Missouri Fire Stopped But Pre-1960 Files Lost

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OVERLAND, MO. (AP) — Flames were brought under control again Friday after consuming [illegible] millions of service records [illegible] on the top floor of the Military Personnel Records Center [illegible] officials said.

More than 200 St. Louis County firemen battled the blaze which started Wednesday night and flared again late Thursday at the two-block-long building that houses the files of [illegible] million servicemen.

[illegible]

Embers smouldered even though the flames were out and firemen said they would continue to pump water on the smoking roof through the weekend. The large volume of tightly packed paper and the 1,800-square-foot area in which it had to burn contributed to the length of the fire, officials said.

[illegible] treated [illegible] smoke in[illegible] or minor injuries and [illegible]

The Federal Bureau of Investigation continued to probe [illegible] possible causes of the fire.

The sixth floor houses about [illegible] million Army and Air Force records, most of which were believed destroyed. The center is the only depository for files on men and women from all branches of the service, but most of [illegible] were pre-1960 files.

Navy records are stored on the fifth floor and government officials feared they would be badly damaged by heat, smoke and water.

The fashion in which the records were packed, some in boxes and others on open shelves, helped fuel the flames.

The General Services Administration, which operates the million-square-foot building, said it would be early next week before a cost estimate could be placed on damages.

Some of the burned records, although not duplicated elsewhere, could be reconstructed if needed through documents such as discharge papers, a GSA official said.

Donald E. Johnson, Veterans Administration director, said in Washington the fire would have no impact on 13 million veterans and their dependents receiving VA benefits.