



Joe Mannino surveys the damage done to his pizza parlor. He plans to reopen in a few weeks. RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Pizza man vows return to ovens

By Tom Baer
staff writer

The ovens are cold and the phones are silent these days at Romano's on Grand River.

Normally a bustling storefront business specializing in carryout pizza, chicken and ribs, Romano's is closed for remodeling after a fire caused about \$25,000 worth of damage to the interior of the building on Sept. 19.

"It's like starting all over again," said Joe Mannino, Romano's owner for the past 10 years.

Mannino, a West Bloomfield resident who owns similar establishments in Farmington Hills and Novi, said the remodeling will take several weeks.

Now, instead of overseeing the purchase of the proper amounts of anchovies and pepperoni for the Grand River store, Mannino is worrying about the remodeling plans he must submit to the county board of health and the city building department.

He's also shopping around for four new electric pizza ovens — approximate cost: \$4,500 — to replace the ones damaged by the fire.

No one was injured in the blaze, which started in one of the ovens. Damage was confined to the front of the building, Mannino said.

"WE USUALLY have some smoke coming from our ovens because we cook our corn meal," said the owner, explaining that the method of cooking causes a certain amount of smoke. "So we didn't realize the ovens were on fire at first."

"By the time we noticed, the fire had gone through the back of the ovens and caught the wood on fire. It crawled up the back wall, smoldering."

Manager Brian Funni and three other employees were working in the building at the time.

"They were making pizzas right up until the fire department came," Mannino said. "They really didn't realize the place was on fire."

Being closed "is going to cost us a few dollars," Mannino admitted, "but we're insured."

Mannino who remodeled the front of the building last October, said he didn't know the volume of business at the Grand River location.

"We do a nice business," he said. "We pay our bills, and we don't owe anybody anything."

Mannino said that he employs eight persons at the Grand River store.

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