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Cause undetermined in fire that claimed life of 15-year-old

GARDEN VALLEY, ID (May 13, 2025) – A devastating house fire that broke out the evening of Sunday, May 4 in Garden Valley has been ruled as having an undetermined cause. The Idaho State Fire Marshal’s Office responded to the scene that night to begin an investigation into the blaze, which claimed the life of a 15-year-old. The investigation remains open, though the official cause of the fire has been classified as undetermined due to the extent of destruction.

The fire was reported to Boise County 911 at 10:04 P.M. by a nearby resident who spotted flames on the rear porch of a single-family home. The witness reported that the fire spread rapidly, climbing toward a snow roof structure and quickly consuming the entire residence.

Tragically, the teenage victim was seen fleeing the area before re-entering the home through the front door. Due to the speed and intensity of the flames, the teen became trapped inside and succumbed to the smoke and fire before emergency crews could arrive.

Firefighters arrived to find the home fully engulfed in flames. Mutual aid was provided by fire departments from Horseshoe Bend and Lowman. A nearby residential propane tank was exposed to the intense heat and began venting, producing a dangerous stream of fire. Crews focused efforts on cooling the tank to prevent an explosion. Explosions heard during the incident were later identified as coming from smaller, camping-size propane bottles.

“Because of the extensive damage, we can only speculate on the fire’s origin,” said State Fire Marshal Knute Sandahl. “We do know the porch contained numerous boxes and personal items, as the homeowner and her grandson had recently moved in.”

Marshal Sandahl, along with Boise County Sheriff Scott Turner, remained on scene through Tuesday morning, carefully sifting through debris in an effort to identify the cause.

“These situations are never easy,” said Sandahl. “I feel a deep responsibility to the families affected to uncover as much information as possible about how these tragedies begin.”

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About the Department of Insurance

The Idaho Department of Insurance has been regulating the business of insurance in Idaho since 1901. The mission of the Department is to serve and protect Idahoans by equitably, effectively and efficiently administering the Idaho Insurance Code and the International Fire Code. For more information, please visit us at doi.idaho.gov or contact consumeraffairs@doi.idaho.gov.

About the Idaho State Fire Marshal

The State Fire Marshal's Office participates in and coordinates an integrated statewide system designed to protect human life from fire and explosions through fire prevention, investigation and public education activities. The program involves fire prevention activities, fire/arson investigation, code enforcement and the operation of the National Fire Incident Reporting System. The State Fire Marshal's Office provides assistance to local fire agencies throughout the state.