



Press Release: February 22, 2016

## Fire Damages Veterans Memorial Golf Course Building

A fire of undetermined origin destroyed a portion of the maintenance building on Veterans Memorial Golf Course Sunday, Feb. 22.

Corrections Officers at the Washington State Penitentiary reported the fire at 1:16 a.m. Firefighters from the Walla Walla Fire Department and Walla Walla County Fire District 4 responded to the call. Since there were chemicals and other flammable substances stored in the building, firefighters made a defensive attack, staying out of the toxic smoke while preserving the portion of the building that was not engulfed in flames. Firefighters remained on the scene until 4 a.m.

Mowers, utility vehicles, a tractor and other items were destroyed. Their loss is estimated at approximately \$250,000. Approximately half of the building was lost, and the remaining portion was damaged. The estimated cost to repair or replace the structure has not yet been determined.

Chief Bob Yancey of the Walla Walla Fire Department said the fire was not caused by a short in electric wires, and that it may have begun inside the building. An investigator from the Washington Cities Insurance Authority will conduct an examination of the scene.

The fire follows a rash of burglaries at this maintenance building, three in recent weeks.

On the night of Jan. 26, burglars stole a leaf blower, chainsaws, tools, clothing, a microwave, and other items totaling approximately \$7,000.

On the night of Feb. 12, burglars stole a leaf blower, a chainsaw, and other items.

Two days later, burglars stole a computer, a computer monitor, tools, and other items. They broke into the building's equipment bay and opened the garage door. They took a Cushman all-purpose vehicle, loaded it with the stolen items, and drove it away from the golf course along the railroad tracks. The vehicle became stuck on the tracks, and the burglars set fire to it. The total loss from this break-in was approximately \$40,000.

The golf course is still open to the public, and the incidents have not affected business. There is enough equipment left to conduct maintenance on the course, and Wine Valley Golf Course and the Walla Walla Country Club are providing support as well.

If you have any information about the fire or the previous burglaries, please call the Walla Walla Police Department at 509-527-1960.

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