

THE BARRIE EXAMINER

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Downtown Fire

Blaze guts historic downtown building; no reports of injuries

An alleged explosion rocked Barrie's downtown shortly before midnight last night.

A building situated at the Five Points that housed apartment units, the Royal Thai Cuisine restaurant and the Riviera Pizza and Pasta House shook at about 11:30 p.m., according to eye witnesses.

Flames followed.

Fire and rescue crews were on scene spraying down the building, which was sporadically engulfed in flames soon after 11:30 p.m. Extensive smoke billowed from the building.

"It just shook. It felt like an earthquake," said Matt Gilbert, who lives next to the building located at the corner of Bayfield and Dunlop streets and was sleeping when he heard what he described as "a very loud boom."

"We ran out and they wouldn't let us back in," said Gilbert. "It blew the front door (of the thai restaurant) right out onto the street. There were chairs out on the street and everything. This is just insane"

One man who lives in an apartment directly above the Royal Thai Cuisine restaurant said all those who were in the apartments above the restaurant when the explosion occurred managed to escape uninjured. He said there were six separate apartment units located upstairs in the building.

The man, who didn't give his name, said he lost his pet cat and bird.

Fire and police personnel on scene would not say if an explosion had occurred, or what caused the fire. They would not say if anyone was injured, and provided no other details at that time, around 12:30 p.m.

The building appeared to be gutted by flames, and around 1:30 a.m. reports indicated one of the walls of the building collapsed.

Cory Smith, his fiance, Ali Sheard, and their friend, Mitchell Lemay, were crossing the street from the Simcoe Hotel when they said they heard a loud bang.



"It was like a shotgun, but like 10 shotguns going off in a row, all at once," Smith said.

"I was walking over to the bank machine and heard a humming noise," Lemay said, "and then I looked over and the building just blew up. The windows shattered and it just blew up."

Lemay said he and the others immediately called 911 and rushed to assist the tenants making their escape from the inferno.

A large crowd of onlookers gathered at the scene, which was eventually cordoned off by police tape.

On July 9, a fire gutted several buildings located just west of last night's scene, on Dunlop Street West. That fire, caused by a faulty extension cord, brought million-dollar damages.

"That whole building goes up in flames," Lemay said. "And now this happens."

Other businesses within the same block include The Silver Star, The Port, Sinfully Yours, The Hun, Rosie's Diner, and H&R Block.

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