

North Dakota Office of the State Fire Marshal (ND)

INCIDENT REPORT

Official Law Enforcement Report - Unauthorized Dissemination is Prohibited

Incident Type: Fire / Accidental

Result Type: Actual

Agency Incident ID: NDSFM25-077

BATS ID: 1563074

Investigation Title: JAMESTOWN WAHL FIRE



Incident Date/Time/Location

Status

Investigation Closed

Jurisdiction

Primary

Start Date/Time

7/21/2025 07:10 Monday

Address

3415 79th Ave

City/State/Zip

Jamestown, ND 58401

County

Stutsman County

Investigator Information

Name

Nicholas J Fettig

Phone

701-955-3294

Email

njfettig@nd.gov

Title

Deputy State Fire Marshal

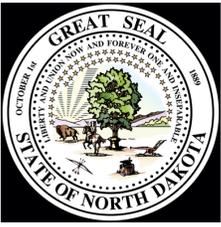
Property Use or Target Information

Type

Residential

Status

Occupied And Operating



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**Scene Details**

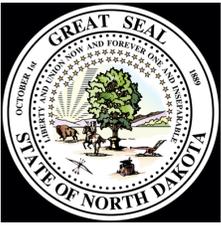
***Miscellaneous Information***

**Latitude**

**Longitude**

46.920405

-98.798617



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**Person/Organization Information**

**Name**

PAULSON, BRIAN

**Race**

White

**Sex**

M

**Juvenile**

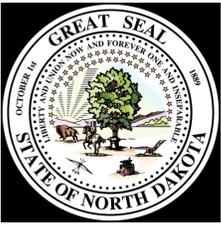
No

**Relationship(s)**

Firefighter – Volunteer Dept

**Notes**

FC Jamestown Rural  
Fire Department



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**Name**

FALK, JASON

**Race**

White

**Sex**

M

**Juvenile**

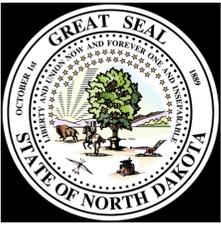
No

**Relationship(s)**

Law Enforcement Official

**Notes**

Detective, Stutsman  
County Sheriffs  
Department



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**Name**

WAHL, STEVEN

**Race**

White

**Sex**

M

**Juvenile**

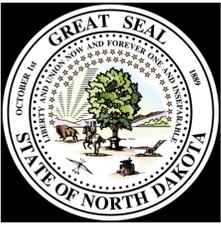
No

**Relationship(s)**

Owner, Resident, Victim

**Notes**

Homeowner



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**Name**

WAHL, DARLENE

**Race**

White

**Sex**

F

**Juvenile**

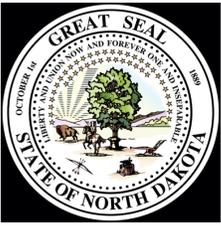
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**Notes**

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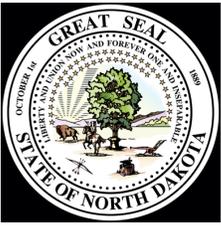
**Investigation Title:** JAMESTOWN WAHL FIRE



**Attachments**

<b>Filename</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Date</b>
NDSFM25-077 JAMESTOWN WAHL FIRE.pdf		12/18/2025

**No image specified**



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**Narrative(s)**

**Title**

Distribution List

**Author**

Nicholas Fettig

7019553294

njfettig@nd.gov

**Description**

FC Brian Paulson, Jamestown Rural Fire Department, [REDACTED]

Det Jason Falk, Stutsman County Sheriff's Department, [REDACTED]



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\_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator/Agent - Fettig, Nicholas

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Approving Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



**North Dakota State Fire Marshals Office (ND)**  
**INCIDENT ORIGIN & CAUSE NARRATIVE**  
**Official Law Enforcement Report – Unauthorized Dissemination is Prohibited**



**Incident Type: FIRE**  
**Agency Incident ID: NDSFM25-077**                      **BATS ID: i-1563074**  
**Investigation Title: JAMESTOWN WAHL FIRE**

**Identify the Need**

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

On Monday, July 21, 2025, at approximately 8:00 AM, I Deputy State Fire Marshal (DSFM) Nick Fettig was contacted by the Jamestown Rural Fire Department regarding a structure fire in Jamestown, ND. During the discussion it was agreed that the fire investigation would begin 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 residential structure at 3415 79<sup>th</sup> Ave SE in Jamestown, ND. The fire was reported on July 21, 2025 at approximately 7:10 AM. The Jamestown Rural Fire Department responded and extinguished the fire. The property owners were away on a cruise ship at the time of the fire and had family members who were checking on the property call 911. No injuries or fatalities were reported. (See Figure 1)



*Figure 1 Photograph NJF\_0005, front yard of structure, facing west.*

**Authority to Enter/Search:**

I arrived on scene on July 21, 2025, at approximately 8:40 AM. I met with Fire Chief Brian Paulson of the Jamestown Rural Fire Department. Due to Jamestown Rural Fire Department still overhauling and holding the fire scene and the homeowners traveling and no way to contact, exigent circumstances was utilized.

After a brief conversation with Fire Chief Brian Paulson, I released the scene back to the Jamestown Rural Fire Department.

I departed the scene at approximately 10:12 AM.

**Assisting Persons/Agencies:**

Name	Agency	Case Reference if Available
Fire Chief Brian Paulson	Jamestown Rural Fire Department	2025-61
Detective Jason Falk	Stutsman County Sheriff's Department	202500014869

**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 scene was photographed in the condition it was found. During the investigation, layering process and reconstruction process a series of 62 photographs were taken. The photographs will remain with the file. No photograph log was created for this investigation.

**Drawings/Sketches:**



NORTH



Electrical Meter



Lp Tank



Area of Origin

Lp Tank

2 Stall Garage

House

Case Number: NDSFM25-077  
Date of Fire: 07.21.2025  
Location of Fire: 3415 79th Ave SE, Jamestown, ND  
Owner: Steven and Darlene Wahl  
Drawn By: DSFM Nick Fettig  
\*\*\*\*NOT TO SCALE\*\*\*\*



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**Exterior Scene Examination:**

During my initial 360° walk around of the structure a Scene Safety Form was completed. The form will remain with the file. The structure was a single story with basement residential structure with an attached garage. The structure collapsed into the basement of the structure.

The Lp was located on the west side of the property on the north side of a shed. The Lp tank had the regulator mounted on the tank with the valve in the closed position. The tank gauge read approximately 18%.

The electrical services entered the property via an underground service lateral which connected to a utility pole north of the structure. The electrical meter had melting and deformation and the two main service 200-amp fuses were removed prior to arrival.

The north side of the structure had all walls and roof collapsed into the structure with mass loss of wooden building material. The metal gutter system was in majority still intact on the ground outside of the foundation of the structure. The north side of the structure was the two-stall connected garage. The grass vegetation had charring and discoloration approximately up to 5 feet away from the structure.

The east side of the structure had all walls missing except an approximately 4 foot tall by 20-foot-long brick and mortar wall. The roof had collapsed inside of the structure. Pieces of metal soffit materials were discovered with deformation and smoke staining. (See Figure 2)



*Figure 2 Photograph NJF\_0007, east side of the structure*

The south side of the structure had all walls and roof missing only standing portion was the basement foundation. The vegetation had charring and discoloration. Metal gutter and soffit materials were discovered outside of the structure with discoloration and smoke staining.

The west side of the structure had all walls and roof missing only standing portion was the basement foundation. Vegetation surrounding the structure was charred and had discoloration. The soffit and gutter materials had discoloration and melting and was found approximately 4 feet west of the structure. One piece of the soffit material was examined that was found to have a large irregular hole with ununiformed ends and melting. (See Figure 3)



*Figure 3 Photograph NJF\_0028, west side of structure, soffit material*

In the yard of the west side of the structure approximately 15 feet away from the structure a service hole was discovered. The area around the service hole had dirt and grass material removed and was discovered in clumps approximately 2 feet west of the service hole. The interior of the service hole had melted and mass loss of electrical wiring for an underground sprinkler system. The cover for the service hole was discovered approximately 10 feet west from the service hole. (See Figure 4)



*Figure 4 Photograph NJF\_0037, service hole for sprinkler system, west yard*

Also, in the west portion of the yard a crater in the ground was discovered approximately 10 feet away from the structure. The crater was approximately 6 inches deep with green vegetation and had non compacted dirt. (See Figure 5)



*Figure 5 Photograph NJF\_0033, ground crater west yard*

**Interior Scene Examination:**

My interior inspection was limited to the exterior due to the only portion of the structure left was the basement foundation. Due to active fires at the time of the investigation no access was made to enter the structure. (See Figure 6)



*Figure 6 Photograph NJF\_0042, basement foundation*

The garage portion of the structure had two vehicles that had mass loss to the wheel and rims of the vehicles along with mass loss of cloth and plastic materials in the cabs. The exterior rooflines of both vehicles received caved in roofs with charred wooden lumber materials on top. Both vehicles received discoloration and all glass materials missing. (See Figure 7)



Figure 7 Photograph NJF\_0049, garage area of structure.

The ground level of the garage area had mass loss and charring of wooden materials with oxidation and color change of metal cans.

**Interview #1:**

**Name:** Fire Chief, (FC) Brian Paulson, Jamestown Rural Fire Department

**Interview Date:** 07.21.2025

**Notes:** Brian Paulson was the Fire Chief of the Jamestown Rural Fire Department at the time of the fire. The following are notes from an informational non-custodial non-recorded interview with FC Brian Paulson. The interview took place in the driveway of the property. I informed FC Brian Paulson that FC Brian Paulson did not have to answer any questions, and that FC Brian Paulson could leave at any time.

FC Brian Paulson stated that on July 21, 2025, at approximately 7:10 AM the Jamestown Rural Fire Department was paged out to a structure fire. FC Brian Paulson stated when fire crews arrived on scene the crews found the entire structure to be in the basement of the structure with spot fires.

**Interview #2:**

**Name:** Detective Jason Falk, Stutsman County Sheriff's Department

**Interview Date:** 07.21.2025

**Notes:** Jason Falk was a Detective with the Stutsman County Sheriff's Department at the time of the fire. The following are notes from an informational non-custodial non-recorded interview with Detective Jason Falk. The interview took place in the driveway of the property. I informed Detective Jason Falk that Detective Jason Falk did not have to answer any questions, and that Detective Jason Falk could leave at any time.

Detective Jason Falk stated that Detective Jason Falk could provide information about the property and vehicles. The following information was discovered.

Property Owners: Steven and Darlene Wahl

Vehicle #1: 1994 Toyota Truck ULX UHT  
 License Plate: ND 607 DAH  
 VIN Number: 4TAVN13D8RZ251350

Vehicle #2: 2017 Chevy Silverado  
 License Plate: 432 BMB  
 Vin Number: 5LMJJ3J58AEJ08487

**Interview #3:**

**Name:** Amanda Schaffer

**Interview Date:** 07.21.2025

**Notes:** Amanda Schaffer was the daughter of the property owners at the time of the fire. The following are notes from an informational non-custodial non-recorded interview with Amanda Schaffer. The interview took place in the driveway of the property. I informed Amanda Schaffer that Amanda Schaffer did not have to answer any questions, and that Amanda Schaffer could leave at any time.

Amanda Schaffer stated that the structure was built approximately in 1975. Amanda Schaffer stated that Amanda Schaffer's parents moved into the structure in 2008 and had lived there since. Amanda Schaffer stated that Amanda Schaffer's parents went on a 7-day Alaskan cruise and should currently be on the way back.

Amanda Schaffer stated that the last time Amanda Schaffer checked on the structure was Friday, July 18, 2025, to water plants. Amanda Schaffer stated that Amanda Schaffer was also taking care of Amanda Schaffer's parents' dog, and the dog was at Amanda Schaffer's house at the time of the fire.

Amanda Schaffer stated that the night of the fire Jamestown had a severe thunderstorm with lightning.

**Video:**

No video was available or reviewed by the North Dakota State Fire Marshal's Office.

**Weather Reviewed:**

The weather information was obtained from [www.wunderground.com](http://www.wunderground.com). The data was reviewed for July 21, 2025. The closest reporting station was the Jamestown Regional Airport Station, approximately 7 miles away. The following information was learned. The weather was a contributing factor of ignition to this fire.

Time	Temperature	Humidity	Wind	Condition
11:21 PM	64 °F	87 %	7 MPH, E	T-Storm
11:37 PM	63 °F	90 %	9 MPH, E	Heavy T-Storm
11:52 PM	63 °F	94 %	5 MPH, E, NE	Light Rain
12:12 AM	63 °F	90 %	6 MPH, W	Light Rain with Thunder
12:56 AM	62 °F	96 %	3 MPH, S	T-Storm
1:30 AM	62 °F	93 %	20 MPH, E, SE	Rain
1:56 AM	62 °F	93 %	20 MPH, E, SE	Mostly Cloudy
2:56 AM	64 °F	90 %	14 MPH, SE	Fair
3:56 AM	64 °F	93 %	7 MPH, S, SE	Light Rain
4:29 AM	63 °F	93 %	0 MPH	Mostly Cloudy

4:45 AM	62 °F	96 %	0 MPH	Partly Cloudy
5:08 AM	62 °F	96 %	0 MPH	Mostly Cloudy
5:56 AM	63 °F	97 %	0 MPH	Cloudy
6:38 AM	63 °F	97 %	0 MPH	Mist
6:45 AM	63 °F	100 %	0 MPH	Mist
7:03 AM	64 °F	96 %	3 MPH, W	Mist
7:56 AM	65 °F	93 %	3 MPH, W	Cloudy
8:16 AM	67 °F	90 %	5 MPH, VAR	Mostly Cloudy
8:31 AM	69 °F	87 %	8 MPH, W	Partly Cloudy
8:56 AM	71 °F	78 %	8 MPH, W	Fair
9:56 AM	73 °F	76 %	6 MPH, W, NW	Fair



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<b>Times:</b>		
<b>Hard Time Description</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Soft Time Description</b>
Time of 911 Call	7:08 AM	
Jamestown Rural Fire Dispatched	7:10 AM	
Jamestown Rural Fire on scene	7:31 AM	
	8:40 AM	North Dakota State Fire Marshal's Office on scene
	10:12 AM	North Dakota State Fire Marshal's Office cleared scene

**Evidence identified/collected/preserved:**  
 No evidence was identified, collected, or preserved by the North Dakota State Fire Marshal's Office.

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

**Other Forms/Documents/Reports Reviewed:**

- Jamestown Rural Fire Department Call for Service
  - First Paged at 7:10 AM
  - On Scene at 7:31 AM
  
- 911 Call Recording
  - 911 caller stated nothing is left of the structure, but a propane line is on fire.
  - 911 caller stated the caller's name is Cade Wahl.
  
- NHTSA, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
  - 2017 Chevrolet Silverado 1500, no open recalls
  - 1994 Toyota Truck, no unrepaired recalls
  
- (NWS) National Weather Service, Report ID 873b3d11-6607-4a13-bb72-c448dd87088f
  - Confirmed coordinates of lightning strike
  - Latitude 46.915407, Longitude -98.798604
  - Time of lightning strike was 5:27 AM
  - 500 meter +or – accuracy (See Figure 8)



*Figure 8 google maps snip it*

**Area of Origin:**

Based on the fire scene examination, witness statements, and other data reviewed, the area of origin was determined to be at or on the exterior of the structure. (See Figure 9)



Figure 9 Photograph NJF\_0026, direction east

● Fire Effects

- The structure had mass loss to the majority of the structure with collapse into the basement.
- Mass loss of common household materials inside of the structure.

● Fire Dynamics

- Oxidation to metal materials inside of the garage.
- Charring to vegetation near the foundational walls.

● Witness Statements

- FC Brian Paulson stated when fire crews arrived on scene the entire structure was in the basement of the structure.
- Amanda Schaffer stated that the night of the fire Jamestown had a severe thunderstorm with lightning.

**Cause Hypothesis Development and Testing:**

The following were identified as the most credible potential fire cause within the area of origin:

- Lighting strike on or near a structure that caused combustible building material to ignite.
  - Review of the weather showed signs of Thunder storms in the area.
  - National Weather Service showed a lightning strike in the area
    - 546 Meters distance from strike to structure
    - Time of strike 5:27 AM.
  - Soffit material with a large irregular opening.
  - No known witness to the strike or the fire.
    - Amanda Schaffer stated severe thunderstorm with lightning.
  - Service hole in west yard had melted and mass loss of wiring with the cover and dirt and grass material removed.
  - Crater was discovered in the west yard.
  - This hypothesis could not be eliminated.

**Final Hypothesis/Conclusion:**

Based on the fire scene examination, witness statements, and other data reviewed, the area of origin was determined to be near or on the exterior of the structure. The fire cause was lighting strike on or near the structure that caused combustible building material to ignite.

This 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