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Local News

Fire guts St. Joseph house

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David Knight photo Firefighters work Tuesday to put out a blaze that gutted a house in St. Joseph. City firefighters received help from Benton Harbor and St. Joseph Township fire departments.

By JIM DALGLEISH - H-P City Editor

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ST. JOSEPH - Firefighters from three departments battled a stubborn fire Tuesday that gutted a house in St. Joseph, city firefighters reported. Capt. Scott Moore said his department and firefighters from Benton Harbor and St. Joseph Township Station 1 put out the fire at the Al Buursma home, 1303 Forres Ave. City firefighters responded to a 4:28 p.m. call to the 1 1-2-story house that Buursma is renting from Lakeside Properties.

No one was home at the time of the fire, though a family dog died in the blaze, Moore said. Two St. Joseph Township firefighters suffered minor injuries during the 4 1/2-hour fight.

The fire's cause is still to be determined, he said.

Moore said the blaze destroyed about half the roof and caused smoke damage throughout the house.

He estimated structural damage at \$100,000 and content damage at \$75,000. The family has renter's insurance, Moore said.

He said the battle proved difficult because the attic area had been converted into several rooms of living space.

"There were a lot of concealed spaces," he said in a phone interview afterward.

"We had firefighters at the top of the stairs when the fire flashed through the wall, driving them back down."

He said the assistance from other departments proved crucial for St. Joseph firefighters, which responded with the on-duty, three-member crew and off-duty firefighters.

"Everyone did an excellent job. Those guys (from other departments) saved our bacon," Moore said.

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