

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: NDSFM25-081

BATS ID: 1564500

Investigation Title: ANAMOOSE RUDNICK FIRE



Incident Date/Time/Location

Status

Investigation Closed

Jurisdiction

Primary

Start Date/Time

7/28/2025 13:00 Monday

Address

705 Main Street

City/State/Zip

Anamoose, ND 58710

County

McHenry

Investigator Information

Name

Jessica Sinerius

Phone

701-220-2762

Email

jsinerius@nd.gov

Title

Deputy State Fire Marshal

Property Use or Target Information

Type

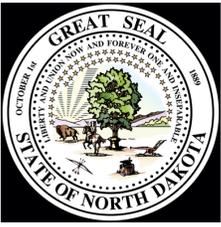
Assembly

Subtype

Restaurant/Cafeteria

Status

Occupied And Operating



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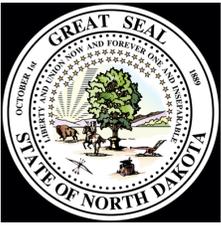
BATS ID: 1564500

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Person/Organization Information

Name	Business Name	
RUDNICK, MICHAEL	Anamoose Cafe	
DOB	Race	Ethnicity
██████ 1960		
Sex	Age at time of Incident	
M	64	
Juvenile		
No		



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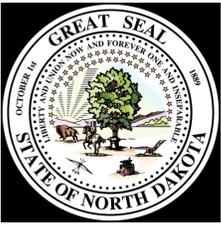
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Name	Business Name	
RUDNICK, CONNIE	Anamoose Cafe	
DOB	Race	Ethnicity
█ 1961		
Sex	Age at time of Incident	
F	63	
Juvenile		
No		



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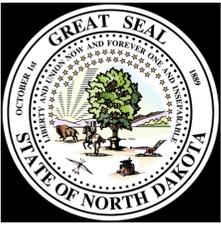
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Attachments

Filename	Description	Date
NDSFM25-081 ANAMOOSE RUDNICK FIRE.pdf		12/12/2025

No image specified



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Narrative(s)

Title

Contacts

Author

Jessica Sinerius

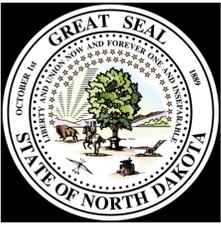
7012202762

jsinerius@nd.gov

Description

Distribution: Via Email Only

Anamoose Fire Department



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Deputy State Fire Marshal - Sinerius, Jessica

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):

I, Deputy State Fire Marshal Jess Sinerius, was contacted at approximately 2:00 PM on Monday, July 28, 2025, by the on-call deputy regarding a fire that occurred in Anamoose, ND. I was requested to contact the Anamoose Fire Protection District’s Fire Chief.

I contacted Fire Chief Jeff Lemer, of the Anamoose Rural Fire Protection District. Fire Chief Jeff Lemer requested assistance with an Origin and Cause Investigation. It was agreed the fire investigation would begin at approximately 3:30 PM on Monday July 28, 2025.

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 Monday, July 28, 2025, at approximately 12:52 PM a fire occurred in a commercial structure identified as the Anamoose Café. The Anamoose Café was located at 705 Main Street, Anamoose, ND. (See Figure 1)



Figure 1 Photograph DSC_0002.JPG Exterior East Side - Store Front

Fire Chief Jeff Lemer was traveling south on 16th Ave NE when he entered Anamoose and observed smoke coming from the Anamoose Café. Fire Chief Jeff Lemer immediately reported the fire. At the time of the incident, the building was unoccupied.

Authority to Enter/Search:

I arrived on scene at approximately 3:30 PM, Monday July 28, 2025. Upon my arrival I met with Fire Chief Jeff Lemer and property owners Michael and Connie Rudnick.

I presented Michael and Connie Rudnick with a Consent to Search Form. Michael and Connie Rudnick reviewed the document, did not have any questions or concerns and signed the form. Fire Chief Jeff Lemer witnessed the conversation, and Michael and Connie Rudnick sign the form.

After the scene examination was conducted I advised Michael and Connie Rudnick not to alter the scene prior to consulting the insurance company. The scene was released to Michael and Connie Rudnick.

I departed the scene at approximately 5:00 PM.

Assisting Persons/Agencies:

Name	Agency	Case Reference if Available
Fire Chief Jeff Lemer	Anamoose Rural Fire Protection District	

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

Data Collection

Photographs:
The scene was photographically documented in the condition it was found and during the layering process. During the scene examination series of 132 photographs were taken. The photographs will remain with the file.

Drawings/Sketches:
No drawing was completed due to the fire being contained to the commercial kitchen hood area.



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Exterior Scene Examination:

The building was a single-story commercial restaurant with a dirt basement. The exterior construction materials were comprised of brick, wood and metal finishings. The building was oriented east/west with separate two-story businesses on north and south sides. The roof peak extended east/west and had a metal exterior. The electrical service entered the structure by an overhead weather head on the northeast corner of the building. No damage was noticed to the electrical service. A 500-gallon LP-gas container was on the west side of the property. The container valve was in the closed position. No damage was noticed to the LP-gas container, valve or regulator.

The exterior east side of the structure faced Main Street and had a metal sided parapet. Approximately center of the wall was a recessed entryway with two concrete steps leading to the main entry/exit door. The entry/exit door was propped open and was comprised of glass panels. Windows were on each side of the recessed entryway. The window at the southernmost end was open. A window screen and two portable fire extinguishers were on the ground along the southernmost end. No fire or heat damage was noticed on the exterior east side. (Refer back to Figure 1)

The north side of the building was inaccessible due to an adjacent two-story brick structure.

The west side of the building had an addition and faced an alleyway. The backside of the building had wood siding and one entry/exit door. The door was propped open with a portable fire extinguisher. Above the door was a small opening that provided attic access. No fire or heat damage was noticed on the exterior west side. (See Figure 2)



Figure 2 Photograph DSC_0020.JPG Exterior West Side - Backside of Building

The south side of the building was inaccessible due to an adjacent two-story brick structure.

Interior Scene Examination:

My interior examination began in the area of least damage and continued to the area of greatest damage. During my initial safety walkthrough, it was determined that the area of greatest damage was in the southeast corner of the main level.

I entered the structure from the west side addition. The addition was not heated and used as storage. The floor was poured concrete. The walls and ceiling had exposed wood studs. No fire or heat damage was noticed in the addition.

East of the addition was another storage room, access to the basement and the entryway to the restaurant. No fire or heat damage was noticed in this area.

The basement had a dirt floor and exposed wood structural members. In the southeast corner was the building's electric water heater and grease trap. No fire or heat damage was noticed in the basement.

Upon entering the main restaurant area, soot deposits were noticed throughout the ceiling, walls, floor and contents. In the northwest corner of the main restaurant area were the electrical meters and circuit breaker panels. Miscellaneous storage was in front of the electrical meters and circuit breaker panels. Soot deposits and discoloration were noticed but no other damage was noticed. In the southwest corner were two separate restrooms.

The northern half of the restaurant area was used as seating. Tables and chairs extended along the north wall. A partition wall extended east/west and enclosed the kitchen area from the seating area. (See Figure 3)



Figure 3 Photograph DSC_0060.JPG Main Restaurant Area - Seating/Kitchen

The east wall of the seating area was the glass entry/exit door and a large picture window north of the door. The door was open, but all the glass remained intact. The area of greatest damage that occurred to the seating area was at the partition wall and ceiling in proximity to the entry/exit door. The ceiling tiles along the partition wall were of metal material. The metal ceiling tiles closest to the door sustained the greatest damage compared to the rest of the ceiling tiles. The ceiling tiles were hanging by the railing, were warped and oxidized. Insulation and charred fire debris collapsed to the floor from the damaged ceiling area. A v-pattern extended up and out from the partition wall. On the south side of the damaged portion wall was the commercial cooking hood. (See Figure 4)



Figure 4 Photograph DSC_0088.JPG Burn Pattern on Partition Wall, Ceiling Tile Damage

A commercial kitchen non-compliance tag was identified with in the pile of fire debris.

The kitchen area was along the southern half of the restaurant. The kitchen area was designed as a galley kitchen with cooking appliances and counter tops along the north wall and south wall. The area of greatest damage to the kitchen area occurred in the area the commercial cooking hood. (See Figure 5)



Figure 5 Photograph DSC_0098.JPG Kitchen Area

The commercial cooking hood with a suppression system was in the eastern end of the kitchen, along the shared partition wall. Under the hood was a grease fryer and gas flat-top grill. East of the flat-top grill and hood was a partition wall that extended up from the floor to the bottom of the hood. Electrical conduit with two switches, a junction box, and a receptacle were mounted on the partition wall. The electrical systems remained intact with the receptacle having discoloration. As extension went up to the hood the conduit sustained discoloration and warping. East of the hood and partition wall was an electric range. The range had some soot deposits and some discoloration but remained intact. Along the north wall in proximity to the range was a pull station. The pull station appeared to be activated.

No fire or heat damage occurred to the east wall or south wall. The area of greatest damage occurred in the area of commercial kitchen hood. The grease fryer was along the westernmost end of the hood with the flat-top grill along the easternmost end of the hood. The grease fryer remained intact with a brown liquid filling the grease vat. Along the north wall under the hood were two light fixtures. The light fixture above the grease fryer was cracked but remained mounted to the wall. The light fixture above the flat-top grill was damaged and no longer in place. The glass from the light fixture remains were on the surface of the flat-top grill. Miscellaneous cooking utensils were on the flat-top grill surface. Charring and an oily residue were throughout the flat-top grill and walls extending up from the flat-top grill. The hood had discoloration and an oily residue throughout. The hood vents had the greatest discoloration and warping in the area of the flat-top grill. As extension went to the west over the grease fryer the discoloration and warping of the hood decreased. A v-pattern extending up and out from the flat-top grill was visible. (See Figure 6)



Figure 6 Photograph DSC_0101.JPG Flat-top grill Surface, Cooking Utensils, Hood Damage, V-pattern

The front of the flat-top grill had a grease trap extending the length of the flat-top grill. Miscellaneous cloth and plastic remnants were within the grease trap. The grill control panel was below the grease trap. Not all the flat-top grill dials appear to be in the “OFF” position. Approximately center of the control panel was a grease trap the extended the width of the flat-top grill. The grease trap was in place and closed. The easternmost end of the flat-top grill and walls sustained the greatest charring, discoloration, soot deposition and dial damage.

Under the flat-top grill were the remains of plastic items, metal silverware, and other unidentifiable materials. The countertop under the flat-top grill had an oily substance and hardened fire debris throughout. The underside of the flat-top grill was warped. Remnants of paper like materials were pulled out from under the flat-top grill. Below the appliances were the electrical and gas service lines. No damage was noticed to the electrical or gas service.

The ceiling tiles in proximity to the hood had collapsed. The exposed wall studs had charring in the area closest to the hood. As extension went away from the hood; the charring on the wall studs decreased.

Interview #1:

Name:	Fire Chief Jeff Lemer
Interview Date:	July 28, 2025

Notes: The following are notes from an informational interview with Fire Chief Jeff Lemer of the Anamoose Rural Fire Protection District. The interview took place at the fire scene. The interview was non-custodial and was not recorded. The following information was provided:

Fire Chief Jeff Lemer stated that Fire Chief Jeff Lemer was traveling south on 16th Ave NE and upon entering the Anamoose city limits Fire Chief Jeff Lemer observed smoke coming from the Anamoose Café.

Upon further investigation, Fire Chief Jeff Lemer observed visible fire through the kitchen windows. The kitchen windows remained intact, and the front door was locked. Fire Chief Lemer stated that no one was in the building upon his arrival. Fire Chief Jeff Lemer then called 911 to report the fire.

Interview #2:	
Name:	Connie Rudnick
Interview Date:	7.28.2025
<p>Notes: The following are notes from an informational interview with property owner Connie Rudnick. The interview took place at the fire scene. Connie Rudnick was informed that Connie Rudnick did not have to answer any questions and could withdraw from the interview at any time. The interview was non-custodial and was not recorded. The following information was provided:</p> <p>Connie Rudnick stated that Connie Rudnick and husband Michael Rudnick owned the property for approximately 20 years. The Rudnick's did not have a mortgage on the property. The taxes and utility bills were current. The restaurant was insured through Grinnell Mutal. Connie Rudnick stated that the last time the property was for sale was approximately 10 years prior to the fire.</p> <p>The restaurant's regular business hours were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunday – Monday: Closed • Tuesday – Friday: 7:00 AM – 2:00 PM • Saturday: 7:00 AM – 10:00 AM <p>Connie Rudnick stated that the restaurant mostly provided "Meals on Wheels" for senior citizens. Dining was available but the menu was limited to burgers, fries, and the designated senior meal for the day.</p> <p>Connie Rudnick stated that Connie Rudnick was at the restaurant on Monday July 28, 2025, from approximately 8:30 AM to 12:00 PM. Connie was using the grease fryer and flat-top grill to prepare fried chicken patties, steaks, and ground beef for the following day's Meals on Wheels program. This was part of Connie Rudnick's normal routine.</p> <p>Connie Rudnick shut down all cooking appliances and left the restaurant at approximately 12:00 PM. Connie Rudnick used the main entry/exit and locked the door on her way out. Connie Rudnick stated that the switches on the east side of the hood controlled the appliances. Connie turned off the switch that controlled the flat-top grill but left the fan on. Connie Rudnick went home and had lunch with Connie Rudnick's son-in-law. Connie Rudnick's home was approximately two blocks away from the restaurant. Connie Rudnick did not notice anything out of the ordinary. Connie Rudnick planned on returning to the restaurant to finish preparing for Tuesday's meals.</p> <p>Connie Rudnick's son-in-law left Connie Rudnick's home after having lunch and headed back to work. Connie Rudnick's son-in-law notified Connie Rudnick of the fire.</p> <p>Connie Rudnick reported that Connie Rudnick did not have any enemies and did not believe anyone would intentionally start a fire at the restaurant.</p> <p>Connie Rudnick stated that the last time the commercial hood suppression system was serviced was in May of 2025.</p> <p>Connie Rudnick stated that the kitchen towels and cleaning rags were placed in a laundry basket on the opposite side of the west end of the kitchen.</p>	

Interview #2:	
Name:	Michael Rudnick
Interview Date:	7.28.2025
<p>Notes: The following are notes from an informational interview with property owner Michael Rudnick. The interview took place at the fire scene. Michael Rudnick was informed that Michael Rudnick did not have to answer any questions and could withdraw from the interview at any time. The interview was non-custodial and was not recorded. The following information was provided:</p> <p>Michael Rudnick stated that Michael Rudnick and wife, Connie Rudnick, had owned the property for approximately 20 years prior to the fire. Michael Rudnick reported that no recent maintenance had been performed on the property and that no new</p>	

appliances had been installed. Michael Rudnick did not notice any issues with the electrical service, such as breakers tripping or lights flickering.

Michael Rudnick stated that the flat-top grill had not been operating properly. Michael Rudnick stated that the westernmost end of the flat-top grill did not function and that the control dials were not properly adjusted or calibrated. Michael Rudnick stated that the switches on the east wall were used to turn off the appliances. The control dials on the flat-top grill were adjusted and remained in the adjusted positions.

Michael Rudnick reported that Michael Rudnick was at work when Michael Rudnick was notified of the fire. Michael Rudnick left work and went to the restaurant. Michael Rudnick noticed smoke and flames visible through the kitchen window. Michael Rudnick stated that Michael Rudnick opened the window and reached inside to activate the manual pull station for the commercial cooking hood suppression system. Michael Rudnick also turned the switches off that were on the east wall. Michael Rudnick then grabbed a fire extinguisher located near the window and attempted to extinguish the fire from the exterior. Shortly after the extinguisher was depleted, the fire department arrived on scene.

Michael Rudnick reported that Michael Rudnick unlocked the front door and shut off the building's main electrical breaker.

Michael Rudnick stated that Michael Rudnick did not have any known enemies and did not believe anyone would intentionally start a fire at the restaurant.

Video:

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

Weather Reviewed:

The weather information was obtained from www.underground.com. The data was reviewed for July 24, 2025. The closest reporting station was the Harvey Station, approximately 16 miles away. The following information was learned:

TIME	Temperature	Humidity	Wind	Condition
9:35 AM	64	100	W 7 MPH	Mist
10:35 AM	70	83	CALM 0 MPH	Partly Cloudy
11:35 AM	72	83	N 5 MPH	Haze
12:35 PM	75	69	NW 6 MPH	Fair
1:35 PM	77	61	WNW 3 MPH	Fair
2:35 PM	79	54	NNW 5 MPH	Fair
3:35 PM	79	57	NW 5 MPH	Fair

After reviewing the weather conditions, it was determined that the weather did not factor into the ignition of the fire.



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Times:		
Hard Time Description	Time	Soft Time Description
	7/28/2025 8:30 AM	Connie Rudnick arrived at the restaurant
	12:00 PM	Connie Rudnick left the restaurant
Anamoose Fire Protection District is dispatched	12:52 PM	

Evidence identified/collected/preserved:
 No evidence was collected or preserved by the State Fire Marshal’s Office.

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

Other Forms/Documents/Reports Reviewed:

First District Health Unit – Environmental Health Division – Food Establishment Inspection Report

- Establishment: Anamoose Café
- Address: 705 Main St, Anamoose, ND 58710
- Date of Inspection: 04/09/2024
- Score: 89
 - Excess grease in and around flat top/hood system.
 - Inspector was concerned about fire safety.

Fire Extinguishing Systems, Inc. – Service Report

- Customer: Anamoose Café
- Inspection Date: 5/13/2024
- System was marked as not compliant with UL 300 and required to be upgraded
- Non-Compliant Tag Attached
 - Notes: Per Ryan Kasper of Fire Extinguishing Systems, Inc, Fire Extinguishing Systems, Inc only services the hood suppression system once a year. NFPA requires semiannual services.

Area of Origin:
 Based on the examination of the fire scene, witness statements, and other data reviewed, the area of origin was determined to be at or near the flat-top grill.



Figure 7 Photograph DSC_0101.JPG Flat-Top Grill, Hood

Fire Effects:

- This area sustained the greatest damage compared to the rest of the appliances and structure.
- The flat-top grill sustained the greatest amount of damage compared to the rest of the appliances.
 - As extension went away from the flat-top grill less charring and discoloration occurred.
- The hood directly above the flat-top grill sustained the greatest amount of discoloration and soot deposition compared to the area above the grease fryer.

Fire Dynamics:

- The surfaces in proximity to the flat-top grill sustained the greatest charring, discoloration and soot deposition.
- A v-pattern was visible extending up and out from the flat-top grill.
- As extension went up, the exhaust and ceiling were impacted above the hood.
- As extension went away from the flat-top grill charring, discoloration and soot deposit decreased.

Witness Statements:

- Fire Chief Jeff Lemer noticed flames and smoke extending from the Anamoose Café.
- Property Owner Michael Rudnick noticed flames and smoke in the area of the grill and hood.
 - Property Owner Michael Rudnick activated the manual pull station and used a portable fire extinguisher in an attempt to extinguish the fire

Cause Hypothesis Development and Testing:

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

Ignition of combustible materials located in close proximity to the flat-top grill, or the ignition of overheated grease deposits that had accumulated on or near the grill.

- The flat-top grill was in operation and used prior to the fire.
- The flat-top grill was not operating properly.
- Cloth and plastic materials were in proximity to the flat-top grill.

- The commercial cooking suppression system had not been serviced since May of 2024.
- The most recent health inspection report, dated April 2024, noted excessive grease accumulation.
- The commercial cooking suppression system was red tagged and did not meet current codes and standards.
- Connie Rudnick reported turning off the flat-top grill prior to leaving the restaurant.
 - Michael Rudnick recalled turning the switches off upon Michael Rudnick's arrival.

Final Hypothesis/Conclusion:

Based on the examination of the fire scene, witness statements, and other information reviewed, the area of origin was determined to be at or near the flat-top grill.

The cause of the fire was determined to be the ignition of combustible materials located in close proximity to the flat-top grill, or the ignition of overheated grease deposits that had accumulated on or near the grill.

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. NFA 921: Guide For Fire & Explosion Investigations. 2024 Edition. NFPA. Quincy, MA