

# Employment Service offices gutted in late night city blaze



FIRE gutted a central New Plymouth building last night. The blaze in the New Zealand Employment Service offices was reported at 11.43pm and quickly flared to engulf the rear of the building.

At the height of the fire, flames reached 10 metres above the three-storey building. Six engines attended the fire in Roebuck House — next to a lot left vacant by a major fire 2½ years ago. In a similar late night blaze the Plymouth Building was gutted by flames.

While New Plymouth's complete fire fighting vehicle force, the whole of the duty watch, and volunteers were called out to fight the fire, an engine from the Oakura volunteer brigade was called in to cover the rest of the city. The city's central business district was blanketed by smoke during the blaze. No one was in the building at the time.

Deputy chief fire officer Graham Moody said fire fighters had trouble containing the blaze because of the extreme heat. Firemen managed to get into the second floor of the building from Powderham St and, assisted by the hydraulic platform, controlled the flames at the front of the building.

The effort then moved to the rear of the building where crews worked from Currie St and Currie Lane to fight the fire which was centred on the second floor.

The fire took 40 minutes to bring under control and water from the fire hoses had seeped into first floor of the building. Mr Moody said salvage work had started last night on computer and other office equipment.

Far left: Firefighters bring the blaze at the front of Roebuck House under control with the help of an hydraulic platform.

Left: Flames blaze out of control at the rear of Roebuck House as seen from the roof of The Daily News building.

Photos: KELLEY LOVERIDGE