



Louisville Fire Protection District

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Strip mall fire likely human-caused

LOUISVILLE, CO, Sept. 11, 2008 ... Fire investigators have ruled out lightning as the cause of a blaze that damaged three businesses last week at the Centennial Crossing shopping center in Louisville.

Although storm activity was reported in the area, the closest lightning strike was a mile away on the night of the fire, according to weather reports obtained by an insurance company investigating the blaze.

The investigation now focuses on human causes for the fire, which caused about \$400,000 in damage to Ink! Coffee, Cut It Out scrapbooking and a chiropractic office at 980 W. Dillon Road. The fire started sometime before 1:30 a.m. Sept. 2 in the attic spaces that formed decorative pitches between the ceiling and the roof along the periphery of the 10,000-square-foot building.

Investigators found evidence that people had been using the attic space for activities such as cooking on a small charcoal grill. Beer bottles and wine bottles also were found, along with newspapers dated July 2008. Unburned charcoal samples found on the roof were sent to a laboratory to be tested to determine their age. The investigation could take a month to complete.

"You can't ignore the presence of people in a place where they are not expected to be, especially when they have at least two heat sources, a grill and lighting materials," said Louisville Fire Chief Tim Parker.

Fire investigators still don't know for sure how the fire started or spread

"Although we can make some educated guesses as to how the fire likely started, there are a number of scenarios that are possible," Parker said.

"We don't know whether the fire was the result of the misuse of fire starting materials, an accident, a fire that got out of hand, or heat from the cooking grill causing other combustibles to ignite," he said. "The scenarios we are considering are all related to the presence of humans in the attic space."

The fire department is hoping someone will come forward with information about who was using the roof and for what purpose. Anyone with information is asked to call the LFD fire prevention bureau at 303- 666-8809.

