Written by Mark Jaeger
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Neighboring bar patron reported smoke coming from marshal's garage

An electrical fire in the garage used by Fredonia's village marshal's department last week left the community without any squad cars for a couple days.

Village Marshal Mike Davel said the fire in the department garage on Fredonia Avenue was reported at about 11:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 15.

Davel said the initial report was made to the Ozaukee County Sheriff's Department by a customer at the neighboring tavern, Tom and Jodi's Fredonia Inn, who noticed smoke coming from the former Village Hall building.

"Officer (Dave) Wilde was on duty until 7 p.m. that evening. He walked right past what has been identified as where the fire started and didn't notice any problem. Somewhere between then and 11:30 p.m., something went haywire," Davel said.

He said investigators with the sheriff's department and the Fredonia Fire Department have ruled out arson in the blaze.

"The report is there was nothing suspicious about the fire," Davel said.

A preliminary investigation linked the fire to faulty electrical wiring. The municipal building has been in use since 1923, first as a fire station, then for village offices and currently for the marshal's headquarters.

Davel said one squad car was damaged by the heat of the fire. The department's other car sustained considerable smoke damage because a window was left partially open.

“It is hard to sit in that car for any length of time because of the smell,” he told the Village Board last week.

The damaged car was taken to a local car dealership for repairs and cleaning last week.

Both cars were cleaned up and made road-worthy by the weekend, although some additional repairs are needed on one of the vehicles.

Public Works Director Al Neumann noted the well house, which is located adjacent to the marshal’s office, also sustained smoke damage in the fire.