



North Dakota Office of the State Fire Marshal (ND)

INCIDENT REPORT

Official Law Enforcement Report - Unauthorized Dissemination is Prohibited

Incident Type: Fire / Accidental

Agency Incident ID: NDSFM25-021

BATS ID: 1547452

Investigation Title: LANGDON BAKER RENTALS LLC FIRE



Incident Date/Time/Location

Status

Investigation Closed

Jurisdiction

Primary

Start Date/Time

2/23/2025 16:29 Sunday

Address

912 3rd St

City/State/Zip

Langdon, ND 58249

County

Cavalier County

Investigator Information

Name

Andrew J Browne

Phone

701-720-9264

Email

abrowne@nd.gov

Title

Deputy State Fire Marshal

Property Use or Target Information

Type

Residential

Subtype

Multifamily Dwelling

Status

Occupied And Operating



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Scene Details

Miscellaneous Information

Latitude

48.761759

Longitude

-98.368537



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Person/Organization Information

Name

CLOUSE, COURTNEY ALLISON

DOB

1990

Sex

F

Juvenile

No

Relationship(s)

Reporting Party

Race

Ethnicity

Age at time of Incident

34

Address Information

Street Address

1304 11th St

City/State/Zip

Langdon, ND 58249

County

Cavalier

Contact Information

Primary Phone

701-351-8050



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Name

RANNACHER, CHARLES EDWARD

DOB

1989

Sex

M

Juvenile

No

Relationship(s)

Occupant, Victim

Race

Ethnicity

Age at time of Incident

35

Address Information

Street Address

912 3rd St Apartment / Room Number 3

City/State/Zip

Langdon, ND 58249

Contact Information

Primary Phone

701-370-7747



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Name

LARSON, CHRISTOPHER ORDINE

DOB

1974

Sex

M

Juvenile

No

Relationship(s)

Injured, Occupant, Victim

Race

Ethnicity

Age at time of Incident

50

Address Information

Street Address

912 3rd St Apartment / Room Number 4

City/State/Zip

Langdon, ND 58249

Contact Information

Primary Phone

701-382-6271



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Name

HOLLIDAY, EILEEN SUNDAY

DOB

955

Sex

F

Juvenile

No

Relationship(s)

Occupant, Victim

Address Information

Street Address

912 3rd St Apartment / Room Number 2

City/State/Zip

Langdon, ND 58249

County

Cavalier

Contact Information

Primary Phone

701-370-8054



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Name

LABRECK, THERESA

DOB

█/1965

Sex

F

Juvenile

No

Relationship(s)

Occupant, Victim

Address Information

Street Address

912 3rd St Apartment / Room Number 1

City/State/Zip

Langdon, ND 58249

County

Cavalier

Contact Information

Primary Phone

701-382-6271



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Name

BAKER, EMILY ROSE

DOB **Race** **Ethnicity**

1993

Sex **Age at time of Incident**

F 31

Juvenile

No

Relationship(s)

Owner, Victim



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Name

KELLY, ERIC S

DOB **Race** **Ethnicity**

1990

Sex **Age at time of Incident**

M 34

Juvenile

No

Relationship(s)

Relative Other Than Spouse



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Name

PARSONS, WENDY L

DOB Race Ethnicity

1977

Sex Age at time of Incident

F 47

Juvenile

No

Relationship(s)

Relative Other Than Spouse



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Attachments

Filename	Description	Date
NDSFM25-021-1-LANGDON-BAKER RENTALS LLC-FIRE.pdf		5/6/2025

No image specified



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NDSFM25-021-2-Langdon-Baker
Rentals LLC-Fire PDF.pdf

5/21/2025

No image specified



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Narrative(s)

Title

Langdon Baker Rentals LLC Fire

Author

Andrew Browne

7017209264

abrowne@nd.gov

Description

A fire occurred in a multi-family dwelling with one injury reported.

Distribution Via Email Only:

Fire Chief Patrick Rime, Langdon Fire Department, fmbank@utma.com

Chief Deputy Gabriel Johnston, Cavalier County Sheriff's Office, gajohnston@nd.gov

Sheriff Matthew Wright, Cavalier County Sheriff's Office, matwright@nd.gov

Special Agent Craig Zachmeier, North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation, cz425@nd.gov



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Investigator/Agent - Browne, Andrew

Date

Approving Official

Date



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Identify the Need

Call for Service (dispatch, request, date, time):

On Sunday, February 23, 2025, at approximately 6:10 pm, I Deputy State Fire Marshal Andrew Browne received a phone call from the Deputy State Fire Marshal Jessica Sinerius regarding a fire investigation being requested by the Langdon Fire Department.

I contacted Firefighter Marty Tetrault of the Langdon Fire Department to discuss the request. During the conversation it was agreed that the fire investigation would begin on Monday, February 24, 2025, at 9:00 am.

North Dakota Century Code 18-01-07 states; "An investigation of each fire must be made by the officers required to report the occurrence of fires under section 18-01-06."

Define the Problem

Nature of Incident/Incident Overview:

On February 23, 2025, at 4:29 pm the Langdon Fire Department was dispatched to a two-story multi-family dwelling with a basement at 912 3rd St, Langdon, ND. The fire occurred in an occupied second story unit of the structure and spread to an adjacent second story unit of the structure. There was one injury reported. The patient was transported to Regions Hospital Burn Center in St. Paul, MN. (See Figure 1)



Figure 1 Photograph DSC_0013.JPG East Exterior Wall Facing West



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Authority to Enter/Search:

I arrived on scene at approximately 9:25 am on February 24, 2025, and met Fire Chief Mike Schrader of the Rugby Fire Department, Deputy State Fire Marshal Doug Pierre of the North Dakota State Fire Marshal's Office, Chief Deputy Gabriel Johnston of the Cavalier County Sheriff's Office, and several other members of the Langdon Fire Department.

Approximately one hour after my arrival, Special Agent Craig Zachmeier of the North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation arrived on scene to assist. It was determined that I would be the lead investigator and Special Agent Zachmeier and Deputy State Fire Marshal Pierre would be assisting me.

At approximately 3:30 pm, Fire Investigator Jacob Rylander of Jacob Rylander Principal Investigator & Consultant arrived on scene.

I was informed the scene was still being held under fire watch by the Langdon Fire Department and the investigation was completed under exigent circumstances.

I departed the scene at approximately 6:40 pm. The scene was turned over to Fire Investigator Jacob Rylander.

Assisting Person/Agencies:

Name	Agency	Case Reference if Available
Deputy State Fire Marshal Douglas Pierre	North Dakota State Fire Marshal's Office	NDSFM-25-021-2
Special Agent Craig Zachmeier	North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation	BCI25-00124_1
Fire Chief Mike Schrader	Langdon Fire Department	
Sheriff Matthew Wright	Cavalier County Sheriff's Office	CC-25-00230
Chief Deputy Gabriel Johnston	Cavalier County Sheriff's Office	CC-25-00230

Fatalities/Injuries:

Name	Fatality/Injury:	Notes/Other Information
Christopher O. Larson	Injury	Burn injuries. Transported to Regions Hospital Burn Center in St. Paul, MN.

Data Collection

Photographs:

The fire scene was documented photographically in the condition in which it was observed. During the scene examination and layering process, a series of 199 photographs were taken. The photographs and photograph log will remain with the file.

Drawings/Sketches:

Sketch of the second story was drawn by Deputy State Fire Marshal Andrew Browne. Sketch was not drawn to scale. The sketch will remain with the file.



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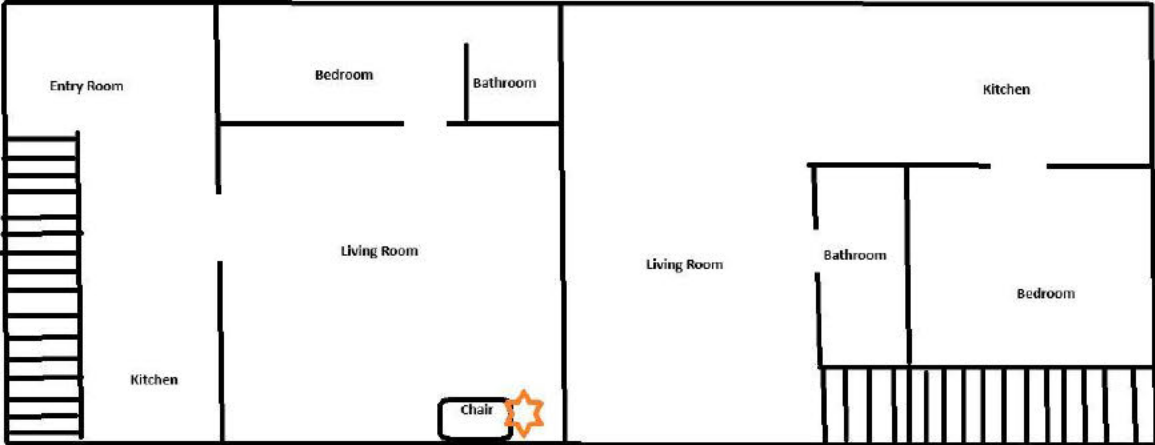
BATS ID: i-1547452

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North

 = Area of Origin

Case # NDSFM25-21
Date of Incident: February 23, 2025
912 3rd Street, Langdon, ND
Drawn By: Andrew Browne, Deputy State Fire Marshal
NOT TO SCALE



Exterior Scene Examination:

My examination of the fire scene began on the exterior south side and continued in a clockwise direction. During my initial walkthrough a Scene Safety Assessment Form was completed and will remain with the file.

The structure was a two-story multi-family dwelling with a basement. The structure had four separate units. The east main level unit was known as unit #1. The east second story unit was known as unit #2. The west main level unit was known as unit #3. The west second story unit was known as unit #4. The structure had a southernmost door on the west side of the structure that entered a main-level unit and stairs that entered a second-story unit. In addition, on the west side wall there was a northernmost door that entered the basement. On the east side of the structure there was a door that entered a main-level unit and stairs that enter a second story unit. The roof peak ran north/south. The roof was a metal roof with asphalt shingles underneath. The siding was wood painted siding with a concrete foundation. The electrical service entered the structure through a weather head to a raceway on the west wall to five separate meters. The meter sockets were pulled off and I observed the power was turned off at the pole. Gas entered the structure through an underground lateral along the west wall. I observed the gas was shut off at the meter. No visible damage was noted to the electrical service or gas service.

The south exterior wall had four main level windows intact and two basement windows intact. There were three upper-level windows that that the glass not intact. Along the upper-level windows there was soot despoths and charring along the two westernmost window trim. The easternmost window had soot deposits and charring along up upper portion of window trim. The south side soffit and fascia was charred throughout with soot despoths. Directly to the east of the easternmost window the siding was consumed exposing a hole to the upper-level east unit of the structure. Most of the eastern half of the roof and roofing members were collapsed. (See Figure 2)



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Figure 2 Photograph DSC_0001.JPG South Exterior Wall Facing Northwest

The west exterior wall had a door approximately in the center of the wall that entered the basement. The door was intact. The basement was used for utilities and laundry. There was a door on the southernmost end of the wall of the structure with concrete steps that led to the west main level and second story units. The door that entered the main level and second story units was in the open position and intact. As you entered the door there was a staircase to the north that led to the second story unit. There was no visible fire damage along this exterior side of the structure. The weatherhead and electrical meters were mounted north of the doors. The gas meter was on the nethermost end of the wall.

The north exterior wall had four main level windows that were intact and two basement windows that were intact. There were three second story windows that the glass was not intact. The westernmost windows had soot and charring around the window frame and soot despoths that extended upward. The north side soffit and fascia had charring throughout with soot despoths. The north portion the roof was collapsed exposing the interior upper level of the structure. (See Figure 3)



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Figure 3 Photograph DCS_0010.JPG North Exterior Wall Facing Southeast

The east exterior wall had a door that entered the east main level and second story units. As you entered the door there was staircase that directly led to the second story unit and a door to the north that entered the main level unit. There was a main level window that was intact. There were three upper-level windows with the glass not intact. The southernmost window had mass consumption around the window trim with the damage greater at the top portion of the window. There was charring along the middle and northernmost window along the top window trim. The east soffit fascia had mass consumption throughout. The roof had collapsed along the east portion.

Interior Scene Examination:



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My interior scene examination began in the in the area of least damage and continued to the area of greatest damage. During my initial walk through it was determined the second story western most unit was the area of greatest damage.

I entered the structure through the east entry/exit door the eastmost main level unit, known as unit #1. The unit had a living room when you entered the structure, a kitchen in the northwest corner of the unit, and bedroom and bathroom suite in the westernmost portion of the unit. Most of the ceiling was collapsed throughout. There were soot deposits throughout. There was no visible fire damage noticed. The personal contents within the unit were intact.

I continued my main level interior examination to the westernmost main-level unit, known as unit #3 by entering through the west entry/exit door. The unit had a kitchen as you entered the unit. Continuing south there was a living room. To the east of the living room was a bedroom and bathroom suite. Most of the ceiling was collapsed throughout. There were soot deposits throughout. There was no visible fire damage noticed. The personal contents within the unit were intact.

Continuing to the second story I entered the easternmost second story through the east entry/door that led to a staircase to the second story unit, known as unit #2. The stairs going up to the unit had charred remains of fire debris along the stair treads and the walls had soot deposits and charring the further you went towards the top of the stairwell. The eastmost second story unit had flashed over. As you entered the unit there was a living room, to the east was a kitchen, and in the northwest corner a bedroom bathroom suite. The ceiling truss members were mostly charred and had dropped down, and in the southwest corner of the unit the ceiling truss members were mostly consumed compared to the rest of the unit's truss members. Along the southernmost portion of the west wall the upper portion of the wall was consumed. The metal roofing was oxidized and warped throughout. The ceiling was exposed to the exterior sky. The wall studs were charred from the top down decreased in approximately in the middle with the bottom portion of the wall studs intact. Most of the plaster and lath had collapsed along the upper portion of the wall with most of the bottom portion intact. The southwest corner of the unit had mass loss along the upper portion of the wall studs that decreased from the top down. Most of the personal contents within the unit were consumed from drop down ceiling material igniting the contents within the unit. (See Figure 4)



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Figure 4 Photograph DCS_0072.JPG East Second Story Unit Facing Towards Living Room

Continuing I entered the westernmost second story unit through the west entry/exit door that lead to a stairwell that went upstairs. This unit was known as unit #4. The stairwell treads had remains of charred ceiling materials towards the top treads and decreased towards the bottom treads. The stairwell walls had soot deposits throughout and increased towards the top. The top portion of the stairwell walls had charring on both sides. The ceiling of the stairwell was charred towards the top and decreased as you went towards the bottom. (See Figure 5)



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Figure 5 Photograph DSC_0079.JPG West Stairwell to West Second Story Unit

At the top of the stairwell was an entry room. The entry room had a window along the north wall. The window was damaged, and no glass remained. The wood window frame had charring along all four sides. Most of the ceiling's insulation and plaster had fallen. The ceiling truss members were charred throughout. The entry room walls were charred throughout with the greatest damage along the east wall compared to the other walls within the entry room. Most of the personal contents within the entry room were consumed. The north wall around the window had more damage compared to the rest of the entry room. (See Figure 6)



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Figure 6 Photograph DSC_0082.JPG West Second Story Unit Entryway Room

Continuing south led into a hallway. The hallway had charring throughout that was comparable on both sides of the east and west wall. Most of the ceiling's insulation and plaster had fallen to the floor. The ceiling truss members were charred throughout.

South of the hallway was a kitchen. The kitchen had an electric range with an oven along the east wall, a counter and sink along the south wall, and a counter with a microwave and a refrigerator along the west wall. Above the sink on the south wall was a window with the glass not intact. There was charring along the wood window frame on all four sides. Most of the ceiling insulation and plaster had collapsed on the counter, appliances, and floor of the kitchen. The ceiling truss members were charred equally throughout. The walls had soot deposits throughout. The kitchen walls sustained charring less on the north and more on the south within the kitchen. The kitchen appliances such as the microwave and cooking utensils sustained consumption and melting. The cabinets sustained charring throughout. Inside the oven was a burnt pepperoni pizza.

Continuing east was a living room. The north wall of the living room had an entry/exit that led to a bedroom. The east wall had miscellaneous household storage items along the wall and remains of a couch. In the southeast corner of the living room was a television entertainment center. Along the south wall was a chair and a bay window. The bay window glass was not intact, and the wood window frame was charred along all four sides. The west wall had a couch, chair, miscellaneous household storage contents, and household garbage. Most of the insulation was consumed and covered the personal contents on the living room. On the northern portion of the living room the wooden roofing material had collapsed into the living room. The southernmost portion of the living had charring and peeling along the wall and decreased as you went towards the north within the living room. In the southeast corner of the living room above the chair, the ceiling truss members were consumed. In the southernmost corner of the east wall the upper portion of the wall was consumed. The



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damage was consistent with east second story unit's damage along the southwest corner of the east second story unit. (See Figure 7)



Figure 7 Photograph DSC_0096.JPG West Second Story Unit Living Room Facing South

To the north of the living was a bedroom bathroom suite. Along the west wall of the bedroom was the remains of a bed and box spring. The bedroom had comparable charring along all four walls. The ceiling truss members were collapsed and charred comparable. The roof had an exposed opening to the exterior due to roof assembly consumption. Most of the personal contents within the bedroom were consumed. The north bedroom window had damage, and the glass was broken.

To the east of the bedroom was a bathroom. The personal contents and the shower, sink, and toilet were mostly consumed. The walls in the bathroom had comparable charring on all four walls.

Layering began in the entry room of unit #4. The layering process began along the west wall and continued towards the east wall. Along the west wall was remains of personal contents such as clothing, gym bags, shoes, laptop remains, and garbage. On the west wall was the remains of a couch cushion and gym bag. I collected a sample of the couch cushion. I placed and sealed the article of the couch cushion into a metal can, to be sent to the crime lab for further analysis. (See Figure 8)



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Figure 8 Photograph DCS_0128.JPG Evidence Collection Photo From West Second Story Unit Entry Room

Still in the entry room, layering along the west wall revealed the remains of a laptop computer and charging cable. The west wall did not have any electrical receptacles nearby. Near the laptop were six batteries that were intact. Continuing layering to the east wall there were the remains of two tables along the east wall. The northernmost table was consumed. The southernmost tabletop portion was intact with mass loss along the southern portion of the tabletop. Along the east wall was an electrical receptacle above the southernmost table. The electrical receptacle had melting on the exterior faceplate and in the interior was intact. Along the east wall an empty cigarette package and a lighter that was found. (See Figure 9)



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Figure 9 Photograph DCS_0143.JPG After Layering Of West Most Second Story Unit Entry Room

I continued my layering to the living room of unit #4 of the southern half of the living room. I began along the west wall and continued the layering to the east wall. Along the west wall there were the remains of a chair, household personal contents such as clothing, kitchen cooking utensils, plastic storage totes, and household garbage being stored. During the layering of the west wall were empty liquor bottles and plastic bottles filled with discarded cigarette butts were revealed. Along the west wall was a portable space heater. The portable space heater was plugged into an electrical receptacle along the west wall. The portable space heater electrical cord exterior plastic jacketing was melted. The space heater electrical line cord remained intact. The portable space heater was charred and oxidized. The outlet was melted and charred, but the plug remained intact. Also plugged into the west wall electrical receptacle an extension cord that was plugged into a power strip. The extension cord had charring and was intact at the electrical receptacle. There were no electrical items plugged into the power strip. Along the west wall were several empty cigarette packages throughout. Most of the personal contents and garbage along the west wall were charred along the top layer with the bottom layers protected.

Continuing to the east along the south wall there was a chair in front of the bay window, a wood entertainment center in the southeast corner, and an office desk chair along the east wall. To the west of the chair was household garbage of empty liquor bottles, empty plastic bottles, and empty cigarette packages. The top layer of garbage was charred with the bottom layer unburned.

The wood entertainment center was charred along the top and northwest (front) portion from the top down. The office desk chair was consumed at the top and the legs and rollers were intact.

The chair arm rest along the west side was intact and the east arm rest was consumed and melted. The chair backrest was charred. The chair cushion was charred. There was more damage on the east side of the chair



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compared to the west side of the chair. Extending from the chair was a V-Pattern on the wall that extended upward from the chair. The ceiling truss members were consumed directly above the chair, exposing the exterior steel roofing. Directly on the floor to the north of the chair was a cellphone charger with a cellphone plugged in. The cellphone was intact and turned over to BCI Special Agent Craig Zachmeier. The cellphone charger was plugged into an extension cord. The extension cord had charring on the exterior plastic jacket consistent with fire impingement. On the cellphone charger cable there was an arc splatter approximately in the middle of the cable. (See Figure 10)



Figure 10 Photograph DSC_0181.JPG Southeast Corner of Living Room In Westernmost Second Story Unit After Layering

Layering in front of the entertainment center revealed a deceased dog on the floor to the northwest of the entertainment center.

The southeast corner of the living room had more damage compared the rest of the unit.

I continued my interior examination of the structure by entering the basement through a west entry/exit door. The basement had a clothing washer and dryer, personal content storage throughout, and a mechanical room. All the contents within the basement were intact with no visible fire damage noticed. The basement had water throughout the floor. The electrical fuse boxes were examined the basement with no visible damage noticed.

During the interior examination of the fire scene, there were no remains of candles or candle wax found with the west second story unit. There were no remains of oil rags, staining cans, or staining materials. There were no remains of welding materials or powered tools that would produce sparks or embers.

Interview #1:



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Name:	Theresa Labreck
Interview Date	February 25, 2025
<p>Notes: Theresa Labreck lived in apartment unit #1 at 912 3rd St, Langdon, ND. The following are notes from an informational interview with Theresa Labreck. The interview took place at the Cavalier County Sheriff's Office and was done voluntarily. The interview was non-custodial and was recorded. It should be noted that Theresa Labreck's son Eric Ranacher was present during the interview.</p> <p>Theresa Labreck stated Theresa Labreck lived at the residence for approximately 2 years in the lower-level east unit. Theresa Labreck stated Theresa Labreck got home at approximately 2:00 pm on February 23, 2025, and was playing games on the computer. Theresa Labreck stated at approximately 4:30 pm Dustin unknown last name and Becky Romfo was pounding on the door and yelling there was a fire to get out. Theresa Labreck stated Theresa Labreck did not smell smoke or know there was a fire.</p> <p>Theresa Labreck stated that Theresa Labreck got all three dogs out of the unit and went to the west side of the building and noticed Charles Rannacher pulling Christopher Larson away from the building. Theresa Labreck stated the only location Theresa Labreck could observe fire was coming from a northwest corner window.</p> <p>Theresa Labreck stated that Theresa Labreck only saw Christopher Larson and Charles Rannacher in passing a couple times and didn't know anything out of the ordinary about either. Theresa Labreck knew the second story tenant above Eileen Holliday and didn't know anything out of the ordinary about Eileen, who lived in unit #2. Theresa Labreck stated Theresa Labreck was a smoker and knew that Christopher Larson and Charles Rannacher smoked, and Eileen Holliday did not smoke. Theresa Labreck did not know much about the other neighbors other than overheard that Christopher Larson drank a lot.</p> <p>Theresa Labreck stated that landlord was Emily Baker and had no issues with Emily Baker. Theresa Labreck stated monthly rent was \$525.00 per month. Theresa Labreck stated there was a smoke detector above the living room door and was last changed approximately 1 year ago. Theresa Labreck stated there was a one-year lease agreement and was currently month to month.</p> <p>Theresa Labreck stated that no law enforcement was called to the apartment complex in the past. Theresa Labreck did not have renters' insurance.</p> <p>This concluding my interview with Theresa Labreck.</p>	

Interview #2:	
Name:	Charles O. Rannacher
Interview Date:	February 24, 2025
<p>Notes: Charles Rannacher lived in unit #3 at 912 3rd St, Langdon, ND. The following are notes from an informational interview with Charles Rannacher. The interview took place at the Cavalier County Sheriff's Office and was done voluntarily. The interview was non-custodial and was recorded.</p> <p>Charles Rannacher lived at the residence for approximately 1 ½ years and paid rent of \$512.00 per month and was in a 1-year lease and currently month to month. Charles Rannacher stated Charles Rannacher had done work to his unit with painting and helped the landlord with other projects with the building like a roofing project. Charles Rannacher stated that Charles Rannacher did not do electrical work and was unaware of any</p>	



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electrical work done to the property. Charles Rannacher was not aware of any electrical issues to the property. Charles Rannacher did not have renters' insurance.

Charles Rannacher stated that Charles Rannacher was lying in bed relaxing when Charles Rannacher heard "stomping or banging" from upstairs on the ceiling from Christopher Larson's unit. Charles Rannacher stated this around approximately 4:30 pm. Charles Rannacher stated shortly after hearing the stomping or banging Charles Rannacher stated Charles Rannacher overheard Chris Larson yelling "Chuck help". Charles Rannacher exited the unit and observed Christopher Larson sitting upright on the common stairs that entered up towards Christopher Larson's unit on approximately the third stair tread from the bottom. Charles Rannacher described Christopher Larson as looking muddy and brown and was wearing a T-shirt and work pants. Charles Rannacher stated Christopher Larson was alert and yelling for help.

Charles Rannacher stated Charles Rannacher ran back inside Charles Rannacher's unit to get boots and a coat and then went back out to help Christopher Larson out of the structure. Charles Rannacher stated Christopher Larson was losing consciousness and Charles Rannacher stated Christopher Larson blacked out at one point. Charles Rannacher stated a bystander assisted Charles Rannacher with moving Christopher Larson to a west parking lot away from the structure, approximately 20 feet away.

Charles Rannacher described the flames at the top of the stairwell as licking from right to left and black smoke. Charles Rannacher stated the flames were approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ up the door towards the top of unit #4.

Charles Rannacher stated that Charles Rannacher then went along the south side of the structure to alert the occupants on the east side of the structure. Charles Rannacher said Charles Rannacher did not see the north side of the structure. Charles Rannacher could hear glass breaking when traveling along the south side of the structure. Charles Rannacher stated that Charles Rannacher went to alert the east upper-level tenant Eileen Holliday.

Charles Rannacher stated Charles Rannacher did not hear smoke detectors going off. Charles Rannacher stated Charles Rannacher believe Charles Rannacher's unit had one smoke detector and had never changed the batteries when residing there.

Charles Rannacher stated that Charles Rannacher knew the other occupants of the structure but knew Christopher Larson the best. Charles Rannacher provided information regarding about Christopher Larson. Charles Rannacher provided the following information about Christopher Larson was a smoker, known to drink on the weekends, does not use drugs, worked for Ratzaff Farms, had one sister, had two daughter's teenagers, had a long-distance girlfriend in New York State, and did not cook and ate microwave meals.

Charles Rannacher stated Charles Rannacher smoked and discard cigarette butts in an ash tray that was cleaned out approximately once a day or every other day. Charles Rannacher stated the landlord allowed smoking in the structure. Charles Rannacher provided information about smoking on the property and stated Charles Rannacher smokes Newports or menthols, Christopher Larson smokes non menthols, Eileen Holliday was a non-smoker, and Theresa Labrack was unknown if they smoked.

Charles Rannacher stated that Charles Rannacher talked to Christopher Larson's boss's wife regarding that Christopher Larson had talked to Christopher Larsons boss approximately 30 minutes before the fire regarding picking up Christopher Larson's paycheck. Charles Rannacher stated that Christopher Larson talked about going to snowmobile race the prior weekend and upcoming weekend with Christopher Larson's boss. This concluded my interview with Charles Rannacher.



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Interview #3:	
Name:	Eileen Holliday
Interview Date:	February 24, 2025
<p>Notes: Eileen Holliday lived in unit #2 at 912 3rd St, Langdon, ND. The following are notes from an informational interview with Eileen Holliday. The interview took place at the Cavalier County Sheriff's Office and was done voluntarily. The interview was non-custodial and was recorded. It should be noted that Eileen Holliday's daughter Wendy Parsons was present during the interview.</p> <p>Eileen Holliday stated Eileen Holliday lived at the apartment for approximately 1 ½ years and was in a month-to-month contract after a one-year lease with rent payments of \$525.00. Eileen Holliday's unit was the upper-level east unit #2.</p> <p>Eileen Holliday stated that Eileen Holliday got home from work on February 23, 2025, at approximately 7am and was sleeping after working 11pm-7am the prior night at the Cobblestone Inn and Suites in Langdon. Eileen Holliday stated Eileen Holliday was awoken from someone yelling help and could smell and see smoke while laying in bed and was half asleep. Eileen Holliday stated while still half asleep a short time later someone was banging on Eileen Holliday's door. Eileen Holliday stated Eileen Holliday went to the door and saw Charles Rannacher there alerting Eileen Holliday to get out of the unit and there was a fire. Eileen Holliday exited the unit and went to Eileen Holliday's vehicle on the east roadway from the structure. Eileen Holliday stated Eileen Holliday did not hear any smoke detectors going off.</p> <p>Eileen Holliday is a non-smoker, and Eileen Holliday knew the other tenants were all smokers. Eileen Holliday did not see Christopher Larson but seen the other two tenants.</p> <p>This concluded my interview with Eileen Holliday.</p>	

Interview #4:	
Name:	Jeff Retzlaff
Interview Date:	February 25, 2025
<p>Notes: Jeff Retzlaff was Christopher Larson's employer at Retzlaff Farm. The following are notes from an informational interview with Jeff Retzlaff. The interview took place over the telephone and was done voluntarily. The interview was non-custodial and was not recorded.</p> <p>Jeff Retzlaff was Christopher Larson's employer where Christopher Larson worked. Jeff Retzlaff stated Christopher was a good person and hardworking and considered as family. Jeff Retzlaff stated last time Jeff Retzlaff saw Christopher Larson was on February 22, 2025, at approximately 3pm when Christopher Larson left work. Jeff Retzlaff stated Jeff Retzlaff texted Christopher Larson on February 23, 2025, in the morning hours regarding a welder that had came in the day before Christopher Larson had ordered. Jeff Retzlaff stated around 3:30 pm on the same day Christopher Larson texted Jeff Retzlaff regarding turning weekly work hours and wanting to come pick-up Christopher Larson's paycheck. Jeff Retzlaff stated during that conversation exchanged it was planned that Christopher Larson would pick up the paycheck that evening later or on the next day Monday, February 24, 2025. Jeff Retzlaff stated the last text around 3:50 pm that was exchanged.</p>	



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Jeff Retzlaff stated Christopher Larson was a smoker and would smoke while at work. Jeff Retzlaff stated Christopher Larson was right-handed. Jeff Retzlaff knew Christopher Larson drank but unknown what extent and would be at home instead of going out to a bar.

Jeff Retzlaff stated Christopher Larson had a twin sister. Jeff Retzlaff stated that Christopher Larson's parents passed away at an early age. Jeff Retzlaff stated Jeff Retzlaff had been in contact with Christopher Larsons sister and updated Christopher Larson was stable and still in a coma as of late after on February 25, 2025.

This concluded my interview with Jeff Retzlaff.

Interview #5:

Name: Christopher Larson

Interview Date: March 21, 2025

Notes: Christopher Larson was the burn victim that lived in unit #4 at 912 3rd St, Langdon, ND. The following are notes from an informational interview with Christopher Larson. The interview took place over the telephone and was done voluntarily. The interview was non-custodial and was not recorded.

Christopher Larson stated Christopher Larson does not remember much from that day of the fire with the events leading up to the fire. Christopher Larson does remember working the day prior to the fire. Christopher Larson stated that Christopher Larson was burnt on his arms, back, head, neck, legs, and bottom of feet. Christopher Larson stated that Christopher Larson was in a coma and has been awake for approximately 2 weeks.

Christopher Larson stated that Christopher Larson was a smoker and smoked inside the apartment unit. Christopher Larson stated Christopher Larson does minimal cooking that includes microwavable meals and frozen pizzas in the oven. Christopher Larson stated that the primary room used in the unit was the living room where Christopher Larson spent most of the time while at home.

Christopher Larson stated that most probable cause of the fire would have been possibly from cigarette smoking, as Christopher Larson has no memory of the incident. Christopher Larson was unaware of any of electrical issues within the apartment unit. Christopher Larson felt bad that Christopher Larson's dogs had perished during the fire.

Christopher Larson stated Christopher Larson has approximately 1 month left at Regions Hospital before being transferred to a physical therapy unit.

This concluded my interview with Christopher Larson.

Video:

No video was obtained for this investigation.

Weather Reviewed:

The weather information was obtained from www.wunderground.com, Weather Underground. The data was reviewed for February 23, 2025, for Langdon, ND. The closest reporting state was the Devils Lake Regional



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Airport Station, which is approximately 70 miles away. The weather information was review from the times of 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm. The following information was learned.

Temperature: 39 Degrees Fahrenheit to 40 Degrees Fahrenheit

Humidity: 70% to 76%

Wind Direction: SSW to SW

Wind Speed: 15 mph to 20 mph

Wind Gusts: 0 mph

Conditions: Cloudy/Fair

[Devils Lake, ND Weather History | Weather Underground](#)

The weather did not factor in the fire ignition. The spread of the fire may have been attributed to the wind speed and direction from one compartment to another within the structure.

Times:

Hard Time Description	Time	Soft Time Description
	3:50pm	Christopher Larson's supervisor last exchanged text message
Time of 911 Call from Cavalier Co Call for Service	4:27 pm	
Time of Dispatch from Cavalier Co Call for Service	4:29 pm	
Time On Scene from Cavalier Co Call for Service	4:34 pm	
Time Clear of Scene from Cavalier Co Call for Service	8:40 pm	

Evidence identified/collected/preserved:

On February 24, 2025, one sample was collected from the interior of the structure at 912 3rd St, Langdon, ND. The sample was transported to the North Dakota Criminal Laboratory for further analysis of the presence of ignitable liquids. The following were the samples collected:

1 of 1 Bottom Couch Cushion (Floor of Entry Room in Unit #4).

Data Analysis, hypothesis development, hypothesis testing, select final hypothesis

Other Forms/Documents/Reports Reviewed:

Cavalier County Sheriff's Office Call for Service Incident #CC-25-00230

- Time of call was 4:29 pm and date of call was February 23, 2025.



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- Julia Shirek was the 911 caller.
- Charles Rannacher was another 911 caller.
 - Stated neighbor upstairs must have had an accident.
 - Stated neighbor Christopher Larson was needing help.
 - Stated neighbor Christopher Larson "he's on the bottle".
 - Stated "were fucked".
 - Stated "he's passed out again".
- Call for service reported Christopher Larson was on the ground in the alley behind the apartment with minor burns.

NFPA 921, A Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations, 2024 Edition

Section 3.3.3 Accident

"An unplanned event that interrupts an activity and sometimes causes injury or damage or a chance occurrence arising from unknown causes; an unexpected happening due to carelessness, ignorance and the like."

Section 19.1.3 Ignition Source

"Sometimes the source of ignition will remain at the point of origin in recognizable form, whereas other times the ignition source may be altered, destroyed, consumed, moved, or removed..."

Kirk's Fire Investigation, Eighth Edition

4.6 Smoking as a Fire Origin

"There is no question that the carelessness of smokers is the primary reason for the high incidence of both indoor and outdoor fires..."

4.6.1 Cigarettes

"Heat release rate for an average tobacco cigarette has been reported as approximately 5 W. Such a low level emphasizes the necessity for a fuel to be in direct contact with the smoldering tip of the cigarette before ignition can be ensured..."

4.6.2 Bedding and Furnishings

"Cigarettes and cigars, being sources of sustained smoldering combustion, are more likely to ignite finely divided cellulosic fuels like cotton padding than thermoplastics and foams that melt rather than char..."

Fire Safer Cigarette (FSC) Data

The North Dakota State Fire Marshal's Office keeps data that is obtained on cigarettes sold within the State of North Dakota. The data obtained gave information regarding cigarettes and their information. Within the second story west unit there were cigarette packages found. The packages were Marlboro Red 100's and Eagle 20's Red 100's. The following information was learned. The Marlboro Red 100's had a pass score and were tested on June 1, 2022, with no pass rate percentage listed. The Eagle 20's Red 100's had a pass score with a 97.5% fail rate listed. The chart had been reviewed and remains with the case file. Please refer to the chart in the case file.

Area of Origin:

Based on the examination of the fire scene, data collected, and witness statements the area of origin was determined to be at the chair along the south wall in the living room of unit #4.



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- Fire Effects
 - Mass loss along the east arm rest of the chair compared to the west arm of the chair.
 - V-pattern extending upward from the chair along the wall in the southeast corner of the living room.
 - Mass loss to the truss members along the southeast corner of living room above the chair.
 - The mass loss to the truss members within this area was more compared to the other areas within unit #2 and unit #4.
 - Farther away from the southeast corner of unit #4 living room, the mass loss on the truss members decreased, with an isolated area of the southeast corner of the living room's truss members were consumed.
 - Mass loss upper portion to the southernmost portion of the wall on the second story between unit #2 and unit #4.
 - Farther away from this area of the structure the mass loss of the wall studs decreased. The wall studs were burned from the top down throughout the structure.
- Fire Dynamics
 - Flame impingement above the chair to ceiling that entered the attic space of the structure.
 - Door opened of unit #4 allowing for fresh air to enter the unit.
 - This was consistent with ventilation patterns observed within the entry room of unit #4. The door was reported to have been left open and the north window failed early described by witnesses. This allowed fresh air to enter the structure and exit the structure, contributing to the growth and spread of the fire. The damage within the entry room was consistent with ventilation and not the area of origin.
 - Window failure of unit #4 allowed fresh air to enter the unit.
 - Witnesses observe the north window of unit #4 fail first then the south bay window of the living room fail second.
 - Fresh air entering the structure allowed for the growth and spread of fire. As the fire grew, the heat increased allowing for heat impingement to fail windows within the structure.
 - Fuel load of personal contents and garbage within unit #4.
 - Consistent with growth and development of fire.
 - As the fire went from the chair in unit #4, the fire spread to the attic space between unit #2 and unit #4 on the second story.
 - Consistent with fire spread.
 - From the southeast corner of the living room in unit #4 which sustained more damage among the truss members, the damage decreased further away. This would be consistent with the spread and growth of the fire to adjacent areas of the structure.
- Witness Statements
 - Charles Rannacher described seeing flames at the top of the stairs in unit #4 at approximately the upper portion of the room from right to left.
 - Charles Rannacher stated seeing flames from the northwest window of unit #4.
 - Theresa Labreck could observe fire was coming from a northwest corner window.
 - Theresa Labreck knew the second story tenant above Eileen Holliday and didn't know anything out of the ordinary about Eileen, who lived in unit #2.
 - Charles Rannacher described the flames at the top of the stairwell as licking from right to left and black smoke. Charles Rannacher stated the flames were approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ up the door towards the top of unit #4.



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- Christopher Larson stated that the most probable cause of the fire would have been possibly caused by cigarette smoking, as Christopher Larson has no memory of the incident.

Cause Hypothesis Development and Testing:

Based on the examination of the fire scene, witness statements, and other data reviewed, the following were identified as the most credible potential causes within the area of origin:

A person or persons unknown ignite ordinary combustible materials such as paper, clothing, furniture, ignitable liquids using an open flame.

- The victim was known to live alone.
- The victim was known to not have many visitors to the unit.
- Tenants living at the building did not report any unusual activity or unknown persons in the area.
- The victim was home at the time of fire.
- The victim's supervisor did not report anything unusual or suspicious while texting the victim
- This hypothesis can be eliminated.

Overheating of an electrical extension cord where an arcing event occurred to ignite cloth, carpet, or plastic for a duration long enough to sustain ignition.

- Extension cord in the area of origin was intact with melting consistent with direct fire impingement.
 - The extension cords along the area around the chair in the southeast corner of the living room were intact. The line cords were intact but sustained melting from fire impingement, in which the line cord was intact with no signs of arc melting or beading.
 - The west wall extension cords that were plugged into the west wall receptacles were intact and remained in the socket. The line cords sustained melting from fire impingement, which the line cord was intact with no signs of arc melting or beading.
 - The interior line cords were still intact with most of the damage to the exterior plastic jacketing.
- Receptacles in the area of origin were intact on the interior of the receptacles but sustained melting on the exterior, from fire impingement.
 - The receptacles were examined on the interior. There was no visible fire damage to the interior and the residential wiring and work box were intact.
 - The electrical extension cord was plugged into the receptacle along the west wall.
- This hypothesis can be eliminated.

An arcing event within a cellphone charger line cord that ignited cloth, carpet, or plastic for a duration long enough to sustain ignition.

- A cellphone was found in front of the chair, in the southeast corner of the living room. The cellphone was intact, and the line cord cellphone charger remained intact.
 - The cellphone charger was plugged into the extension cord.
 - The extension cord was intact and did not show any signs of arc melting. The extension cord sustained melting from fire impingement, as the line cord was intact and there were no signs of arc melting or beading.
- The cellphone sustained melting along the exterior jacketing of the cellphone.
- There was no visible damage or bulging to the cellphone.
- The cellphone was plugged into the cellphone charger.
- The cellphone charger was not damaged.



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- This hypothesis can be eliminated.

Improperly handled or discarded cigarette which fell between the arm rest and cushion of the chair which ignited cloth materials that sustained enough heating to ignite a fire.

- The victim and tenant of unit #4 was a known smoker to other tenants within the building.
- There were smoking materials such as lighters and cigarette butts in proximity to the area of origin.
 - Lighters were found in the area, which was the ignition source of lighting cigarettes.
- Chair was made of cloth material.
 - Cloth with direct heating from a cigarette end burning sustained enough heating to ignite the cloth materials.
 - A cigarette fell in between cushion and the right arm rest with ambient room air allowing oxygen to add an oxidant to the room environment.
 - Kirk's states heat release rate of a cigarette is 5 watts. Conversion of the heat release rate from watts is 400 to 500 degrees Fahrenheit.
 - Kirk's states that cloth has an ignition temperature of a range of approximately 410 to 750 degrees Fahrenheit.
 - The arm rest on the east side of the chair sustained melting and charring. This damage was more compared to the west side of the chair.
- Data was obtained from the Fire Safer Cigarette (FSC) program. The two cigarettes' packages found in the area of origin were Marlboro Red 100's and Eagle 20's Red. The Marlboro FSC data showed a pass with no percentage pass rate listed. The Eagle 20's showed a pass with a 97.5% pass rate.
 - Per Kirk's, "Cigarettes and cigars, being sources of sustained smoldering combustion, are more likely to ignite finely divided cellulosic fuels like cotton padding than thermoplastics and foams that melt rather than char..."
 - Kirk's states that foam found in furniture is made of polyurethane. These materials will ignite at a temperature of 600 to 680 degrees Fahrenheit.
 - The chair materials were cloth on the exterior of the chair.
- The victims' supervisor was texting the victim until approximately 4:50 pm regarding picking up a paycheck.
- Victim was known to drink on the weekends from information obtained from Charles Rannacher.
 - There were multiple empty bottles of liquor bottles within proximity to the area of origin.
- There were multiple empty plastic bottles filled with cigarette butts throughout the living room.
- Christopher Larson reported spending majority of time in living room when at home.
- The east side of the chair had more mass loss compared to the west side of the chair.
 - Consistent with a person being right-handed.
 - Supervisor reported victim to be right-handed.
 - Christopher Larson reported being right-handed.
- The chair and area around sustained the most damage within the living room compared to other areas within the living room.
- V-pattern extending upward from the chair.
 - Consistent with fire spread and direction.
- This hypothesis cannot be eliminated.

Final Hypothesis/Conclusion:

Based on the examination of the fire scene, witness statements, and other data reviewed, the area of origin was determined to be at the chair along the south wall in the living room of unit #4.



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Improperly handled or discarded cigarette which fell between the arm rest and cushion of the chair which ignited cloth materials that sustained enough heating to ignite a fire.

The cause of the fire was classified as accidental.

The opinions expressed in this conclusion are based on data and evidence collected to this point. The opinions are subject to change based upon relevant, significant and credible information discovered or provided in the future.

References:

Technical Committee on Fire Investigations. 2023. NFPA 921: Guide For Fire & Explosion Investigations. 2024 Edition. NFPA. Quincy, MA



North Dakota State Fire Marshals Office (ND)
SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT NARRATIVE
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Incident Type: FIRE/ARSON

Agency Incident ID: NDSFM25-021

BATS ID: i-1547452

Investigation Title: LANGDON BAKER RENTALS LLC FIRE

Lead Fire/Explosion Origin and Cause Investigator:		
Name	Agency	Case Reference if Available
Andrew Browne	North Dakota State Fire Marshal's Office	NDSFM25-021

Fatalities/Injuries:		
Name	Fatality/Injury:	Notes/Other Information:
Christopher O. Larson	Injury	Burn injuries. Transported to Hennepin County Medical Center in Minneapolis, MN.

Reason For Supplemental Report:
<p>I, Deputy State Fire Marshal, Doug Pierre was contacted by Deputy State Fire Marshal, Andrew Browne requesting assistance with a fire investigation in Langdon, North Dakota. I was requested to assist with origin and cause for an apartment complex fire.</p> <p>It was determined that DSFM Andrew Browne would be the lead investigator, and I would be assisting.</p> <p>This supplemental report is to document my assistance at the scene.</p>

Remarks:
<p>I arrived on scene at approximately 9:00 am. I departed the scene at approximately 6:00 pm. I assisted with the investigation, delayering, reconstruction process and any other need as directed by DSFM Browne.</p> <p>I was not responsible for documentation and did not take any photographs. Upon completion of the fire scene examination and at the direction of the lead investigator, I cleared the scene. This concluded my assistance with the investigation.</p> <p>See lead investigator's report for further information related to the origin and cause determination.</p>