



- L&T staff report A structure adjacent to the Perryton Equity Exchange grain elevator in Liberal was completely destroyed by fire Sunday night, but no injuries have been reported.

The structure was once part of the old Light Grain Flour Mill, and according to Liberal Fire Chief Kelly Kirk, officials are still investigating the cause of the fire.

In a press statement released Monday afternoon, Kirk said Liberal firefighters responded to a reported structure fire at 7:25 p.m. Sunday in the flour mill at Perryton Equity Exchange located at 140 S. Kansas Ave.

“Heavy smoke and flames were visible from nearly everywhere in the city at the time fire units were dispatched,” Kirk reported. “The first fire unit arrived on scene at 7:29 and confirmed that the three-story flour mill and one-story warehouse were fully engulfed in flames. “The fire also involved two rail cars, the elevator facility and a warehouse immediately across the railroad tracks,” he continued. “Due to the size, extent and wind driven nature of the fire, crews immediately assumed a defensive attack, focusing on containment and exposure protection.”

Kirk noted winds were at 15 to 20 mph with gusts over 30 mph.

Also responding to the initial page were Liberal Police Department, Seward County EMS and Seward County Sheriff’s office. Immediate calls for assistance were also placed to Seward County Fire Department, Seward County Emergency Management, Turpin (Okla.) Fire Department and Tyrone (Okla.) Fire Department.

“In all, more than 75 area emergency responders and at least 15 fire apparatus were involved with bringing the incident under control,” Kirk added.

Cause of fire at old flour mill yet to be determined

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“Fire crews and law enforcement patrolled the area and neighborhoods north of the fire for several hours,” he added. “This was due to a large amount of embers and fire brands carried by the wind. These embers caused at least two additional structure fires, one residential and one commercial, one fence fire and multiple tree and grass fires.”

The fire was declared under control – though not entirely extinguished – at 2:03 a.m. Monday, more than six-and-a-half hours after it was reported.

Kirk noted the flour mill and warehouse were both empty and scheduled for demolition in the near future.

“These two structures were completely destroyed in the fire,” he added. “The two railcars were loaded with fertilizer and are a total loss. The elevator facility suffered significant damage from direct flame and radiant heat. And the fertilizer warehouse suffered extensive fire damage to approximately one-third of the building. All other damage from the exposure fires due to embers was minor in nature.”

Kirk reported there are still smoldering fires beneath the rubble pile that are inaccessible due to the amount of collapsed debris.

“These fires will likely smolder for some time and will be monitored by the fire department,” he said.

Firefighters and a pumper unit were still on site at 6 early this morning.

“The cause of the fire is undetermined at this time and an investigation will be ongoing in conjunction with multiple local agencies and insurance company representatives,” Kirk noted.

“The Liberal Fire Department, along with all other agencies involved, would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to all of the individuals and businesses that provided an overwhelming amount of support for the responders at this incident. The food, drink and other supplies were invaluable to the personnel involved in an intense and physically draining emergency response,” he added.