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Blaze scorches area nail salon

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Page

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WOODSTOCK - Two days after returning from a Navy tour in Iraq, a dazed Steven Le took photos as firefighters investigated the smoking remains of his sister's Woodstock nail salon.

"I'm so worried for her now," the 24-year-old Gurnee man said of elder sister Nancy Le, who was in Vietnam visiting family. "She's the sweetest lady in the whole world. I don't know what this will do to her or her future.

"This really hurts."

The Sunday afternoon blaze destroyed Nail 2000, 709 S. Eastwood Drive, causing at least \$100,000 in damage but injuring no one, Woodstock Fire Chief Ralph Webster said. The salon did not have sprinklers.

By late Sunday, the cause was not declared, though arson and flammable nail chemicals were thought unlikely factors, Woodstock Fire Deputy Chief Terry Menzel said.

He said the fire might have stemmed from a power strip and electrical outlet behind Nancy Le's desk.

Woodstock Fire Rescue was called about 3:40 p.m. to a report of smoke showing at Nail 2000. They tore out pane windows and discovered flames in part of the salon, Webster said.

About 30 firefighters descended on the scene, a sharp contrast to the blue skies, closed shops and nearly empty roads of Easter.

Fire walls prevented the flames from spreading to neighboring businesses, including Universal Cash Express, Coldwell Banker, and a State Farm Insurance agency, Webster said. They all suffered smoke damage, he said.

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Nail technician Daniel Cao, 35, of Johnsburg, has worked at Nail 2000 for three years, he said. It employs about six people and has been in business at least five years, he said.

Cao sighed as Woodstock police brought him a few soaked, charred dollar bills from the salon cash register.

"I don't know what I'll do for work now, or how we'll all get through this," he said. "It's a real shame."

Webster expressed concern for the Le family and Nail 2000 workers.

"We're sad for them," he said. "We hope they'll be able to get their business restored ... in a short time so the economic impact won't be as devastating."