

New images reveal more damage to historic Bisbee hotel than first reported

KVOA

The owner of the historic Letson Loft Hotel has shown News 4 Tucson new pictures to show how bad the damage was from the Valentine's Day blaze.

Before News 4 Tucson met up with Tom Firth on Feb. 15, his Letson Loft Hotel was nothing short of elegant and cozy, welcoming guests to Bisbee with comfy beds and sophisticated furniture.

But that is all on pause for the moment.

Even though the Letson Loft Hotel was spared from being destroyed, you can see from pictures that it received heavy damage.

"We had a collapse of our building about 28 feet of the foundation that was adobe brick. It was just dissolved by the million gallons of water that the fire department had to use to extinguish the fire. So we now have a 28-foot gap on the west end of the building," Firth said.

The hotel is not the only business that is being forced to close.

"We have three tenants in our building, and they're not able to open yet either because structurally unsound conditions," Firth explained.

Unfortunately, one of Firth's tenants decided to relocate from the building.

"La Dolce Vida we're sorry about that, because our upper floor collapsed on their retail space," Firth said.

Another tenant of Firth's has already started picking themselves up from the fire.

“The honeybee guy. Now he’s been permitted to open with a table out front on Main Street,” Firth said.

“For a horrible, horrible situation, we’re probably some of the most fortunate because we will be able to reopen,” said Reed Booth, the owner of Bisbee Honey Shop.

Everyone impacted by the fire wants everybody to know that Bisbee is still open for business.

“We’re still encouraging people to come visit the city,” Firth said.

Firth said he has adequate insurance and hopes to open the hotel back up in six to 12 months.

For other businesses, they are not so lucky.

News 4 Tucson found a GoFundMe created by Anne Bush, who writes that her and her husband own the building to the right of the Bisbee Oil & Vinegar store and that during the blaze their building was destroyed.

The couple claim they lived upstairs in that building and now owe a lot money.

The GoFundMe is asking for \$250,000 because the couple claims that they temporarily paused their insurance plan in order to deal with a financial emergency, adding that their premium was very high.

News 4 Tucson spoke to the executive director of United Policyholders on why insurance rates could be so high for such a historical building.

“The fact that it’s an older building, yeah, I mean that’s one of the reasons that insurance companies are using to raise peoples rates, you know, because they typically have the older systems, older plumbing, older electrical. Our advice today is carry the highest deductible that you feel comfortable carrying, get rid of any coverage you can live without, you know high coverage on your contents, bundle your policies,” said Amy Bach from United Policyholders.

News 4 Tucson reached out to the couple to get comment on this story, but they could not talk before deadline.