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Fire engulfs Sugar Creek Road home

By Josh Shephard
SUGAR CREEK — Smoke alarms prevented a house fire from claiming more than the home of a Nicholas County family late Saturday night, just as the couple was settling to sleep.

According to a fire report issued by Nicholas County fire chief Mark Hughes, firefighters received an emergency call of a house fire at the home of Richard and Shirley Gardner 11 miles outside of Carlisle on Sugar Creek Road at approximately 11:20 p.m., April 4.

While available firemen rushed to the scene, the Gardner home was being very swiftly engulfed in flames. By the time firefighters arrived, the house was fully involved, the report said.

With few options left for attempting to save the home, firefighters concentrated their efforts on containing the flames, keeping them away from the gasoline tank lo-

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cated several yards away from the home, and a small barn-like structure on the other side.

According to Gardner, he and his wife were in their bedroom and had just gone to sleep when their smoke alarms went off. When they awakened, smoke was just beginning to filter into the bedroom.

They managed to save a laundry basket of clothes and a few pieces of furniture. To prevent any further spread of the flames beyond the house, the Gardners moved their cars as well as turning off the gas, Gardner said.

The cause of the fire, according to the county fire report, remains unknown.



Saturday night the Nicholas County Fire Department responded to a structure fire on Sugar Creek Road at the residence of Richard Gardner at 11:20 p.m. When the fire department arrived the house was fully engulfed and was a total loss.

The Carlisle Mercury/Pam Bowles Photo

Cause for bus fire unknown; 34 students safe

Pam Bowles and Josh Shephard
of The Carlisle Mercury Staff

SIMPSONVILLE, Ky. — According to state transportation investigators, the cause of a fire that engulfed a Nicholas County school bus last Tuesday afternoon may never be determined, but the commendable actions of two teachers, a parent, and a Nicholas County school bus driver did the important thing.

They made sure 34 Nicholas County elementary school students left the bus unharmed.

According to Rob Lane, Nicholas County Transportation Officer, the students were returning from a trip from Louisville.

The students had just wrapped up a visit to the Louisville Museum of

Science History and were returning on Interstate 64 near the Simpsonville rest area when bus driver Mary Jo McCord said she smelt something.

"I can't say it was smoke, I can't say it was anything really. All I knew at the time was that it was wrong," McCord said.

Pulling off at the Simpsonville rest area, McCord, teachers Brenda Anderson, and Kathy Caswell, and Paula Hunter, a parent, very quickly asked all students to depart the bus from the front and emergency exits.

Minutes after the children had left the bus, McCord said, smoke began to appear from beneath the hood. By the time McCord had called for firefighters, and informed Nicholas County Superintendent

Cobert Gilbert of the situation, and investigators met with Lane, Gilbert, and Nicholas bus garage mechanic Richard Gardner for a round table discussion of what destroyed the bus.

According to a report filed by the state department of Education, the bus was in good condition and had 50,000 miles on the odometer.

Lane said, McCord's bus had been in for its monthly for David Mangrum and checkup on the Monday prior. County Transportation Officer Darrell See, who participated in the investigation, investigators say they have narrowed the range of possibilities for the cause of the fire to two alternatives, neither of which, Mangrum said, may never be completely verified.

"Damage to the bus was so severe, its very nearly impossible for us to be certain as to why the fire started," Jim Parks, a representative of the Kentucky Department of Education said.

On the next day following the incident, state officials

Generally, Parks said, bus engine fires are most likely to occur in the early spring. Because of the risk of fire with volatile gasoline, the Department of Education agreed to switch all Kentucky school buses to diesel, a fuel far less potentially volatile than standard gasoline.

In the case of Nicholas County's bus, investigators felt that either the check valve in the bus exhaust manifold failed or high vapor pressure in the gasoline itself, on a warm day as Tuesday was, could have become too hot and ignited.

What is certain, he said, is that a great deal of heat was generated at the center of the blaze. Within the time the fire started until it was finally extinguished by fire fighters, the fire had melted the bus alternator, carburetor, radiator,

even the top of the roof.

However, if the fire had been caused by a faulty exhaust valve, then the incident may not have actually started as a fire, but just as a high concentration of heat. If exhaust were not allowed to escape in the normal way, heat would gradually build up in the lines, getting hot enough, eventually, to ignite the rubber hoses running through parts of the bus.

However, there is yet remains one more possibility. There is basically a difference in the "volatility" of standard gasoline from winter and summer.

During the summer, Parks explained, when temperatures are hot, gasoline is treated in such a way that its flash point, the

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Nicholas County school bus number 32 is now totally out of commission after an incident last Tuesday afternoon when the bus was destroyed by fire. The bus was returning from a 60-day and 700-mile class trip to Louisville, which included 34 students from the third through eighth grade.

The Carlisle Mercury/Pam Bowles Photo

Water board makes plans to upgrade system

By Pam Bowles
of The Carlisle Mercury Staff

CARLISLE — In a special meeting of the Nicholas County Water District Board members discussed possibilities for financing needed improvements to the existing Nicholas County water system.

Board members are faced with purchasing a new water tank to help service customers in the Bartonsville area. In the past month since the new board convened, there have been numerous complaints and concerns about water availability in particular sections of that area of the county.

The water tank is required to be installed in the Nicholas County area within the next year.

In addition a new and improved water pump system is needed to serve customers on Concord Road. In a previous meeting board members voted to suspend billing to certain

customers because water supplies were either low or nonexistent.

There are other areas which also need improvements. However, board members also expressed their desire to extend water lines further into the county where no water is available.

Funding for this type of project however is beyond the water district's current assets.

Therefore in the special called meeting last Thursday night board members heard a report from an accountant representing Aqua-KWS Inc. about possibility for acquiring money to help fund these improvements.

This suggestion was the board to apply for a community block grant and secure loan from Farmers Home Administration for \$500,000 each.

To secure this loan the accountant said the water dis-

trict would have to increase the current water rate of \$7.57 to \$9.61 for the first 1,000 gallons.

The accountant said, "By raising the rates this would insure the possibility of the loan and this would show the financial collateral to pay back the loan with in reasonable time.

Garvey Curtstinger, board chairman said, he was informed the board had an outstanding loan of \$6,400 at the Deposit Bank of Carlisle.

The loan was taken out in September before the current board took office.

Presently the book are being audited by an accountant in Cynthiana.

Curtstinger said, he hopes the audit will show where the loan was spent. Board members expressed an interest in pursuing the application of the grant and loans.