



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: NDSFM25-031

BATS ID: 1551622

Investigation Title: CARRINGTON MARLOW FIRE



Incident Date/Time/Location

Status

Investigation Closed

Jurisdiction

Primary

Start Date/Time

4/2/2025 14:44 Wednesday

Address

552 2nd St

City/State/Zip

Carrington, ND 58421

County

Foster 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

1 (Single Family) or 2 Family Dwelling

Status

Occupied And Operating



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Scene Details

Miscellaneous Information

Latitude

47.447291

Longitude

-99.119670



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Person/Organization Information

Name

MARLOW, EARNEST L

DOB

1970

Sex

M

Juvenile

No

Relationship(s)

Owner, Victim

Race

White

Ethnicity

Non-Hispanic

Age at time of Incident

54

Address Information

Street Address

552 2ND ST S.

City/State/Zip

CARRINGTON, MN
58421

County

FOSTER

Contact Information

Primary Phone

701-307-1003



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Attachments

Filename	Description	Date
NDSFM25-031-1 CARRINGTON MARLOW FIRE.pdf		5/8/2025

No image specified



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Investigator/Agent - Browne, Andrew

Date

Approving Official

Date



North Dakota State Fire Marshals Office (ND)
INCIDENT ORIGIN & CAUSE NARRATIVE
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Identify the Need

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

On Wednesday, April 2, 2025, at approximately 3:25 pm, I Deputy State Fire Marshal Andrew Browne received a phone call from North Dakota State Radio Dispatch regarding a fire investigation being requested by the Carrington Fire Department. I contacted Fire Chief Ken Wangen to discuss the request. During the conversation it was agreed that I would respond immediately.

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:

A fire occurred in a three-story single-family residence with a basement at 552 2nd Street S, Carrington, North Dakota. The Carrington Fire Department responded to extinguish the fire. The fire was contained to the kitchen area near the southeast corner. There were no injuries or fatalities reported to the North Dakota State Fire Marshal Office. (See Figure 1)



Figure 1 Photograph DSC_0001.JPG North Exterior Wall Of Structure Facing South

Authority to Enter/Search:

I arrived on scene at approximately 4:45 pm on April 2, 2025. Upon my arrival Fire Chief Ken Wangen, Assistant Fire Chief Jason Wolsky, and Property Owner Earnest Marlow were on scene.

I presented Property Owner Earnest Marlow with a Consent to Search Form. Earnest Marlow reviewed the form and did not have any questions or concerns. Earnest Marlow signed the form and Deputy State Fire Marshal Nicholas Fettig was present and witnessed the conversation and Earnest Marlow signed the form. The form will remain with the file.

After signing the Consent to Search Form I provided Earnest Marlow with a safety briefing of the hazards and told Earnest Marlow to contact Earnest Marlow's insurance company for further instructions.

I departed the scene at approximately 6:55 pm.

Assisting Persons/Agencies:

Name	Agency	Case Reference if Available
Fire Chief Ken Wangen	Carrington Fire Department	2025-010
Deputy State Fire Marshal Nicholas Fettig	North Dakota State Fire Marshal's Office	NDSFM25-031-2

Fatalities/Injuries:

Name	Fatality/Injury:	Notes/Other Information:
		No injuries or fatalities were reported to the North Dakota State Fire Marshal's Office.

Data Collection

Photographs:

Prior to physically altering the fire scene, the fire scene was photographed in the condition it was found. During the investigation a series of 205 photographs were taken. The photographs and photograph log will remain with the file.

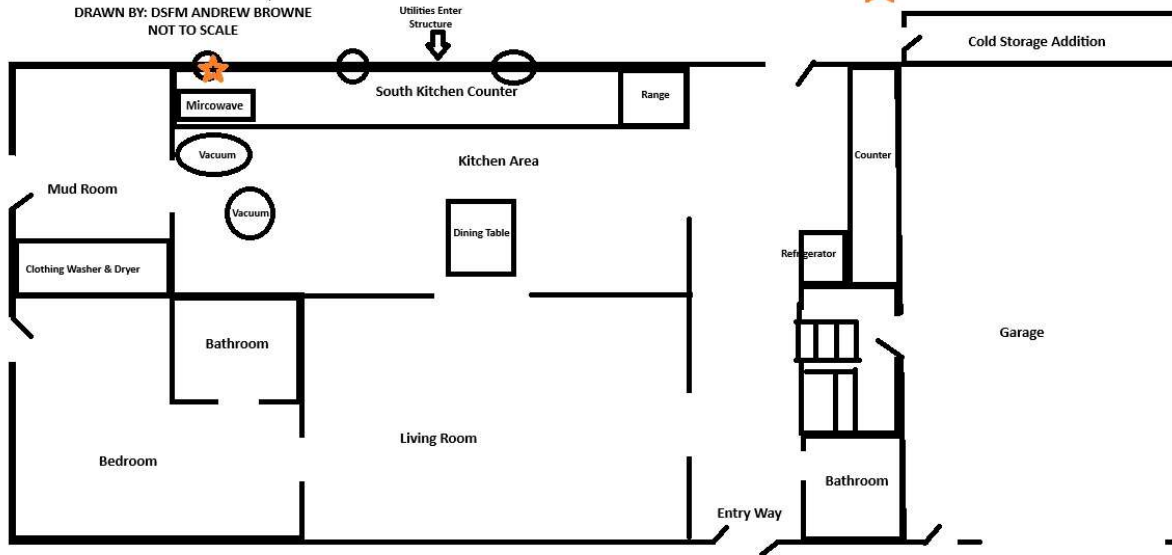
Drawings/Sketches:

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

NDSFM25-031
CARRINGTON MARLOW FIRE
DATE OF FIRE: APRIL 2, 2025
552 2ND ST. S. CARRINGTON, ND
DRAWN BY: DSFM ANDREW BROWNE
NOT TO SCALE



○ = Receptacles
★ = Area of Origin





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Exterior Scene Examination:

My examination of the fire scene began on the exterior north 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 three-story occupied residential structure with a finished basement. There was vinyl siding and asphalt shingles. The electrical service entered the structure through an underground lateral on the south wall. The electrical meter was pulled from the socket. The fire department informed me the power was turned off to the structure. There was no damage noted to the electrical service. Natural gas entered the structure from the south wall through an underground lateral. The fire department reported the gas meter was turned off. There was no damage noted to the natural gas service.

The exterior north wall had a garage door, garage entry/exit service door, front entry/exit door, three main level windows, three second story windows, and a wooden deck that extended from the structure. The wood deck had no damage noted. The second story windows glass was broken consistent with firefighting operations while the main level windows remained intact. The siding remained intact.

The exterior east wall had a glass entry/exit door, southernmost entry/exit door, one main level, and two second story windows. The second window's glass was broken consistent with firefighting operations while the lower-level window remained intact. The glass on the entry/exit door was intact. There was a wooden deck that extended from the east exterior wall of the structure. The wood deck had no damage noted. The siding in the southernmost upper portion of the structure was melted.

The exterior south wall had a south entry/exit door, garage service entry/exit door, three main level windows, and two second story windows. All the windows and glass along the south exterior wall were broken consistent with firefighting operations. Approximately along the easternmost half of the south wall was a wooden deck that extended from the structure with a wooden ramp that extended near the entry/exit door. The wood deck and ramp had no damage noted. Extending approximately in the middle of the south wall of the structure was a wooden trellis that extended from the structure. The wood trellis had no damage noted. Extending in the westernmost portion of the structure was a cold storage addition. The cold storage addition door was closed and no visible damage noted. The electrical services and natural gas entered the structure on the south wall to the east of the ramp. The siding to the east of the electrical services and natural gas meter was melted and the wood was charred. The fire damage started near the foundation and extended upward to the second story of the structure. As you went away from this area, the siding remained intact. The soffit and fascia of the roof directly above was charred. (See Figure 2)



Figure 2 Photograph DSC_0007.JPG South Exterior Wall Of Structure Facing North

The exterior west wall had no windows or doors. The west exterior had no fire damage noted, and the siding was intact.

Interior Scene Examination:

My interior scene examination began in the area of least damage and continued to the area of greatest damage. During my initial walk through it was determined the basement level was the area of least damage and the kitchen on the main level was the area of greatest damage.

I began my interior scene examination by entering the structure through the north entry/exit door that led into the garage. Along the north wall was an entry/exit door and a garage door. The garage door was in the closed position. Along the west wall was several household items that included a snowblower, toolboxes, shovels, and shelving storing miscellaneous storage. Along the south wall was storage totes, chest freezer, and a refrigerator. Along the east wall was an entry/exit door that led into the structure and miscellaneous storage items. Along the east wall was a table close to the northernmost portion of the wall that had cigarette butts in an ash tray. During my interior and exterior scene examination this was the only area identified with having remains of cigarette butts. In the garage was a red sedan that was parked in the garage. There was no fire damage noted in the garage.

Continuing to the east I entered the entry/exit door from the garage that led to two stairways. The northernmost stairway went to the basement and the southernmost stairway went to the main level. I continued to the basement level of the structure. At the bottom of the stairs was a living room that was used as a living room with a couch, television, and entertainment center. Throughout this area was miscellaneous household items in cardboard boxes and plastic totes throughout. There was no fire damage noted in the living room portion of the basement. Along the east wall of the basement was two doors. The northernmost door led to a mechanical room. The mechanical room along the west, south, and east walls had wood shelving that had storage of tools. Along the northernmost portion of the mechanical room had a water heater and furnace. There was no damage noted to the water heater or furnace. In the northeast corner on the east was two electrical panels. One of the electrical panels was labeled with a legend that was for the primary power of the structure which was the northernmost. Inside the panel the breaker number 27 was tripped, which was labeled as "outlets AC wall". The southernmost electrical panel was a subpanel used for the boiler and heating appliances for the structure. No visible breakers were tripped in this panel. There was no visible fire damage in the mechanical room. (See Figure 3)



Figure 3 Photograph DSC_0044.JPG Breaker Panel Box

To the north of the mechanical room was a storage room. The storage room had wood shelving along the north, west, and east walls with cardboard boxes. Along the south wall was an open electrical junction box. There was no visible fire damage noted in the storage room.

I continued my interior examination by going up the stairs all the way to the second story of the structure. The second story of the structure had a hallway that led to a bathroom, a laundry closet, and three bedrooms. Along the west wall was a stairwell that led to a finish attic space. The hallway had soot deposits throughout. The northwest bedroom had no bed, an entertainment center, and two book shelves, and two windows. The windows were broken with most of the glass on the exterior. There were soot deposits throughout the room. To the west was the northeast bedroom. The northeast bedroom had a bed, cat tower, a desk, a dresser, a vanity, and a window. The window was intact. There were soot deposits throughout. To the south was southeast bedroom. The southeast bedroom had children's toys stored along the west wall two windows. The windows were broken with most of the glass on the exterior. There were soot deposits throughout. To the west was a laundry closet with a washer and dryer. The washer and dryer were intact with soot deposits throughout. To the west was a bathroom. The bathroom had soot deposits throughout.

I continued from the second story up the stairs that led to a third story. The third story could be best described as a finished attic space. Along the stairwell that led to the third story was soot deposits throughout that decreased the further away from the second story. The attic space had storage of cardboard boxes throughout. There was a bed and bedframe and desk. There was storage of an additional box frame and mattress along the wall. The attic space had no visible fire damage and soot deposits throughout which were less visible compared to the second story.

I continued my interior examination to the main level of the structure. I began my main level interior examination at the bottom of the stairwell that led to the second story of the structure, which was near a common hallway that led north/south to the north of the stairs that led from the garage into the structure.

To the north was an entry/exit door with an entry room that led to the north deck of the structure. There were children's toys and cardboard boxes in the entry room. There were soot deposits throughout the entry room.

To the west in the northwest corner of the structure was a bathroom. The bathroom had a bathtub with cardboard boxes inside the bathtub, a sink, and toilet. There were soot deposits throughout the bathroom. There were more soot deposits in the living room and hallway to the east of the bathroom compared to the bathroom.

Continuing to the east through the north/south hallway was a living room. The west wall had an opening that led to the north/south hallway along the southernmost portion of the wall and a gun cabinet along the northernmost portion of the wall. Along the north wall was a cat tower, and intact window, and an office desk in the northeast corner. Along the east wall was a door that entered the master bedroom/bathroom, a wood storage stand, and a metal stand. Along the south wall in the easternmost portion was an opening that led to the dining room. In front of the opening was a couch, rocking chair, and coffee table. In the southwest corner was a wood stand. There were soot deposits along the ceiling that extending down the walls towards the floor. The soot deposits decreased from top/down. In approximately middle of the living room was a ceiling fan. The fan blades were covered in soot and annealed downward. In the southeast corner of the living room was a smoke detector. The smoke detector had acoustic soot agglomeration on the horn speaker. In the living room there was barbeque style lighter observed on the top of the westernmost wood stand. All the contents within the living had soot deposits throughout. (See Figure 4)

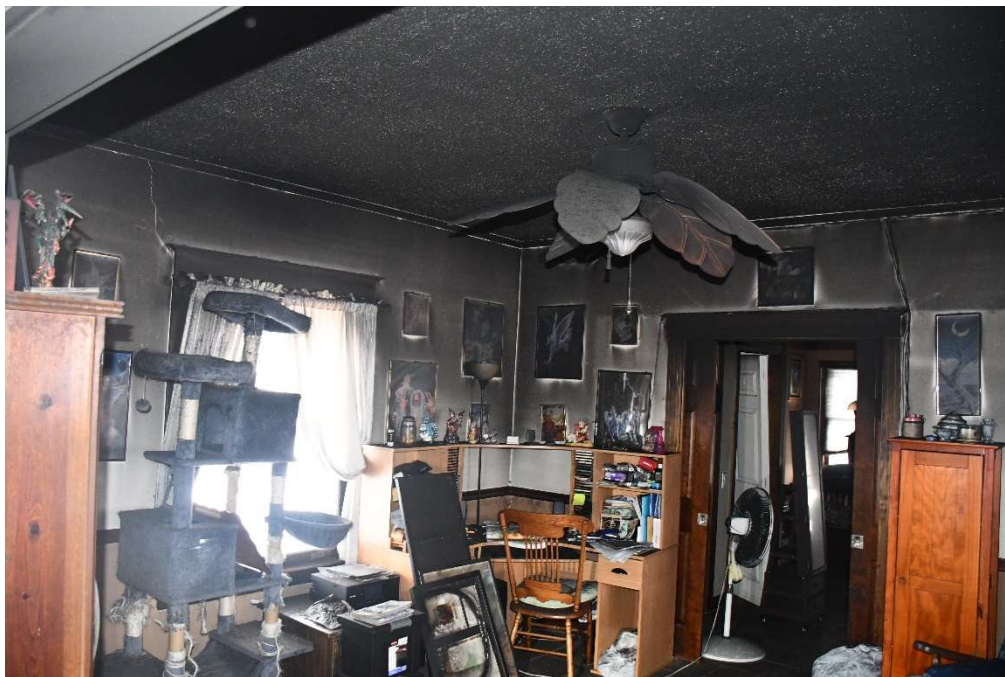


Figure 4 Photograph DSC_0098.JPG Northeast Corner And North Hall Of Main Level Living Room

Continuing to the east led into a master bedroom and bathroom suite. As you entered the master bedroom to the south was a bathroom and to the north was a walk-in closet. The bathroom and walk-in closet had soot deposits throughout. The bedroom had a bed along the east wall and a door in the southeast corner that exited to the deck. There was a window along the east wall and north wall that remained intact. There was a dresser along the north wall. The south wall had two closets and a dresser with a television on top. There were soot deposits throughout. There were more deposits in the living room area compared to the master bedroom and bathroom. On the ceiling in the bedroom there was a smoke detector. The smoke detector had acoustic soot agglomeration on the horn speaker. In approximately in the middle of the bedroom was a ceiling fan. The fan had soot deposits. The fan blades were annealed downward. The fan blades in the living room were more annealed compared to the bedrooms fan blades. Along the north wall was a home security camera. There were lighters and fluid in the bedroom. All the contents within the bedroom and bathroom had soot deposits throughout.

I continued by interior examination through the north/south hallway towards the south towards into the kitchen. I passed through into an east mudroom to the east of the kitchen as the kitchen was identified during my initial walkthrough as the area of greatest damage. The mudroom had a washer and dryer along the north wall. The east wall had an entry/exit door that led to the deck. Along the south wall was miscellaneous household storage items such as boxes, cleaning supplies, and

laundry baskets. Along the ceiling there were soot deposits that extended down the walls and decreased towards the floor. All the contents within the mudroom had soot deposits throughout.

To the west was the kitchen. The kitchen extended from the east mudroom all the way to a wall on the west. Along the westernmost portion of the kitchen was a refrigerator on the north wall. There was sink, counterspace, and a dishwasher along the west wall. In the southernmost portion was an entry/exit door that was intact. Above the sink there were wooden cabinets. The uppermost portion of the cabinets had peeling and were soot deposits throughout. The appliances in this portion of the kitchen remained intact with soot deposits throughout.

In the northernmost portion of the kitchen was a dining room. The living room had a dining room table and chairs, an open space along the northern wall that led into the living room, a refrigerator along the west wall, and a wood table along the east wall. There were soot deposits on the ceiling that extended down the walls that decreased towards the floor. The items within this area remained intact with soot deposits throughout. The dining room had a security camera located on the northernmost wall. (See Figure 5)



Figure 5 Photograph DSC_0139.JPG Kitchen Dining Room Facing Northeast

Along the southern wall of the kitchen there was an oven in the westernmost portion of the wall. To the east of the oven was a built-in range in the counterspace. The counterspace extended from the oven to the east along the whole south wall of the kitchen. Along the counterspace there were items being stored throughout such as cooking utensils, cooking spices, paper towels, Google Home, pots, medications, cardboard boxes, Christmas decorations, batteries and a microwave. The items on the easternmost portion of the counter were charred and decreased towards the west, with most of the items along the western portion of the counter remaining intact. Along the south wall was an air conditioning unit. The air conditioning unit had soot deposits and was not plugged in. To the east of the air conditioning unit was a window. The window and window frame were removed and laid on the ground directly below the opening. The glass was broken. The wood window trim had charring throughout with more damage along the east portion compared to the west portion. The microwave was on the easternmost portion of the counter. The microwave had melted and was oxidized and warped. The cabinets on the lower portion of the south counter had soot deposits but remained intact. (See Figure 6)



Figure 6 Photograph DSC_0150.JPG Southeast Corner Of Kitchen Easternmost Portion Of The South Counterspace

In the southeast corner of the kitchen directly above the area where the microwave was there was charring and mass loss to the wall that extended upward and out towards the ceiling, making a v-pattern. Along the upper portion of the wall and ceiling in the southeast corner the lath and plaster were peeled and cracked that extended outward and decreased the further away from the southeast corner. (See Figure 7)



Figure 7 Photograph DSC_0153.JPG Southernmost Portion Of East Wall In Kitchen

Layering started just to the west of the microwave along the easternmost portion of the south counter and floor directly below the counterspace and continued towards the east. Along the floor was the remains of a battery vacuum. The vacuum was not

plugged in and no visible line cords extending from the vacuum. There was mass loss to the uppermost portion of the vacuum and the batteries were oxidized. Along the east portion of the wall was a vacuum. The vacuum sustained melting to the upper portion. The vacuum was not plugged in, and the line cord was intact and wrapped up in the rear support brackets. (See Figure 8)



Figure 8 Photograph DSC_0149.JPG Southeast Corner Of Kitchen Floor Facing South

Along the westernmost portion of the counter layer discovered a receptible with a Google Home plugged into the socket. The line cord sustained melting of the exterior plastic jacketing, and the wires were oxidized and broken off approximately midway. The receptible sustained melting to the exterior faceplate but the interior of the receptible remained intact. Along the counter was a battery charger. The battery charger line cord exterior plastic jacketing was melted and was not plugged in. Along the line cord of the battery charger the metal wiring remained intact. (See Figure 9)



Figure 9 Photograph DSC_0173.JPG South Kitchen Counter Start Of Layering Easternmost Portion Of Counterspace

Continuing to the east layering revealed remains of paper that was consumed. To the west of the microwave was several batteries. The batteries were charred and oxidized.

Layering continued to the microwave. On the top of the microwave was several batteries that were oxidized. The microwave exterior plastic was melted. The microwave was oxidized. Along the back portion of the microwave that was facing south there was a v-pattern that extended along the westernmost portion with a rust discoloration. The discoloration was found only in this area on the microwave compared to the other areas on the microwave. The interior line cord inside the microwave was charred and remained intact exiting the microwave. As the line cord continued away from the microwave the line cord had sustained oxidation compared to the remaining portions. The line cord was frayed at the end of the line cord. I was unable to find the plug-in components on the line cord within the area or plugged inside the socket of the receptacle. (See Figure 10)



Figure 10 Photograph DSC_0179.JPG Back Side Of Microwave Facing Along South Wall In Kitchen

Continuing layering, the receptacle that the microwave was plugged into was laying outside on the ground with the line cord oxidized and intact. The receptacle was consumed and oxidized. Inside the receptacle there was arc splatter visible. Inside the receptacle there was electrical resistive heating along the conductors. (See Figure 11)



Figure 11 Photograph DSC_0194.JPG Closeup Of Receptacle Behind Microwave

Reconstruction of the receptacle and line cord were put back in its approximate location prior to fire. The receptacle and the discolored v-pattern at the rear (southern) portion of the microwave were parallel with one another. From the line cord

extending towards the ground, there was more mass loss between the two wood studs compared to the other wood studs' interstitial space. Where the receptacle was inside the structure in the easternmost portion above the counter there was more mass loss to the wall compared the remaining wall spaces in the kitchen. Inside the interior/exterior wall space there was mass loss to the wood wall studs and decrease the farther away from where the line cord ran through the wall space. (See Figure 12)



Figure 12 Photograph DSC_0182.JPG South Kitchen Wall Space In The Easternmost Portion Of The Wall From Exterior Facing North

Continuing, I examined the other two electrical receptacles along the south wall. The next receptacle to the west of the receptacle behind the microwave sustained charring on the exterior plastic face plate. The interior of the receptacle remained intact with discoloration on the neutral cord line around where it attached the screw. The westernmost receptacle had no visible damage to the faceplate and the interior remained intact with no damage noted.

Interview #1:

Name: Earnest Marlow

Interview Date: April 2, 2025

Notes: Earnest Marlow was the property owner. The following are notes from an informational interview with Earnest Marlow. The interview took place at 552 2nd St. S, Carrington, ND and was done voluntarily. The interview was non-custodial and was not recorded.

Earnest Marlow was the property owner and owned the structure for approximately 10 years. Earnest Marlow stated Earnest Marlow has a mortgage on the property with Gate City Bank and is current on payments and escrow. Earnest Marlow stated Earnest Marlow has insurance on the property through Farmers Union Insurance in Carrington with an agent of Randy Hooey. Earnest Marlow only has a girlfriend Toni Grinell that lives at the residence with him and 8 cats. Earnest Marlow stated the cats had survived the fire.

Earnest Marlow stated that Earnest Marlow has not done any work to the structures electrical system or hired anyone to do work to the electrical system. Earnest Marlow stated the structure has not had any major remodeling or work done to the structure. Earnest Marlow stated that Earnest Marlow had not noticed any lights flickering or dimming within the structure or smell anything burning within the structure in the past. Earnest Marlow stated Earnest Marlow hired Randy's Electric of Carrington approximately two months ago to work on the electric in floor heat after it went out. Earnest Marlow was unaware of any other issues within the structure. Earnest Marlow stated there was no known history of electrical breakers tripping.

Earnest Marlow stated Earnest Marlow had working smoke detectors within the structure and regularly changes the batteries. Earnest Marlow denied having any fires in the past.

Earnest Marlow is a smoker and smokes outside. Earnest Marlow stated the discarded cigarette butts are put in an ash tray within the garage. Earnest Marlow stated no smoking had occurred within the structure.

Earnest Marlow stated inside the kitchen along the south counter from the east counterspace to the west there were two Dyson battery operated vacuum cleaners that were on the east wall directly in front of the microwave that were not plugged into an electrical receptacle. Earnest Marlow stated the last time the vacuums were used and charged was approximately two days ago. Earnest Marlow stated along the south counter on the easternmost portion was a microwave that was plugged into an electrical receptacle. Earnest Marlow stated the last time the microwave was used was around supertime on April 1, 2025. To the west of the microwave Earnest Marlow stated that there was a variety of batteries that were stored for various household usage. Earnest Marlow stated to the west of the microwave there was Google Home that was plugged into the middle electrical receptacle. Earnest Marlow stated to the west of Google Home there were no other electrical household items plugged in and the remaining contents on the counter were miscellaneous household items. Earnest Marlow stated there were no issues noted with any of the appliances within the kitchen and all the items were original from when the house was purchased.

Earnest Marlow stated the last known power outage at the structure was on either Saturday, March 29, 2025, or Sunday, March 30, 2025, and Earnest Marlow stated was the whole grid.

Earnest Marlow stated that on April 2, 2025, Earnest Marlow left for work at Camp Grafton in Devils Lake at approximately 5:20 am and girlfriend Toni Grinell left for work in Jamestown at approximately 6:15 am. Earnest Marlow stated prior to departing for work in the morning of April 2, 2025, there was nothing that seems out of the ordinary within the structure and did not smell anything out of the ordinary.

Earnest Marlow stated that Earnest Marlow learned about the fire while at work from a neighbor Randy Leadbetter whom called. Earnest Marlow stated shortly after Randy Leadbetter called a police officer from Carrington Police Department called.

Earnest Marlow stated Earnest Marlow does not have any enemies or anyone upset. Earnest Marlow stated that the property is locked and has security cameras installed within the structure. Earnest Marlow stated that Earnest Marlow did not start the fire. Earnest Marlow stated Earnest Marlow did not know what might have started the fire other than something electrical.

This concluded my interview with Earnest Marlow.

April 24, 2025, Follow Up Interview

On April 24, 2025, I Deputy State Fire Marshal Andrew Browne contacted Earnest Marlow regarding follow up if any data was able to be obtained from the security camera system. Earnest Marlow stated the security camera system did not obtain any footage of the fire or events leading to the fire on the DVR recording system. Earnest Marlow stated that Earnest Marlow was working in the process of getting the property cleaned up with the insurance company.

This concluded my interview with Earnest Marlow.

Interview #2:

Name:	Jason Wolsky
Interview Date:	April 2, 2025
Notes: Jason Wolsky was the Assistant Fire Chief of the Carrington Fire Department. Jason Wolsky was the first fire officer on scene. The interview took place at 552 2 nd St. S, Carrington, ND and was done voluntarily. The interview was non-custodial and was not recorded.	

Jason Wolsky stated that the Carrington Fire Department was paged at approximately 2:40 pm with an initial page giving information of smoke showing from the southeast corner of the structure. Jason Wolsky stated the first arriving engine arrived on scene and parked on the north side of the structure. Jason Wolsky stated firefighters made entry through the north door to the east of the garage door. Jason Wolsky stated the garage door was in the open position as the property owner allows stray cats to eat in the garage. Jason Wolsky stated firefighters had to force entry into the structure and observed thick black smoke. Jason Wolsky stated the firefighters continued south towards the kitchen and observed flames coming from the southeast corner of the kitchen near the microwave.

Jason Wolsky stated a second due engine arrived on scene on the south side of the structure and conducted firefighting operations along the south exterior wall of the structure. Jason Wolsky stated south exterior siding was pulled for extension and windows were broken on the structure for ventilation.

This concluded my interview with Jason Wolsky.

Video:

Property owner Earnest Marlow had security cameras installed in the structure. Earnest Marlow reviewed the security camera footage. The security camera system was not recording at the time of the fire, per property owner Earnest Marlow.

Weather Reviewed:

The weather information was obtained from www.wunderground.com. The data was reviewed for April 2, 2025. The closest reporting station was the Jamestown Regional Airport Station, which is approximately 40 miles away from Carrington, ND. The following information was learned.

Temperature: 30 degrees to 31 degrees Fahrenheit

Humidity: 89% to 92%

Wind Direction: N to NNE

Wind Speed: 13 mph to 20 mph, with 0 mph wind gusts

Conditions: Light Snow

<https://www.wunderground.com/history/daily/us/nd/jamestown/KJMS/date/2025-4-2>

The weather conditions were not a direct cause of the fire and did not assist in the spread of the fire.



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

Agency Incident ID: NDSFM25-031

BATS ID: i-1551622

Investigation Title: CARRINGTON MARLOW FIRE

Times:

Hard Time Description	Time	Soft Time Description
April 1, 2025, Times		
	6:00 pm	Last use of the microwave that was plugged into the kitchen branch circuit.
April 2, 2025, Times		
	5:20 am	Earnest Marlow leaves for work in Devils Lake
	6:15 am	Girlfriend Toni Grinell leaves for work in Jamestown
Time of 911 Call from ND State Radio	2:49 pm	
FD Dispatch from ND State Radio	2:50 pm	
FD Enroute from ND State Radio	2:53 pm	
FD Arrival from ND State Radio	2:55 pm	
	3:00	Property owner found out about the fire from neighbor Randy Leadbetter that lives next door and a phone call from Law Enforcement.
	3:25 pm	Fire investigator contacted
FD Clear Scene from ND State Radio	6:55 pm	

Evidence identified/collected/preserved:

No evidence was collected by the State Fire Marshal's Office. An electrical receptacle located in the southeast corner of the main level kitchen was marked with warning this may be evidence during the on-scene examination.

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

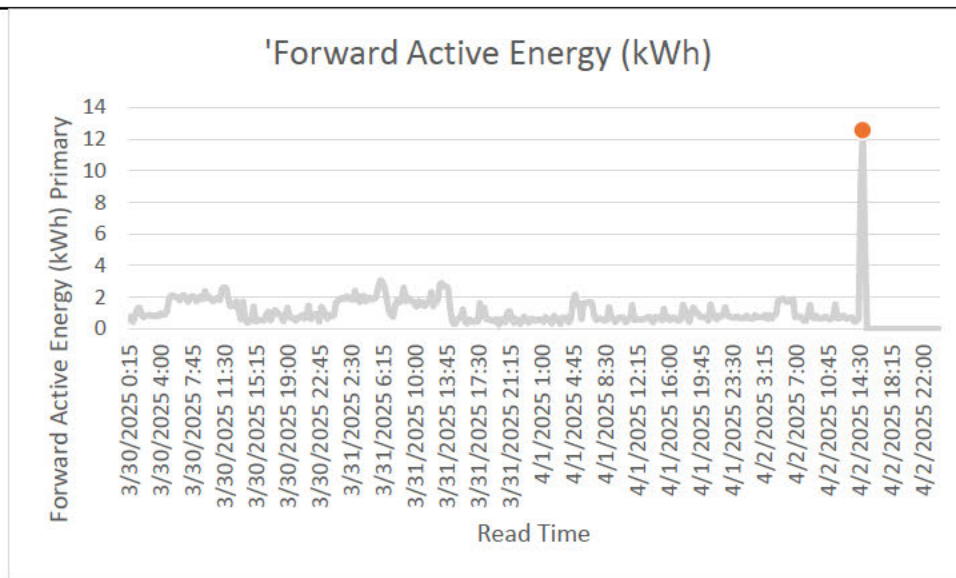
Other Forms/Documents/Reports Reviewed:

North Dakota State Radio Dispatch Call for Service (SO2504020110)

- Time of call was 2:49 pm.
- Date of call was April 2, 2025.
- There were four 911 callers that reported the fire.
- One 911 caller reported observing black smoke coming from the structure.
- Carrington Police Officer 1622 reported confirmed structure fire, flames coming out of the back of the structure.
- Ottetail Power was the electrical company with an eta to scene of 10 minutes after requesting to turn off power.

Ottetail Power Company Smart Meter Data

- Data request via email from smart meter of the structure.
- Ottetail Power Company was the provider of power for the structure.
- Provided an excel file of the data from March 30, 2025, at midnight until April 2, 2025, at midnight.
- On April 2, 2025, the following kilowatts per hour were read with an above normal reading of 9.04189 kWh at 2:45 pm, 12.55722 kWh at 3:00 pm, and 4.93099 kWh at 3:15pm.
- Chart below shows the range of the data obtained from the excel file provided from Ottetail Power Company.



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9.2.6 Electrical Power

“When electronics are moved (electrical current) through a resistance, electrical energy is spent. This energy may appear in a variety of ways, such as light in a lamp or heating of a conductor. “

9.8.2 Receptacles

“Receptacles for 15 A and 20 A circuits, illustrated in Figure 9.8.2(a) and Figure 9.8.2(b) are usually duplex. Receptacles now must be polarized and of the grounding type, although there are still many nongrounding and nonpolarized receptacles in older installations...”

9.9.1 General

“For ignition to be from an electrical source, the following must occur: The electrical wiring, equipment, or component must have been energized from a buildings wiring, an emergency system, a battery, or some other source. Sufficient heat and temperature to ignite a close combustible material must have been produced by electrical energy at the point of origin by the electrical source...”

9.9.2.1.2 Resistance Heating

“When conductors are thermally insulated and operating at rated current, enough energy may be available to cause a fault or ignition...”

9.9.2.3 Poor Connections

“When a circuit has a poor connection such as a loose screw at a terminal, increased resistance causes increased heating at the contact, which promotes formation of an oxide interface. If combustible materials are close enough to the hot spot, the can be ignited...”

9.9.4.1 General (Arcs)

“An arc is a high temperature luminous electrical discharge across a gap or through a medium such as charred insulation. Temperatures within the arc are in the range of several thousand degrees, depending on circumstances, including current, voltage drop, and metal involved...”

9.10.3.3 Overheating in Duplex Receptacles

“Overheating of poor electrical connections in a duplex receptacle can lead to glowing connections...”

Carrington Fire Department Call for Service (2025-010)

- Fire department observed seeing smoke coming from the southeast corner of the structure and smoke coming from the eaves.

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 easternmost electrical receptacle along the south wall closet to the east wall.

- Fire Effects
 - This area sustained the greatest damage compared to the rest of the structure.
 - The contents within the area of origin consisted of combustible materials such as cloth, plastic, insulation, and wood.
 - Most of the combustible materials were charred or consumed.
 - The wall studs near the electrical receptacle and line cord were charred. As extension went away from this area the charring decreased.
 - V-pattern was identified extending from the area of the receptacle upward and out.
 - A line of demarcation was noticed to the northeast and southwest of the area of greatest damage. As you went away from this area the soot deposits decreased the further away.
 - Charring from the exterior of the structure went up and out from the area where the line cord was between the interior and exterior wall. The further away from this area the charring decreased.
- Fire Dynamics
 - Mass loss to the interior wall studs that decreased the further away from the line cord inside the wall space.
 - Consistent with fire duration and time.
 - Most of the wall plaster and lath was fallen from the interior wall.
 - Consistent with growth and duration.
 - Mass loss to the exterior siding and wood within the area of the line cord within the interior wall space.
 - Consistent with growth and duration.
 - Soot deposits from the kitchen extended outward throughout the house. The farther away from the kitchen area the soot deposits decreased.
 - Consistent with fire duration and time.
 - V-pattern extending from receptacle behind the microwave and extended upward and out.
 - Consistent with fire spread.
- Witness Statements
 - 911 caller reported observing black smoke coming from the southeast corner of the structure.

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:

1. Person or persons unknown used an open flame to ignite ordinary combustible materials such as paper, wood, plastic, or vapors from ignitable liquids.
- Property owner reported the structure to be locked at the time of the fire.
 - Fire department reported having to use forcible entry to gain access to the structure.
 - Property has security cameras installed within the structure.
 - Property owner noted nothing out of the ordinary on the camera footage.
 - Property owner has no known enemies or anyone upset with them.
 - This hypothesis has been eliminated as the potential cause of the fire.

2. A battery failure resulting in thermal runaway from a battery cell within a battery powered vacuum that ignites ordinary combustible materials such as paper, wood, or plastic for a duration long enough to sustain ignition.
 - The property owner reported last using the battery-operated vacuums two days prior to the fire.
 - Property owner reported no issues with operation or charging of the fire vacuums.
 - The property owner reported the vacuums were not charged at the time of the fire.
 - The vacuums were not plugged into receptacles.
 - There were no visible charging line cords within the area of origin.
 - Location of the battery operation vacuums did not show signs of fire extension or spread where they were located.
 - This hypothesis has been eliminated as the potential cause of the fire.
3. Resistant heating occurred inside a receptacle creating an arc or overheating to ignite combustible materials such as paper, wood, insulation, and plastic.
 - The property owner did not report anything out of the ordinary with the structure electrical system.
 - Day of the fire and days leading up to the fire.
 - Ottertail Power Smart Meter report showed a spike in Kilowatts per Hour at around 2:45 pm on April 2, 2025, that sustained higher than normal numbers than earlier during the same day and days leading up to the fire.
 - Report showed 9.04189, 12.55722, and 4.93099 Kilowatts per Hour from 2:45 pm to 3:15 pm on April 2, 2025.
 - The easternmost receptacle behind the microwave on the south wall sustained arc splatter inside the receptable box.
 - The easternmost receptacle behind the microwave on the south wall has sustained resistive heating.
 - The fire damage was the greatest in this area compared to the other areas of the structure.
 - 911 caller reported seeing black smoke coming from the southeast corner of the structure.
 - Consistent with location of origin.
 - Fire patterns show growth and development from the area of the receptacle and extended upward and out.
 - This hypothesis cannot be eliminated and the potential cause of the fire.

Final Hypothesis/Conclusion:

Based on the examination of the fire scene, data collected, and witness statements the area of origin was determined to be at the easternmost electrical receptacle along the south wall closet to the east wall. Resistant heating occurred inside a receptacle creating an arc or overheating to ignite combustible materials such as paper, wood, insulation, and plastic.

The fire is 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