

# Daily Nebraskan

COVERING THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA SINCE 1901

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FRIDAY

WEATHER:

Today - Mostly sunny.  
Southeast wind 10 to 20  
mph.

Tonight - Mostly cloudy.  
Low around 5.



January 19, 1996

## Fire destroys NU presidential house



Travis Heying/DN

Lincoln firefighters try to contain a Thursday morning fire that ripped through the University of Nebraska Foundation residence maintained for the NU president. Bitterly cold temperatures and winds froze the water to trees and equipment. Firefighters were rotated from duty every half hour.



Matthew Waite/DN

### Wind, low temperatures slow firefighting efforts

By Chad Lorenz  
Senior Reporter

Below-zero temperatures and high winds complicated firefighting Thursday as a fire ravaged the uninhabited University of Nebraska Foundation's presidential residence.

Firefighters, their bright coats caked with ice, rotated in and out of the house through the garage. Each company entering the house relieved another on its way to "rehab."

Flames burst from the roof and the top of the garage on the house's west side, and smoke billowed from windows and doors, leaving the burning house barely visible.

Dean Staberg, deputy fire chief, said firefighters struggled for nine hours to contain the blaze at 5930 Norman Road. The fire gutted the inside of the house, causing an estimated \$500,000 in structural damage and \$150,000 to \$200,000 damage to its contents.

The house, which is designated for the NU president, was vacant at the time of the blaze. NU President Dennis Smith and his wife, Suzanne, live in a house they purchased last summer, said Joe Rowson, UNL director of public affairs.

The house was valued at \$440,000, he

said.

Although much of the inside of the house was destroyed, Staberg said, most of the foundation and outer walls were intact and parts of the roof were sound and unharmed.

Some property in the house, such as artwork, furniture and clothing belonging to the Smiths, was salvaged, Staberg said.

"We're trying to save what we can."

University police Cpl. Carl Eastman, who investigated the fire, said the cause of the fire was electrical, possibly from an electric heater in the garage.

At 7:12 a.m., Lincoln Fire Department's fourth engine company, located at 27th Street and Old Cheney Road, was dispatched after a neighbor reported the fire.

The three-alarm blaze brought six engine companies and three truck companies to Norman Road.

A StarTran city bus stationed down the street served as the firefighters' rehabilitation center for thawing out coats, gloves, helmets, radios and body parts.

When Staberg arrived, thick smoke obscured vision two blocks away, he said.

Forty-mph northwest winds spread the

See FIRE on 3

## Asbestos removal main priority

### Improvements underway for residence halls

By Julie Sobczyk  
Senior Reporter

Life in UNL residence halls may soon get easier for students and staff, a UNL official said Thursday.

Glen Schumann, assistant director of housing for maintenance, said projects to remove asbestos, replace dishwashers and upgrade computers were three priorities for residence hall improvements.

Smith, Schramm, Cather, Pound, Abel and Sandoz residence halls all need asbestos removal on their first floors, he said.

"Thank God we don't have it in the residential floors," Schumann said.

"There is no health threat to students."

The process of removing the asbestos already has begun. Asbestos in the Abel Hall ballroom was removed last summer, he said, and asbestos in the Cather and Pound halls' food service building was removed over winter break.

The process will cost about \$250,000, and all of the halls should be asbestos-free in about three years.

A second renovation on the list is dishwasher replacement in the dining halls.

"Technology has made it possible to eliminate existing equipment, such as the pot and pan washer and the dish machine," he said.

The new dishwashers will have insulated sides, which will save energy.

The total cost of the dishwashers will be about \$800,000.

The last renovation will be for technology upgrades.

A room will need to be built in each

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**GLEN SCHUMANN**  
Asst. housing director

hall for fiber-optic wires to connect to computer wires from individual rooms, Schumann said.

Some halls — Neihardt, Abel, Selleck and Burr — will need two rooms because of those halls' layouts.

The project will cost \$900,000 and should be completed in about three years.

## Stranded students have all-night slumber party

From The Associated Press

GRAND ISLAND — It wasn't exactly breakfast in bed, but nearly 400 students and teachers at two Kearney schools made the best of being stranded overnight by the first blizzard of the season.

Wrestling mats, cots and carpet became makeshift beds, though Christina Bokenkamp, a Kearney High School junior, spent Wednesday night sleeping on a tile floor.

"It hasn't really set in yet that I spent a night at school," she said. "It's something I will be able to tell my children and grandchildren."

"It was quite the experience," she said. "There was no heat in the building for a while."

Parents and volunteers used four-

wheel drives Thursday to get up a snow-packed hill to the high school and the nearby Horizon Middle School to evacuate the students. All of the students had left by 12:30 p.m.

The impromptu sleepover was forced by light snow and winds up to nearly 70 mph that arrived suddenly Wednesday afternoon.

Strong winds forced five buses to return to the school Wednesday afternoon. A few elementary school students, who were riding on the buses, also spent the night away from home.

"It just hit so fast; it was a white out. The buses just couldn't go anywhere," middle school Principal Jerry Menke said. "The kids thought it was OK; it was kind of like a slumber party, but it was a big one."