Dubasik (DOB 5/23/47) is the property owner. He was interviewed by phone on 6/18/26 at 15:05. He purchased 4008 N. Upriver Bend Lane roughly two years prior. The house belonged to his wife's great grandfather. Robert had intended to visit the house the week prior to the fire but was not able to make it. He had cleaned the house out. The only things left inside the house were a ladder, a vacuum cleaner, two chairs, the kitchen stove, an oil stove, and a few dishes, and a few canning jars. There was little in the house to steal. The house had knob and tube wiring along with some romex wiring that had been installed later. Robert kept electrical service to the house (Inland Power and Light), but he kept the main breaker turned off. IP&L billed him \$30.00 per month for service but his bills never showed any electrical usage (Robert checked that monthly). There was no water to the house. Rolla Jones had built the house in 1890 with remodel/additions to it in 1903 and 1907 that added more to the ground floor and an upper story. The last break-in had occurred several months prior to the fire, but Robert found no damage or theft. Robert had tried to get a roofing company to re-roof the house in 2024 but no contractors wanted the job. He did finally get one contractor to fix the dormers and valleys and tarp the area where roofing had come off. Robert indicated the roof did not leak after that treatment. Robert had no mortgage on the house and had no insurance on the house. One of the additions had been a library on the east side with oak bookshelves and a collection of the grandmother's old books. All of the books and bookshelves had been removed by family in years prior to the fire.
27. Dustin Bruffet works for Inland Power and Light. He was on site when the home was examined by a team of fire investigators on 6/24/26. He indicated that IP&L records showed no electrical usage at the address. However, he also indicated that his equipment would not register power usage over the course of a month until it reached 1 Kilowatt hour.
28. Robert Dubasik was also present during scene examination on 6/24/26. He signed written consent to enter at that time. During this time Robert indicated that Matt Collin had notified him in sometime the prior year that the roof was leaking. Robert got Rick Fleck, a roofer, to tarp the 1-story portion and repair the 2nd story with patches to the valleys about a year and a half prior to the

fire. About 7-8 months prior to the fire he had Rick come back to repair the dormer again. That fixed the roof leaks. Robert indicated that the property around the house amounted to about 7 acres.

29. I called Rick Fleck of 20/20 Exteriors (509-475-1059) at 16:07 on 7/7/26 and left a message. He called me back at 16:09. He indicated he had been contacted by Robert Dubasik around two years prior to the fire. He placed tarps and sealed the valleys. About 7-8 months prior he was asked by Robert to roll up and check the house, which was all he did at that time. There was no metal roofing flopping around near the electrical service. There was loose metal roofing but it was all under the tarps that Rick had applied two years prior. Rick was able to find records that he was originally contracted to fix the roof in July of 2025. Rick provided a photo of the roof at the electrical service masthead and no loose metal roofing is visible.
30. Dispatch records showed that 43 callers called 911 in the first 30 minutes of the fire. I called all of those numbers and got responses from 21 callers. No one had a vantage point to see the origin of the fire at the time of ignition. Most were some distance away (including downtown Spokane). One flight student at Felts Field had video he shot on his cell phone, but it showed smoke in the trees with no clear view of the origin.

SCENE PROCESSING

Preparation

31. While the fire was still being fought on 6/18/26, under exigent circumstance, fire investigators went to the scene to shoot photos. No scene exam was performed at that time.
32. While the fire was still being fought on 6/19/26, I went to 4008 N Upriver Bend Lane at 13:23 with Sheriff's detectives under exigent circumstance. This effort was coordinated with Incident Command who was notified the night prior to this event. The Operations Section Chief managing the fire was contacted and advised of our presence prior to entering. Spokane County Sheriff's Office (SCSO) brought a cadaver K9 and handler to ensure we had no one who had perished inside the structure. With reports of break-ins, and many indicators in the area of homeless camping, we needed to rule out the possibility that someone who had broken into the house for shelter had died during the fire. The K9 team combed over the house and did not alert. The handler indicated we had no human remains at the site. A wildland firefighter working the fire pointed out a site north and a little east of the house where a barbecue had been set up behind rocks so no drivers on Upriver Drive would see fire activity. Upon returning to the house from photographing that site, I stumbled over another site that was hidden by rocks from the road where stove pipe had been used to assemble a small fire pit. I took photos of that site also. SCSO Detective Mike Drapeau collected the electrical breaker panel, which was found with the main breaker in the 'on' position. That was logged into the Spokane City/County Property facility to keep it from any further damage for forensic destructive testing by other agencies, if necessary. We departed the site at 14:38.
33. NFPA 921, the Guide For Fire and Explosion Investigations has much to say about avoiding spoliation. Contacts were received and were made with private fire investigators, the property owner, and legal counsel for Inland Power and Light. A date and time was set up for that group to examine the scene. By this time exigent circumstance had clearly expired and the property owner signed written consent to enter. Private fire investigators were Clifton Mehaffey (Hart & Mehaffey Consulting) and Scott Roberts (YA Group). Inland Power and Light VP of Engineering Dustin

Bruffett was also present. Additionally, SCSO Detectives Mike Drapeau and Christina Ennis were on scene for this scene visit.

Exterior Examination

34. All parties (Robert Dubasik, Dustin Bruffet, Clifton Mehaffey, Scott Roberts, Mike Drapeau, Christina Ennis, Doug Bleeker) met at the scene on 6/24/26 at 09:00. Written consent to enter was signed by the property owner. The owner brought along his latest electrical bill from Inland Power and Light (IP&L) and that was reviewed. It covered the period from 5/6/26 to 6/6/26. Dustin Bruffet contacted his office and stated that billing showed no electrical usage since the owner's last billing. Dustin indicated that a kilowatt hour of power would need to be used in order to register any power consumption on IP&L equipment. All parties then opened the gate and entered the scene.

Property access points

35. The property is accessed by a driveway that approaches the house from the south. There is plenty of open access to the property on foot from the west, north and east. There are mountain bike trails to the west, north and northeast of the property.

Fence/property security

36. There was fence still in place along the south and west portions of the property. There were posts left after the fire around the property. I'm unable to determine the state of fencing on the east and north prior to the fire.

Items seen/found outside

37. To the north of the house was a masonry structure that Robert Dubasik said was the old chicken house that was in a state of collapse. The apple house was to the northwest of the house. The apple house and the house were completely destroyed by fire. Initial firefighting efforts had been to contain the spreading wildfire. Both structures were pretty much lost at the time firefighters arrived on scene. So no efforts were put into fighting either structure fire. Firefighting crews then followed the spreading wildfire to protect other resources at risk. So no water was flowed on either structure and both structures burned to complete extinction. There were few, if any, combustible elements left.
38. Fire damage was seen on large shade trees on the east and south of the house. The tree to the east of the house had all foliage burned off. The tree to the south of the house had foliage on the north side (facing the house) burned off with foliage on the south of the tree still in place. Wind at the time of the fire was from the east and south. Winds like that would protect foliage on the south side of the south tree. The tree to the east was in the path of the fire as it escaped and spread north and east, explaining why all foliage on that side was destroyed by fire.
39. There was some dried grass in the immediate area that had not burned completely. This suggested grass between knee high and waist high surrounding the house. Matt Collin indicated there had been no maintenance of the grass around the house.
40. Brush to the north and east of the house was around 5'-6' in height and most of the foliage from that was burned off.

Scene exterior description

41. The house and the apple house had burned to extinction with nothing left standing except foundations.

Exterior fire & smoke patterns

42. With no vertical or horizontal surfaces left there were no fire patterns to be seen in the house. Vegetation in the immediate vicinity of the house was pretty much completely burned with some grasses left standing in places.

Exterior Construction Elements

Utilities

43. There was no water or gas supplied to the house. Electrical service had been maintained by the homeowner and power was supplied by an overhead line from a transformer on a utility pole to the west of the structure. The overhead line extended from the pole to the masthead on the west wall of the house. That masthead and the service entrance panel beneath it were on the west wall just south of the second story dormer.
44. The service feed to the masthead was parted in six locations, beginning at the masthead. Where wire parted on the ground, we found burned grass indicating arcing from energized line. That means the first part of the service feed was at the masthead and it arced to ground in locations successively closer to the transformer. There was also blistering of metal and heated sections of the masthead conduit that appeared to be arcing in the conduit between masthead and service entry panel. This damage would have occurred prior to the wire parting at the masthead.

Building Openings

45. The building had doors on the south side (front door), the west side, the east side, and one door on the northeast that only entered the milk room. That room provided no access to the inside of the rest of the structure. There were windows all the way around the exterior.

Interior Examination

Furnishings

46. The structure had burned to extinction and no combustible elements remained.

Building HVAC

47. There was an oil furnace found in the living room area, a wood cook stove in the kitchen on the first floor, and a large baseboard heater (6'-8' long) in the east library. None had been in use by the homeowner. The homeowner had kept the main breaker panel off. The main breaker panel was found with the main breaker in the 'on' position. Had the baseboard heater been used, we surmise that would have registered as power consumption, which power company records do not show. However, temperatures were warm and no one should have been needing heat at the time of the fire.
48. There was an oil tank found on the exterior side of the west wall near the southwest corner of the house. It was empty at the time of examination. Older pre-fire photos of the house show this tank on wooden legs next to the home. That would have supplied the oil furnace.

Appliances

49. Appliances had been removed from the structure prior to the fire.

Fire suppression/alarm system(s)

50. Being older and not occupied, the building probably did not have had smoke detectors. None were found.

Interior smoke & fire patterns

51. The structure had burned to extinction with no combustible elements remaining. So no interior fire patterns could be discerned.

Reconstruction

52. The structure had burned to extinction and no combustible elements remained. Very little reconstruction was possible.

Evidence discovered/collected

53. The main breaker panel was found just inside the west wall of the structure. It was found with the main breaker in the 'on' position. This was collected and placed in the Spokane City/County Property Facility for safe keeping by Detective Mike Drapeau on 6/19/26. It was retrieved from the property room for examination at the scene on 6/24/26. Upon completion of the examination it was turned over to the property owner and he was advised to keep the panel for any future inquiries about it.

Additional Information

54. During scene examination nothing more was found that was of evidentiary value.
55. The house was examined on the day of the fire by WA DNR with support from BATFE personnel and Spokane County Fire District 4. While fighting the fire those personnel came to the incident command post and indicated that wildland fire patterns suggested the fire originated in the house. Furthermore, BATFE personnel indicated that window glass was found up to six feet away from the exterior walls. One hypothesis was that a smoldering fire had existed for some time and a cold smoke explosion blew glass out. However, examination of satellite photos showed tarps covering holes in the roof. It is hard to maintain confinement to cause an explosion with plastic tarps. So that hypothesis was ruled out early on. Another hypothesis is that walls collapsing from a second story may have pushed window glass that far out.
56. There is much homeless activity in this area. Firefighters found evidence of homeless encampments all over the fire area. Homeless activity seems to involve camp fires, even indoors, and even when weather is warm. We have seen homeless break into an empty house up for sale and set fire on the floor so that smoke from the chimney would not alert neighbors. Activity in this house, seen by the neighbor to the south indicated the house had been broken into. There was nothing of any value to steal. One hypothesis was that someone had broken into the house for shelter, and may have started a fire that consumed the house and progressed to surrounding trees, brush and grass. A further concern with this hypothesis was that a homeless person may not have escaped such a fire. Consequently a K9 cadaver team was called to look for any remains on 6/19/26. We were able to rule out the presence of any human remains. So the concern that someone died in an initial house fire was ruled out. We cannot rule out the possibility that a fire was started by a homeless person looking for shelter in the house and causing the wildland fire. We were not able to recover any evidence to prove that hypothesis either.

57. There are mountain bike trails to the west, north, and northeast of the house. That network of trails is a very popular outdoor recreational opportunity. SCFD-9 and City of Spokane Fire often see recreational fires in this area that are either never extinguished or poorly extinguished before being abandoned by recreationalists. We often get called to smoldering camp fires in this area, and have fought several fires in the Beacon Hill area to the west due to smoldering camp fires escaping control. While examining the scene on 6/19/26 I was alerted by wildland firefighters to a regular campfire spot up the hill where a metal barbecue had been transported in. It was placed behind rocks so any fire there would not be visible to drivers on Upriver Drive, precluding fire activity being reported. I photographed that site and while hiking back to the house, I found another similar site made up of wood stove components. Clearly recreational fires are common in this area. Another hypothesis was that a recreational enthusiast found the unoccupied house and used it for a place to rest or hangout with friends. It is possible that a fire was started there and that was the origin of the fire. We cannot rule this hypothesis out. Neither did we recover evidence that would prove this hypothesis.
58. The house had electrical service even though unoccupied. While the owner kept the main breaker switch off, we found breaker panel with the main breaker in the 'on' position. The rest of the panel was destroyed by fire. Another hypothesis is that electrical failure of some type may have ignited the fire. We cannot rule this hypothesis out either. Neither did we recover evidence that would prove this hypothesis.

FIRE PROGRESSION

Origin Area

59. The fire investigator from WA DNR reported that wildland fire patterns indicated the fire originated at the house. His observation was that the tree on the east (leeward side) of the house had all vegetation burned off and the tree to the south (the windward side) had only vegetation on the north burned off. Had the fire started in the grasses away from the house, we would not expect to see that extensive damage that high in the tree on the east. Damage that high in the tree would require much greater heat release and taller flame heights from the house burning. In fact, WA DNR photo IMG_0248.jpeg shows leaves still intact at ground level on the south side of the south tree. That tree trunk would have protected those leaves from fire in the house, but would not have protected those leaves from being burned by a ground fire originating on the south or west side of the house. Another hypothesis is fire starting in grass or brush beside the house and then spread to the house. There was accumulation of grass next to the house. However, such a fire start would have immediate exposure to wind driving that fire north or east initially. The house would have caught fire much later in the time line (or not at all if the fire started on the east or north sides of the house). A fire started in grasses right beside the house on the east or north sides may be pulled toward the house by turbulent effects of the house on winds from the southwest and fire could then progress to the house. The first person on the scene saw fire coming up through the roof in the middle of the house. His impression was that the fire originated in the house and was spreading out to wildland and the apple house to the northwest. It is less likely that an origin from a wind-driven grass fire would have traveled to the apple house (wind was not blowing in that direction). However, embers and heat release from the burning house is a much more likely source of ignition for the apple house. Initial attacking fire units also reported the house burning early in the fire and voiced suspicions that the house was the cause. All of these observations would tend to support the WA DNR investigator's finding that the fire started at the house, or perhaps in extremely close proximity to the house on the east or north side.

60. The pile of wood debris between the house and apple house to the northwest (reported by Matt Collin) would have aided fire spread from the house to the apple house.

Ignition Sources in Origin Area

Potential ignition sources

61. Potential ignition sources include electricity in the house. Some of the wiring was old knob and tube. Some wiring was newer romex. We could not recover enough data from the scene to prove any electrical cause. It is also possible that a fire could have been started by someone (homeless or recreationalist) who broke into the house. There was history of break ins. Once again we were not able to recover enough data from the scene to prove a human start. However, fire damage may have destroyed such evidence so we cannot disprove those hypotheses either.

Fuel Packages & Arrangements

62. There was little fuel loading in the house as it was empty and unoccupied. Structural elements provided pretty much the only fuel.

Ventilation

63. The first witness on scene and first arriving fire units all reported the fire burning through the roof of the house, indicating the fire had self-ventilated and was in the total involvement phase of combustion.

OTHER FIRE SCENARIO ELEMENTS

64. The main breaker panel was offered to private fire investigators for forensic investigation. Both investigators felt that the extensive level of damage to the breaker panel left no evidentiary value to any forensic evaluation of the panel. Both declined to perform such evaluation.
65. On the day of the fire, WA DNR and BATFE personnel advised Incident Command that an individual with an interest in fire service was present at the fire and that he was being evaluated as to whether or not he had any part in ignition of the fire. They worked with SCSO personnel to interview the individual but no written report from that interview could be recovered.
66. The individual in question is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] is on the [REDACTED] and is passionate in his interest for fire service. Both SCFD-9 and Spokane Fire Department (SFD) had encounters with [REDACTED] in 2023 regarding boundaries with fire stations. SFD had engaged [REDACTED] passion by getting him involved with their explorers program. SCFD-9 had experienced no encounters with [REDACTED] since that time.
67. On 7/21/26 at 16:57, I met with SCSO Detective Christina Ennis, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] Detective Ennis and I introduced ourselves and explained the purpose of our visit. [REDACTED] was aware of the Upriver Fire. His first indication of the fire was when he heard the size-up on the radio. [REDACTED] produced two portable radios: one is tuned to SRMA-3 and the other to SRMA-4. Both talk groups are used for wildland fires in Spokane County. Originally as a smoke investigation, the incident was dispatched on the North Primary talk group. Once it was categorized as an actual fire, all units were migrated to SRMA-4. [REDACTED] monitors these radios to know when active wildland fires are being fought. He could not have heard fire traffic on SRMA-4 until 12:21:09 when dispatchers migrated all fire traffic to the SRMA-4 talk group. [REDACTED] described to me, with some detail, the radio size-up transmitted by V21 on SRMA-4 as he arrived at the scene. Dispatch records indicate that size-up was delivered by V21

at 12:27:15. [REDACTED] was still at his Mom's home at that time. [REDACTED] produced Ring camera videos showing [REDACTED] exiting her front door and coming back inside at 13:12. At 13:56, the Ring camera again shows [REDACTED] exiting the house. [REDACTED] indicated that was when he caught a bus to go look at the fire. This is two hours and 19 minutes after the fire was reported. [REDACTED] was to get copies of the Ring camera videos to the SCSO Detective. [REDACTED] says he rode the bus to the intersection of Frederick and Upriver where he got off. He hiked to the parking lot at the Minnehaha climbing rocks. From there he climbed the hill to get above the fire to view it. At the top of the hill he found two bull dozers: Dozer9 from SCFD-9 and a bull dozer from WA DNR. Those dozers were assigned to put in dozer trail from the top of the fire south around the west edge of the fire and tie it into Upriver Drive. Dispatch notes indicate Dozer 9 was on scene, unloading at 14:25:03. The Dozer9 operator corroborates seeing [REDACTED] while preparing to put in dozer line. That operator indicated that while the two bull dozers initially worked together, the DNR dozer put line in a different canyon south than Dozer9 and [REDACTED] followed the DNR dozer. [REDACTED] indicated he followed the DNR dozer down and hiked to the garage at 4011 N Upriver Bend Lane, roughly 500' southwest of the fire origin. [REDACTED] estimated he got there roughly 1-2 hours after hearing the size-up on his portable radio. That fits into times recorded by dispatch as well as the time posted on the Ring camera when he left his Mom's house. [REDACTED] was able to get Ring images to us for review.

68. [REDACTED] and I talked about the hazards of his actions and how much danger he placed himself in by stationing himself uphill from a rapidly expanding wildfire in light, flashy fuels, with wind pushing the fire toward him, with no training or personnel protective equipment. He indicated he understood and would stay out of hazard areas in the future.
69. Based on the interview, the times presented by [REDACTED] the fact that his first notice of the fire was our size-up on scene, the Ring camera images from his mother, travel times to and from home and the origin, and [REDACTED] interaction with the dozer operators, I have nothing to tie [REDACTED] to the ignition of the fire and he has been ruled out as being in or near the origin area at or prior to the time of the fire.

CONCLUSIONS

Origin

70. It appears probable that the fire originated in the house at 4008 N Upriver Bend Lane and spread from there to wildland fuels and the apple house.

Ignition Source

71. We were unable to determine an ignition source. Hypotheses include a human caused fire or an accidental electrical fire. There is no hard evidence to prove either hypothesis.

Oxidant

72. While an interior ignition may have been ventilation limited for at time, the roof was probably open enough to provide adequate oxygen for the fire to build. Once it burned through the roof, self-ventilation would have provided more than enough oxygen for the fire to continue progression. Embers from a two-story structure falling into adjacent wildland fuel beds, as well as radiant heat from a house fire, with temperature, relative humidity, and wind conditions recorded that day, would have been more than adequate to cause a running wildfire.

First Fuel Ignited

73. Due to the structure burning to extinction we are not left with enough data to determine what fuel was ignited first.

Ignition Sequence

74. Once the fire got started it moved into to wildland fuel beds and progressed from there driven by wind.

Fire Cause

75. Lacking hard evidence of ignition source and first fuel ignited, and with multiple hypotheses, none of which can be proven, the cause of this fire is undetermined.

Doug Bleeker
Assistant Chief, Spokane County Fire District 9
Employee # 285

Doug M Bleeker

Report reviewed by:

[Signature] #313

