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UPDATE: Fire Near Railroad Track Engulfs Structure

UPDATE:Liberal firefighters responded to a reported structure fire in the flour mill at Perryton Equity Exchange (140 S. Kansas Ave) on Sunday evening at 7:25 pm. Heavy smoke and flames were visible from nearly everywhere in the city at the time fire units were dispatched. The first fire unit arrived on scene at 7:29 pm and confirmed that the three story flour mill and one story warehouse were fully engulfed in flames. The fire also involved two rail cars, the elevator facility and a warehouse immediately across the railroad tracks. Due to the size, extent and wind driven nature of the fire, crews immediately assumed a defensive attack, focusing on containment and exposure protection. During the entire duration of the fire, winds were at 15-20 mph with gusts to over 30 mph. Liberal Police Department, Seward County EMS and Seward County Sheriff also responded to the initial page. Immediate calls for assistance were placed to Seward County Fire Department, Seward County Emergency Management, Turpin (OK) Fire Department and Tyrone (OK) Fire Department. In all over 75 area emergency responders and at least 15 fire apparatus were involved with bringing the incident under control. Fire crews & law enforcement patrolled the area and neighborhoods north of the fire for several hours. This was due to a large amount of embers and brands carried by the wind. These embers caused at least two additional structure fires, one residential and one commercial, one fence fire and multiple tree and grass fires. The fire was declared under control, though not entirely extinguished at 2:03 am, more than 5 ½ hours after it was reported. The flour mill and warehouse were empty and scheduled for demolition in the near future. These two structures were completely destroyed in the fire. The two railcars were loaded with fertilizer and are a total loss. The elevator facility suffered significant damage from direct flame and radiant heat. And the fertilizer warehouse suffered extensive fire damage to approximately 1/3 of the building. All other damage from the exposure fires due to embers was minor in nature. There are still smoldering fires beneath the rubble pile that are inaccessible due to the amount of collapsed debris. These fires will likely smolder for some time and will be monitored by the fire department. The cause of the fire is undetermined at this time and an investigation will be ongoing in conjunction with multiple local agencies and insurance company representatives. The Liberal Fire Department, along with all other agencies involved, would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to all of the individuals and businesses that provided an overwhelming amount of support for the responders at this incident. The food, drink and other supplies were invaluable to the personnel involved in an intense and physically draining emergency response. ----------

A fire near the railroad tracks in Liberal has kept area firefighters busy much of Sunday evening. At this time we do not have any information on the fire. Authorities are asking motorists to resist the urge to drive at Locke and Pershing south, Trail and Kansas, and Pershing from Highway 54 north to the railroad tracks. Firefighters have knocked the fire down considerably from the large flames visible earlier this evening.