

Carnival company building destroyed by fire in Amity Township

By Michelle Park
Reading Eagle

A carnival company's Amity Township machine shop and storage facility burned Wednesday in a fire that produced a black plume of smoke that could be seen for miles.

Fire officials said the building owned by Oscar's Amusement Co. was a loss in the amount of about \$100,000. The building and its contents were insured.

The cause is under investigation.

The metal-and-wood structure off Amity Park Road was the winter storage facility for the 30-year-old, family-owned company, which operates rides, games and food stands at about 30 carnivals a season.

Most of the equipment was on location at two scheduled carnivals, including one that begins today in Birdsboro, said Joe Imes, whose great-grandfather started the company.

Imes' mother, Betty, is the property owner and company president.

Monarch Fire Company Assistant Chief Robert L. Kline said more than 75 firefighters from 15 companies used water channeled uphill from portable tanks to battle the fire, which started shortly before 4:30 p.m.

The fire was under control in about 30 minutes.

"It was a really hot fire, and probably (had) flames ... about 50 feet high," Kline said, pointing to singed trees next to the building.



The fire destroyed tools, parts, generators, about \$10,000 in carnival ride lights and memorabilia, including ornamental pieces from the company's first merry-go-round, Joe Imes said.

Also damaged was a 1989 Ford Mustang LX that Imes' son, Sam, had refurbished.

Imes said he and Sam, 18, were at Central Catholic High School in Reading for volleyball practice when Betty called and said the shop was ablaze.

"We saw the smoke from the McDonald's in Mount Penn," Imes said. "We were thinking,

'How bad could it possibly be?' I called my mom, and I said, 'How bad?' And she said, 'It's completely gone.' "

All that remained Wednesday evening was the smoking frame of the building.

Despite the fire, Imes said Oscar's has contracts to fulfill, and the company doesn't expect to cancel any carnivals.

"Of course, economically, it's gonna set us back," Imes said. "The stuff that we lost in here will have to be replaced immediately."

If necessary, Oscar's could contract with other carnival operators to obtain equipment it needs to run its scheduled events, he added.

The carnival in Birdsboro is scheduled today through Saturday along Main Street.

Contact Michelle Park: 610-371-5022 or mpark@readingeagle.com.



