



# Alaska Department of Public Safety

## Incident Report

### Incident: AK24062041

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**Incident Type:** Fire [FIRE]  
**Incident time:** 06/26/2024 18:43-  
**Reported time:** 06/26/2024 18:43  
**Incident location:** 14 KENNEDY Street, Stebbins, Unorganized Borough AK USA 99671 (STEBBINS SCHOOL) (Beat/zone: RHRB, STEBBINS)  
**Incident status:** Closed by investigation

**Summary:** On June 26, 2024 at approximately 1843 hours, a fire was reported in an accessory building west of the school in Stebbins. Despite efforts of locals and responding Nome Volunteer Fire Department firefighters from Nome, the conflagration destroyed 9 buildings belonging to the Bering Strait School District, which included the school and teacher housing. Two Deputy Fire Marshals were requested and responded from Anchorage/Wasilla.

### Incident Activities/Offenses

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- Fire - Non Criminal()

### Involved Persons/Organizations

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#### **3E CONSTRUCTION LLC**

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**Classification:** Mentioned in report

#### **ANDREWS-KIRK, ALFRED**

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**Classification:** Interview; Witness

**Gender:** Male

#### **CLAPP, TIMOTHY JUSTIN**

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**Classification:** Witness

**Gender:** Male

**COFFEY, GARRETT ALLEN**

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**Classification:** Mentioned in report  
**Gender:** Male

**ECKENWEILER, GARY GEORGE**

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**Classification:** Mentioned in report  
**Gender:** Male

**ELACHIK, RICHARD JOHN**

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**Classification:** Complainant  
**Gender:** Male

**GOLIVER, DARYL LEE**

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**Classification:** Witness  
**Gender:** Male

**KOBUK, TAYLOR JAMES**

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**Classification:** Mentioned in report  
**Gender:** Male

**MYOMICK, FRANK BILLY**

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**Classification:** Complainant  
**Gender:** Male

**[REDACTED]** A2

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**Classification:** Witness  
**Gender:** Male

**SCALISI, DUSTIN DWAYNE**

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**Classification:** Interview; Witness  
**Gender:** Male

## SHELDEN, SETH ELIJAH

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**Classification:** Interview; Witness

**Gender:** Male

## SMITH, RYAN JEFFREY

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**Classification:** Witness

**Gender:** Male

## TAPRAQ ROCK LLC

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**Classification:** Mentioned in report

## Involved Addresses

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- 14 KENNEDY Street / Incident location / Stebbins, Alaska, USA 99671 (STEBBINS SCHOOL) (Beat/zone: RHRB, STEBBINS)

## Involved Officers

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- Investigator/ #NLR1ROCHELEAU, NATHAN L/ DPS
- Investigating unit/ #LSIBDFLS LSI BUREAU/ DPS
- Investigator/ #BJL0LEWIS, BRANDON J/ DPS
- Reporting unit/ #UNLEAST UNALAKLEET POST/ DPS
- Reporting officer/ #BJW1WASSMANN, BRIAN J/ DPS

## Reports

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### General report

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**Author:** #BJW1 WASSMANN, B.

**Report time:** 06/26/2024 18:45

**Narrative:**

On Wednesday June 26, 2024, at 1830 hours I was in the Stebbins School when I heard men talking loudly outside the school. I couldn't hear what they were saying, but I wasn't alarmed because they had been working on site for several days, talking loud at times as they worked.

1845 hours, Daisy Katcheak called me on my cell phone. I was still in the Stebbins school. Katcheak frantically told me there was a fire in the old shop next to the school. I ran outside the main door and saw men at the northwest side of the school. The men had formed a bucket brigade to pass water buckets from the school spigot. When I arrived the structure, later identified as the boiler room, had flames shooting out the roof line. The southeast and northeast side of the building looked to be the area with the most fire. I helped for about 5 minutes, but the bucket brigade was ineffective. We could not dump enough water on the structure to slow or suppress the fire. Additionally, it was too hot near the structure to get close enough dump water from the buckets.

I disengaged and spoke briefly with Katcheak about getting air support to Stebbins as soon as possible. The structure fire was near the west side of the school. There was also a blue shop building on the north side of the boiler room that the fire was spreading to.

I called AST dispatch at about 1850 hours and requested to be transferred to any fire service resource in western Alaska. I was eventually transferred to Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Alaska Fire Service (AFS) dispatch in Fairbanks at (907)356-5555. I spoke with Bjorn Burgenson, who advised there had to be a wildland fire threat for them to respond.

At about 1905 hours I notified command- Captain Merrill of the fire and updated him with actions I was taking to manage the incident.

I worked to take pictures of the fire as it spread to document the potential ignition point. At about 1910 hours I called NVFD Fire Chief Jimmy West JR. and gave him a briefing. He said NVFD was getting gear and scrambling personnel to respond on a Bering Air charter.

I called the Stebbins School principal, Robert Cooper and advised him of the fire and provided updates to him.

I was aware that Stebbins School had a painting crew on site, actively working when the fire broke out.

At about 1920 hours I approached the painting crew who had assembled at the east side of the basketball court near the east side of the school. I talked briefly with Johnathan Carlson, Darrel Goliver, [REDACTED] A2, Timothy Clap and Ryan Smith. All of them work for 3E Construction LLC.

Carlson told me [REDACTED] A6C  
[REDACTED] A6C

Between 1940 and 2030 hours I tried to maintain scene safety by keeping people out of the area and evacuating nearby structures.

NVFD arrived in Stebbins at about 2100 hours. I assisted with loading gear into trucks. At about 2115 hours Robert Cooper advised [REDACTED] A6C

A6C [REDACTED] The witness was later identified as Alfred Andrews-Kirk. I interviewed Kirk later in the evening. He said [REDACTED] A6C  
[REDACTED] A6C

A6C

Between 2030 and 2200 hours I worked at the scene to document the fire progression and worked with VPOs to keep intoxicated people out of the scene. I also received a DV call at about 2200 hours, I had to respond to that call to investigate.

Between 2300 and 0200 hours I stayed around the fire and Stebbins Clinic to maintain safety perimeter and assist as needed with personnel moving hoses and gear. I also took STB phone calls from incoming calls. I evacuated one elder out of the area.

Between 0200-0400 hours I was at makeshift command post to monitor the fire and stayed available to assist with evacuation of more homes as we monitored the spread of the fire.

The fire consumed four structures on the west side, to include a 6-plex of teacher housing, and another multi-unit teacher housing. Several other structures at the southeast side of the school were also razed. Fire crews used heavy equipment to push burning structures toward the center of the fire and worked to erect berms at the south side of the property as a fire break. The efforts were effective.

I went off duty at 0400 hours at the command post.

## Supplementary report

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**Author:** #BJL0 LEWIS, B.

**Report time:**

**Remarks:**

Origin and Cause  
Report

**Narrative:**

**DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY:**

Alaska State Fire Marshal Deputy (DFM) Brandon Lewis, Certified Fire Investigator (CFI) Origin and Cause Determination.

This report relates to an origin and cause determination of a fire that damaged multiple structures in Stebbins, Alaska between June 26-27, 2024. The Scientific Method was utilized during the course of this fire investigation, as recommended by the 2021 edition of NFPA 921 Guide for Fire & Explosion Investigations, which defines the Scientific Method as:

*“The systematic pursuit of knowledge involving the recognition and definition of a problem; the collection of data through observation and experimentation; analysis of the data; the formulation, evaluation and testing of a hypothesis; and, where possible, the selection of a final hypothesis.”*

**SYNOPSIS:**

On June 27, 2024, at approximately 1157 hours, Deputy Fire Marshals Brandon Lewis and Nathan Rocheleau conducted a fire scene examination in Stebbins, Alaska. The cause of the fire was undetermined.

**NARRATIVE:**

On June 26, 2024, at approximately 1843 hours, a fire was reported in a building accessory to the Tukurngailnguq School in Stebbins. Locals and an Alaska State Trooper staying at the school responded and attempted to put out the fire. Due to high winds, the fire soon spread to adjacent buildings, including the school.

DFM/CFI Lewis was contacted by Alaska State Troopers Captain Merrill at approximately 1930 hours. Information provided by Capt. Merrill stated a construction crew working at the Stebbins school (Tukurngailnguq School) discovered a fire in an accessory building. At the time of notification, the fire had spread to the school and one other building, with additional buildings at risk of catching fire. It was reported that the Nome Volunteer Fire Department was coordinating with Bering Air to charter a crew to Stebbins.

At approximately 1954 hours, DFM Lewis contacted Alaska State Trooper Wassmann, who was in Stebbins and at the school when the fire was first reported. Trp. Wassmann stated a construction crew that was working on the school went into the accessory building and saw smoke in a back room. Trp. Wassmann indicated the fire extended to an adjacent accessory building quickly, and within approximately ninety (90) minutes, was into the roof eaves of the school. Trp. Wassmann indicated the existing firefighting equipment in town was ineffective, and additional resources were enroute from Nome. Due to the involvement of the school and the projection of additional buildings being damaged, assistance was requested for a fire scene examination.

On June 27, 2024, DFM/CFIs Lewis and Rocheleau responded to Stebbins, flying commercial aircraft from Anchorage to Nome, then department aircraft from Nome to Stebbins, arriving at approximately 1100 hours.

**PARTICIPATING FIRE INVESTIGATORS:**

The following fire investigators participated in the fire scene examination:

- DFM/CFI Brandon Lewis
- DFM/CFI Nathan Rocheleau

**LEGAL PRESENCE:**

The fire scene examination was initiated on June 27, 2024, at approximately 1157 hours, by the legal authority granted under 13AAC52.010(a).

**OWNER/INSURANCE INFORMATION:**

All buildings involved were owned by the Bering Strait School District. Specific insurance information was not provided, but it was indicated the property was insured.

**BUILDING CONSTRUCTION:**

The building of origin, known as the shop, was an approximately thirty (30) foot by fifty (50) foot, approximately 1500 square feet, single story accessory building. The construction was wood framed walls elevated above the ground on a pile and beam foundation. The elevated structure was said to have plywood sheeting around the base, with the space underneath approximately five to six feet high. The roof was a wood-framed gable roof, with the ridge oriented east-west. Access to the structure was from the south side via stairs and ramps to an exterior elevated walkway, with single man doors approximately six (6) feet from either end, with a set of double doors east of the midpoint.

The west end of the building was the location of two boilers as well as mechanicals for the septic system reported to be installed in 2023. An electrical service panel was also reported to be within the west side of the building which provided power to the structure, as well as the six-plex to the south. A utilidor extended from underneath the structure to the south, connecting service lines to the six-plex and three-plex buildings. A fuel tank was located on the east side of the building, though a size could not be determined from provided photographs.

Contents within the building of origin included the storage of cleaning and maintenance supplies such as paint and paper products, and snowmachines.

**FIRE PROTECTION SYSTEMS:**

There were no fire protection systems reported to be within the building of origin. The Tukurngailnguq School did contain fire protection systems, however with the fire extending to the building via the eaves, the fire entered the structure above the fire suppression system, rendering the system ineffective.

**FIRE DISCOVERY:**

The fire was first witnessed at approximately 1843 hours by a construction crew that was working on the school, as well as **GARRETT COFFEY** [REDACTED] CJIS, a local maintenance employee of the Bering Strait School District. As the construction crew entered the building of origin to retrieve tools, smoke was observed coming from the floor assembly in the area of the boilers and glycol heating loops. The use of a fire extinguisher was attempted, however appeared unsuccessful. Alarm was sounded immediately, and local community members responded to the area to assist. COFFEY attempted to access the suspected area of origin by removing the skirting panels around the foundation, finding electrical components arcing and sparking beneath the building.

**FIRE SUPPRESSION:**

Initial fire suppression was limited to buckets and garden hoses to retrieve water from an exterior faucet from the school. Alaska State Trooper Wassmann, who was in the school at the time the fire started, responded and attempted to assist. A call was placed to the Nome Volunteer Fire Department at approximately 1910 hours, and firefighters were enroute via charter to assist with additional personnel and equipment. See Trp. Wassmann's report for further details.

**WEATHER:**

According to historic weather data from the St. Michael Airport Station, approximately 6 miles to the southeast, at the time the fire first reported, weather conditions were recorded to be cloudy and approximately 73° Fahrenheit, with an east-southeast wind of 20 miles per hour, gusting to 31 miles per hour. During the fire event, air temperatures got to a low of approximately 54° Fahrenheit overnight. Wind direction fluctuated greatly overnight, from beginning east-southeast, to southeast, to west, to west-northwest, to calm, to north-northwest, to calm, to north-northeast, to southeast. Wind speeds ranged between 0 and 18 miles per hour, with no reported gusting.

**WITNESS STATEMENTS:**

On June 27, 2024, at approximately 1220 hours, an interview was conducted with **GARY ECKENWEILER** [REDACTED] CJIS, Maintenance Director for the Bering Strait School District (BSSD). Also present was **GARRETT COFFEY** [REDACTED] CJIS and **TAYLOR KOBUK** [REDACTED] CJIS, both BSSD staff. The interview was recorded by body-worn camera.

In essence, ECKENWEILER stated [REDACTED] A6C  
[REDACTED] A6C

[REDACTED] A6C

COFFEY stated [REDACTED] A6C  
[REDACTED] A6C  
[REDACTED] A6C

On June 27, 2024, at approximately 1253 hours, and interview was conducted with **DUSTIN SCALISI** [REDACTED] CJIS. The interview was recorded by body worn camera.

In essence, SCALISI [REDACTED] A6C  
[REDACTED] A6C  
[REDACTED] A6C  
[REDACTED] A6C  
[REDACTED] A6C  
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[REDACTED] A6C  
[REDACTED] A6C  
[REDACTED] A6C  
[REDACTED] A6C

**SCENE EXAMINATION:**

The fire scene examination began on June 27, 2024, at approximately 1157 hours. The examination started with a walk-around of the entire property.

The property contained multiple large structures that were actively burning on the ground. Along the east and south sides was a large dirt berm, approximately ten (10) feet high. All of the involved buildings were collapsed within their footprint, leaving an open scene. An overhead utility pole on the south side of the property exhibited charring and other thermal damage to the top half of the pole. Near the northwest corner of the property was a dirt mound with multiple building component intermixed. This was described as the building of origin. To the northwest of the building of origin, a utility pole with a transformer was significantly damaged from the fire activity, with the top of the pole and top cross member broken and hanging by the intact wires.

Due to the use of heavy machinery destroying the fire scene, piling all the debris into a pile and partially buried in dirt in an attempt to contain the fire, an interior examination could not be completed.

#### **EXPOSURES:**

The fire extended to multiple structures, aided by high winds and minimal suppression capabilities. The fire destroyed the building of origin along with 6 additional buildings including the Tukumgailnguq School, the building housing the welding and automotive shops, a six-plex used for teacher housing, a three-plex used for teacher housing, and two older relocatable classrooms. Two additional accessory buildings described as portable classrooms located on the east side of the school near the southeast corner were lost because of the fire. Though not damaged by the fire yet, they were anticipated to become involved in the conflagration and add significant risk of the fire spreading further through the community. Those two buildings were destroyed and pushed into the area of the burning school by use of heavy equipment. In total, nine (9) buildings were destroyed between the building of origin and the affected adjacent buildings.

#### **NUMBER OF FATALITIES AND/OR INJURIES:**

No injuries were reported as a result of the fire.

#### **ESTIMATED VALUE OF LOSS:**

The estimated loss due to fire had not been determined, but assumed in excess of \$1,000,000.00.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

By means of a systematic approach to determine the fire origin and cause to include investigator's training, experience, interviews, witness statements, and scene examination, investigators developed several hypotheses during the investigation to include, but not limited to, the following:

- The construction project at the adjacent six-plex where the building was being lifted/leveled, dislodged the electrical service wires supplied from the building of origin to the six-plex, leading to an arcing or resistance heating condition within the electrical service panel of the building of origin.
  - This cause could not be eliminated.
- Careless discarding of smoking materials around or within the building of origin.
  - This cause could not be eliminated, however, based on witness statements regarding the initial fire conditions, this is least probably.
- Improper installation of electrical components.
  - This cause could not be eliminated.

Based on witness statements and their observations made during the initial stages of the fire, it is the opinion of investigators that the most probable cause to the fire was electrical in nature. Due to the building of origin being demolished in the community's attempt to prevent conflagration, the point of origin and the first material ignited could not be identified.

#### **DISPOSITION:**

This case

## Public Records Exemptions

Enclosed please find a copy of the response documents for your public records request. The following information is provided to explain the process employed to review and produce the response documents.

Reason	Description	Pages
A6C	AS 40.25.120 (a)(6)(C) - ) could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of the personal privacy of a suspect, defendant, victim, or witness	6, 4
A2	AS 40.25.120 (a)(2) - records pertaining to juveniles	2, 4
CJIS	AS 12.62.160 - Criminal justice information and the identity of recipients of criminal justice information are confidential and exempt from disclosure under AS 40.25.	6
		6