By Mary Pierce
Keith County News

An observant motorist and aggressive firefighters may have saved an Ogallala business from total ruin.

At 1:20 a.m. Saturday, a passing motorist reported that a large amount of smoke was coming from Cornhusker Glass, 817 W. First St. Ogallala Fire Chief Greg Stofer said that call might have been made in the nick of time.

“The fire was getting ready to go through the roof,” Stofer said. “We were lucky to get the call when we did. That worked to our advantage.”

The cause of the fire was a malfunctioning furnace and combustibles being stored too close to the furnace, Stofer said. Once the smoke was cleared, damages were estimated at $100,000.

“That will probably go up,” Stofer said. In addition to 13 Ogallala firefighters, personnel from the Brule, Grant and Keystone-Lemoyne Volunteer Fire departments also responded.

“It was a by-the-book scenario and the firefighters did a fantastic job,” he said.

The fire chief said the fire allowed the department to utilize a different attack system recently installed on its engine.

The attack line was reduced from three inches to two inches yet still pumped a large amount of water.

“We still get big flows of 300 gallons a minute, but the lines are easier to handle,” Stofer said.

Stofer credited firefighters for their hard work.

“It pays to have an aggressive fire department, we saved a lot there,” Stofer said.

In addition to thanking neighboring fire departments, Stofer also expressed appreciation to the law enforcement officers who routed traffic off Highway 30.

The highway was closed for three hours because the fire department had to utilize a hydrant on the south side of the highway instead of the hydrant located adjacent to the business.

That hydrant is no longer in service and is scheduled to be removed.

Larry and Shirley Schlem, owners of Cornhusker Glass, said the business would be temporarily closed. Anyone with questions on pending jobs with the business can call (308) 289-2829.