



Howell Township
Bureau of Fire Prevention
4567 Highway 9, North, 2nd Floor
Howell, NJ 07731
Phone: 732-938-4500
Fax:

Fire Case # FI-26-006
Fire Dep Case # 26RFD0096
Police Case # 26HT06633
Incident Date 2/26/2026
Incident Time 00:15

Year: 2026 Month: 2 District: District #4 (Ramtown) Date: 2/26/2026 Time: 00:15
Fire Bureau Case # FI-26-006 Police Case # 26HT06633 Block: 42 Lot: 57

Location of Fire: 172 EASY STREET

Type of Fire: Structure - Residential REG: _____

Appliance Type: Heat Lamp Brand: Producers Pride Chicken Brooder Lamp Year: N/A

Model: TSC-L17-2717A Power: Electric

Veh. Year: _____ Make/Model: _____ VIN: _____

Owner: OHLINGER, JOHN F Phone: _____

Owner Address: 172 EASY STREET HOWELL

Tenant/Operator: RECHEL SHERMAN Phone: [REDACTED]

Alarm Reported By: RECHEL SHERMAN Phone: [REDACTED]

Address: 172 EASY STREET Relationship: Operator

Fire Department Responding: Ramtown OIC: CHIEF REALMUTO

Weather: 76% Humidity Mostly Cloudy Temp: 41F Wind,Dir/Speed: SSW 8mph Gust 0mph

Cause of Fire: Accidental

Point of Origin: Barn Stall

☒ Photos Taken JOSHUA D'ARCY

Type of Construction: WOOD FRAME

Electric Status: On Gas Status: None Heat System: None

☐ Smoke Detector Installed ☐ Detector Operated

☐ Did Fire Dept. Force Entry Where: _____

☒ Was Building Found Open

☐ Evidence Collected

Occupants: _____

Description of Evidence: _____

Custody of Evidence: _____

Persons Injured: 0 Civilians Injured: 0 Fire Injured: 0

Fatalities: 0 Civilian Fatalities: 0 Fire Fatalities: 0

Notification By: HOWELL POLICE DISPATCH Time of Notification: 00:30

Investigators Responding: Joshua DArCy

Value Loss: \$0.00 ☒ Guide Hours: 2 On Duty: 0 Off Duty: 2

Report Completed By: Joshua DArCy



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Narrative:

26-006

2/26/2026

172 Easy Street

Structure Fire/R

On Thursday February 26, 2026 at 0015, Investigator responded to a reported structure fire at 172 Easy St. Howell, New Jersey. Upon arrival, Fire Department operations were still on going. The primary responding agency to this incident was the Ramtown Fire Company (19-4). Initial discussion with the incident commander, Chief Pete Realmuto of the Ramtown Fire Company indicated that a reported structure fire with entrapment was called in by the property owner. No injuries were reported as a result of this incident. Additional units operating on scene included the Squankum Fire Company (19-1), Howell EMS (19-8), Howell Township Police Department, and the Howell Township Fire Bureau.

PROPERTY

According to Monmouth County Tax Records, John Ohlinger owns the property. Rachel Sherman was identified as the property contact and operator. The property is a 16 acer farm and consist of multiple structures both residential and agricultural.

Structure

The structure in question is a 30 X 50 barn. The exterior of the barn is metal with a metal roof. The interior of the barn has cedar wood boards as the wall and ceiling covering. 8 stalls 4 on each side were constructed of cedar boards roughly 4 feet from ground with metal rails an additional 3 feet. 2 openings one at each end. The structure received power from the house. The structure did not have any permanent heat. Mapped location of building is 40° 8' 21", -74° 9' 20".

Heat Lamp

The heat lamp in question is made by Producers Pride. The lamps housing is 10.5x10x7.7 round aluminum housing Is equipped with a 6 foot power cord connected to a porcelain bulb socket. The lamp comes equipped with a steel ball joint clamp. The lamp is also equipped with a reinforced steel guard to prevent contact with hot bulb. Manufactures number TSC-L17-2717A. The bulb in the lamp was a Producers Pride 250W red heat glass bulb. Manufactures number 81016-730. Both the lamp and bulb are UL tested and listed. Both are purchased at Tractor Supply and do not have any recalls.

Breaker Panel

The panel showed 40 breakers. None of the breakers had been tripped. Several breakers in the off position. The main breaker still in the on position. The owner shut the breaker to the barn off during the fire.



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UTILITIES

Electrical service was provided via an under-ground service to the residential structure. The electrical meter was located on the A-side of the residential structure. Service was provided by First Energy / Jersey Central Power and Light Co. Electrical meter was a digital style meter manufactured by Itron with serial number 1N500336800669022 and a read of 912 1993 1.

INTERVIEWS

Upon my initial briefing, I conducted a 360 - degree survey of the structure and observed light smoke coming from the D-side (west) entrance of the structure. I donned the appropriate personal protective equipment consisting of bunker pants, structural firefighting boots, protective gloves, and turnout coat. Upon my initial overview I proceeded to conduct witness interviews.

Chief Pete Realmuto

Ramtown Fire Company

Discussion with the first arriving fire officer, Chief Pete Realmuto of the Ramtown Fire Company indicated that upon his initial dispatch the fire company was hit out for a barn fire with entrapment. He advised that he arrived on location and observed a 30X50 barn with a heavy smoke condition with no visible flames from the exterior. He informed investigator that he was advised by patrol that they were trying to evacuate the animals and the property owner was inside. He continued by stating he donned his PPE, grabbed his pressurized water extinguisher and entered the structure. Upon entering the structure he observed burning wood chips throughout the stall burning. Chief Realmuto attempted to control the spread of the fire utilizing the pressurized water extinguisher until additional units arrived. Chief continued that all occupants were removed and the property owner was checked by EMS for smoke inhalation.

Rachel Sherman

DOB: [REDACTED]

172 Easy Street

Discussion with Rachel indicated that she was the property owner and operator. Rachel advised that she was in the house sleeping in the upstairs bedroom when she heard the dogs in the kennel barking. Rachel advised the dogs normally do not bark unless someone is coming up the driveway or there is an issue with the animals in the barn. Rachel got dressed and went out the front door when she observed heavy smoke coming from the closed barn door. She quickly called 911 and neighbor advising of a fire in the barn. Rachel indicated she entered the barn observed fire in the stall with the baby goat she dumped the drinking water on the fire and began removing the animals. She stated that she had to reenter the structure several times.

When asked about what would have ignited the fire Rachel informed investigator that a heat lamp is used to keep the animals warm during the cold weather. Rachel indicated that she has had small fires caused by the heat lamp sometimes they pop and a spark lands in the bedding, but never has a fire spread so fast. When asked if she is a smoker Rachel indicated no she is not.



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SCENE EXAMINATION

The fire scene examination utilized the basic methodology of a systematic approach as recommended by accepted reference materials. These reference materials include 2024 edition of National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 921 - Guide for Fire and Explosion Investigations.

A systematic investigation was conducted starting from the least burned to the most severely damaged. Conducting a 360 moving in a clockwise direction. Investigator entered the structure on the B-side (east) entrance. 4 stall were located on each side of the barn. The ground was covered in straw and pine shavings. The first stall in the B/C corner (Southwest) showed no heating equipment, no power source, and no fire damage. The stall to the right of the first showed a heat lamp face down in the pine shaving. Electrical cords in the same area were observed. Fire damage was observed to the pine shavings and to the cedar stall wall. Continuing to the next stall along the C-side wall, this stall showed a power strip with a heat lamp plugged into one of the receptacles. The power strip was not plugged into any power source. No fire damage was observed. Moving to the fourth stall on the C-side wall showed no heating device no power source. This stall did not show any fire damage.

Continuing the A/D-side (Northwest) of the structure and with the fifth stall. This stall did not show any source of power, no heating device, and no fire damage. Moving to the 6th stall to the right of the last. It was observed in this stall it was equipped with an electric heat lamp. The lamp was secured on the metal bar fence by a steel clamp. The heat lamp was not plugged into any power source. This stall did not show any power source and no fire damage was observed. Continuing to the seventh stall, no power source, heating equipment and fire damage was observed. Moving to the eighth and final stall. The last stall showed no power source, no heating equipment, and no fire damage.

After completing the overall scene examination investigator returned to the area with most fire damage. The area with most fire damage was the second stall located on the C-side wall closer to the

B-side (east). Located in the front right corner in the entrance of the stall was a heat lamp. The heat lamp was face down on the pine shavings the lamp was no longer plugged into a power source. The steel guard to the lamp was no longer connected and laid behind. Charred pine shavings were scattered around the area.

Investigator lifted the lamp. On the underside of the lamp was a round pile of pine shavings. The pine shaving showed heavy charring. The underside of the lamp showed burn patterns on the inside of the aluminum housing. The red heat bulb was still intact. Examination of the lamp did not show any electrical short, arch, or malfunction. Examination of the cord showed melting of the sheathing and minimal exposure of the copper wiring. To the right of this area was the cedar board wall showed an inverted cone shaped fire pattern that extended along the base of the cedar board wall. Soot deposit was observed on the metal stall gate.

Continuing with the areas examination investigator observed multiple extension cords running from the stall to the center of the barn and out the B-side (east) doors. The extension cords showed charring and melting of the sheathing. The cord ran out the door, in that area the green extension cord showed a breakdown of the green sheathing exposing the individual wires in the cord. The sheathing for each wire was observed to be intact. The breakdown of the exterior sheathing of the cord was identified by that point being closed in the sliding door each time the door was operated. Following the green cord to a third cord yellow of higher amp. The two cords were twisted together and plugged in to each. The yellow cord ran up to the house through the front door and plugged into an outlet to the left in the foyer area.



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AREA OF ORIGIN

After a complete fire scene examination, fire pattern analysis, excavation of fire debris, and scene reconstruction, the area of origin was located in the second stall on the C-side wall closer to the B-side of the structure. The point of origin placed in the front right corner in the entrance of the stall.

CONCLUSION

This conclusion is based on the totality of the information available to this investigator at the time of this report and scene examination. Pertinent sources include firefighter and witness statements, fire scene processing, burn pattern analysis, and fire dynamics. This fire has been determined to have originated from the heat lamp falling coming in contact with the combustible pine shavings. Unless further information is provided or obtained, it is the findings of this agency and of my opinion that the fire is classified as Accidental.