

Fire destroys Miller Heating and Cooling early Saturday

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An electrical fire which apparently started in an attic area completely destroyed the building which housed Miller Heating and Cooling on State Road 256 in Austin early Saturday morning, March 21.

Kevin Salyers, acting fire chief for the Jennings Township Volunteer Fire Department, stated that the department received an alert call around 2 a.m. Saturday, advising that the business was on fire.

Apparently, a 9-1-1 call was placed to dispatchers by residents across the highway from the business. Miller Heating and Cooling was located in what is known locally as the old Home Oven Restaurant. The structure had been renovated to serve the purposes of the business, which had been located there a little over a year.

Firemen were faced with a wall of flames. About 15 tackled the hazardous business of extinguishing the blaze. Asst. Chief Salyers said he placed an assist call to Crothersville/Vernon Township Volunteer Fire Department, which responded with another eight men and equipment. Together, the two departments successfully drowned the flames after several hours' work.

What caused the largest problem was the fact that some of the equipment heated up and then exploded, raising the roof several inches before allowing it to drop back inside the building. Firemen had to get under the remains of the roof to beat out the fire.

Owner John Miller said he was called to the scene and watched as the firemen tried again and again to extinguish the blaze. "We just really appreciate all that they did. It was a hard job, and they really struggled," he stated.

All of the business' service vehicles were parked close to the building when the fire started. Since the keys were inside the building, a wrecker service was called to move all of the trucks to a safe distance.

Asst. Chief Salyers said the building and its contents were a total loss.

Fortunately, the company had its old building at 126 English Avenue in Austin at which to relocate. Miller's Heating and Cooling will stay there until the site can be cleared and rebuilding is completed, Miller advised. "We poured a lot of time and effort into (the new building), but we're going to rebuild. That's the plan," Miller commented. The firm's telephone number will remain 794-4406.

He confirmed that all of the structure's doors and windows were secured at the time the fire started.

Asst. Chief Salyers said a follow-up investigation is expected to be completed soon.