

Temporary store expected in Kasabonika by week's end

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James Thom

An afternoon fire destroyed the Northern Store in Kasabonika Lake April 22.

No one was injured in the fire which began around 2:40 p.m., said Northern Store Ontario general manager Pat Jacob.

However, the residence, where the operators of the store lived, was also destroyed.

"They lost everything in the fire," Jacob said.

He said the company has arranged to lease one of the homes designated for teachers in the community until a new home can be built for the family.

The fire remains under investigation, said Nishnawbe Aski Police Service Sgt. Jackie George, adding officers believe the cause to be accidental.

The Ontario Fire Marshal is expected to be in the community later this week to add its expertise to the investigation.

George said while the fire was still burning, power to the building had to be shut off because of live wires. Hydro was restored by 7 p.m.

Jacob was in Kasabonika over the weekend along with other company officials to view the scene.

During that trip, the group had its plane fly to Wunnumin Lake where it picked up basic food essentials which were loaded and transported back to Kasabonika Lake and donated to community members.

Included were bread, baby formula, milk and other items to allow a transition until a temporary Northern Store can be set up in the community.

That is expected to happen by April 28 or 29.

"We're trying to get a temporary store set up as soon as possible," Jacob said. "We have already begun converting the community centre into a temporary store. We are flying in fixtures and a computer system."

Refrigeration units are in transit to the community as well.

"This is a good temporary solution," Chief Eno H. Anderson said. "The Northern Store is a main service to our community."

For that reason, Anderson approached Emergency Measures Ontario, which lobbied on the community's behalf to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada regarding emergency funding.

Anderson said INAC has provided additional supplies to community members to help cover the period between the fire until the temporary store is operational.

"We can't supply everything to the community members that they need but it does help," Anderson said.

Jacob said the company was renting the space to operate its store from the First Nation.

The fire has also knocked out bank and postal services in the community as both additional services were housed in the same building as the store.

Those services should be running again at the temporary store, Anderson said.