

Elderly woman dies when smoke fills home

PORTSMOUTH -- An 87-year-old Portsmouth woman was pronounced dead Monday, May 5 after she was pulled from her smoke-filled home by firefighters here.

Services for Emma Ann Lefeber will be held today, Friday, May 9 at 10:30 a.m. at St. Mary Our Lady of Fatima Church in Portsmouth.

An autopsy was to be conducted this week to determine if the fire and smoke was the cause of her death, officials said.

According to Shelby County Sheriff reports, the Portsmouth and Panama Fire Departments were called to Lefeber's 203 3rd Ave. home at about 6:54 p.m. Monday evening.

"Some kids saw smoke coming from the house, and I think a neighbor called it in," said sheriff Gene Cavanaugh.

When firefighters arrived, the house was filled with smoke, he said. Lefeber was found in the home, and taken out by firefighters, who performed CPR. She was pronounced dead at the scene by Shelby County Medical Examiner R. Duane Harris, officials said.

The home sustained considerable damage, officials said.

State Fire Marshal Jim Kenkel was called to the scene to investigate, and it was initially determined that a faulty motor in the exhaust fan in the bathroom was the cause of the fire.

Services to be held

A wake service for Lefeber was held Thursday, May 8 at 8 p.m. at Pauley Funeral Home in Harlan. Visitation



The Emma Lefeber home, 203 3rd Ave., Portsmouth, sustained extensive damage Monday. (Photo by Chad Goetsche)

continued Thursday from 8-9:30 p.m. at Pauley's.

Burial will be in the St. Mary's Cemetery at Portsmouth.

Lefeber is survived by four sons -- Russell (Dorothy) Lefeber of Harlan, Eugene (Joanne) Lefeber of Portsmouth, Richard (Stella) Lefeber of Portsmouth and Ernest (Shirley) Lefeber of Harlan; two daughters -- Margie (Ray) Gorden of Arion and LaVonne (Paul) Jensen of Council Bluffs; one sister, Dorothy Williams, of Denison; 33 grandchildren, 57 great-grandchildren and nine great-great-grandchildren.