



**By Mary Pierce**

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Lightning was the apparent cause of a fire that completely destroyed a farm house southeast of Ogallala on Thursday.

The home, located at 651 Road East A South, was owned by Don Thompson of Ogallala and was a rental.

No one was home at the time of the blaze.

While there were no injuries, the home was declared a total loss.

The home was valued at \$60,000 and the fire also destroyed the renter's property, which was estimated at \$10,000.

Ogallala Fire Chief Greg Stofer said the fire call was paged at 1:05 p.m., and the first engine arrived at 1:17 p.m.

State Fire Marshal Ryan Sylvester said the fire started on the east side of the house after a lightning rod captured the lightning, diverting it from the structure but then arcing to the aluminum siding of the home.

"The lightning rod carried the lightning to the ground, like it's designed to do, but then arced to the house from there," he said.

Stofer said lightning strikes had been reported in the area at approximately 10:30 a.m.

"The fire may have had quite a jump on us," Stofer said, adding when he arrived at the scene, the home was engulfed in flames.

"It went really well. The fire was well advanced when we got there so it was a 'surround and drown,'" Stofer said.

Because of the home's rural location water had to be hauled into the site. The challenge with that, Stofer said, is the first water brought in is crucial.

"We have to make sure it's not wasted," he said.

With tanker and manpower support from Keystone-Lemoyne, Brule and Grant Fire departments, a continuous flow of water was made available and water was stored in a portable tank.

Stofer said he is appreciative of all Ogallala firefighters who responded as well as all mutual aid departments.

"Everybody did a fantastic job for us and we appreciate all the equipment they brought," he said.

The Lakeview Ladies also provided support to the firefighters.

“They do a fabulous fire rehab,” Stofer said.