

Jackson County Fire District 3

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For Immediate Release

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Fire at Historic Butte Creek Mill Deemed Accidental

At 4:12 a.m. Christmas morning, Fire District 3 was dispatched to a fire alarm at Butte Creek Mill in Eagle Point. A total of five fire engines responded to the scene from three different agencies; Fire District 3, Medford Fire-Rescue and Lake Creek Rural Fire District. A Fire District 3 investigator was on-scene within minutes to begin the process of data collection and interviewing eyewitnesses.

Over the last two months fire investigators from Fire District 3 and insurance companies searched the debris for evidence. Building damage and structural instability slowed progress while safety hazards were addressed and debris was removed. Many theories were developed and tested throughout the investigation.

Based upon observable fire patterns and scene data, it is determined that the fire originated inside a concealed space above the west side of the milling room. It appears that heat was generated from an electrical malfunction which led to the ignition of a smoldering fire. The fire spread slowly through the concealed space between the ceiling of the milling room and the floor planks on the second story until the structural members collapsed.

The collapse pushed preheated smoke, gas and burning materials into the lobby and adjacent rooms. The open frame construction and exposed wood members were easily ignited and the fire grew rapidly, spreading through the historic mill.

The cause of the fire at Butte Creek Mill on Christmas morning of 2015 is determined to be accidental.

Fire District 3 thanks everyone involved in this investigation for their hard work and dedication. Community partnerships like these are invaluable and we would like to thank everyone who was available during this time of need.

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