Trash Fees Forced on Part-Timers

By Heidi Fr on, Reporter | Posted: Thursday , December 21, 2017 10:00 am

Burrtec Waste Industries, Inc., notified its Mountain Disposal customers that it is discontinuing the Fee Waiver Program, effective Dec. 31. Burrtec previously offered the courtesy waiver to part-time residents whose homes sit idle for much of the year, and to homeowners waiting for their vacant properties to be sold.

When the program was reviewed at a Municipal Advisory Council (MAC) meeting in August 2011, Kathleen Bingham, Solid Waste Programs administrator, stated, “I believe the program we’ve implemented is fair and equitable.”

However, the notice, dated Dec. 1, 2017, explained that the Fee Waiver Program “has created problematic administrative issues and customer service challenges.”

Due to a previously scheduled holiday vacation, an official Burrtec spokesman was unavailable to comment on the nature of those issues and challenges.

Burrtec let San Bernardino County off the hook by explaining that the program is not administered by the county; Mountain Disposal, of its own initiative, offered the program as a customer courtesy for vacant properties only.

Customers were required to submit electric bills showing six kilowatts or less of electricity usage per month for a three-month period. Later, Burrtec raised the amount to 10 kilowatts for December through March, to accommodate the need to heat homes so pipes would not freeze. Now, Burrtec describes its decision to end the program as a difficult action.

Residents may still apply for the self-haul exemption program, which requires proof of disposal receipts. Under that program, residents may self-haul their solid waste to a local waste transfer station in lieu of waste collection service subscription. Call (909) 338-2417 with any questions.
Will You Pay Something for Nothing?

Posted: Thursday, December 21, 2017 10:00 am

The voices are echoing throughout Southern California, with some chiming in from far-away northern and eastern locations: ‘Why should I pay for services I don’t receive?’

So say the second homeowners who visit their mountain cabins periodically, but infrequently enough to justify paying for full-time, year-round trash pickup. Those homeowners would much rather toss their minimal trash into the trunk and take it home at the end of the weekend. After all, it can’t be difficult for trash collectors to simply pass by the houses that have no trash can sitting at the end of the driveway.

Or can it?

Citing “problematic administrative issues and customer service challenges,” Burrtec Waste Industries, Inc., announced the cessation of its Fee Waiver Program. The solution to Burrtec’s internal logistics strategy is to charge part-timers $50 per quarter, i.e., $200 per year. The part-timers are furious. As one homeowner stated in a Letter to the Editor: “I have better things to do with $200 a year than put it in the TRASH!”

A lot of questions remain unanswered, due to the timing of this year-end announcement and pre-arranged vacations. But consider the likely scenarios that will follow.

A second homeowner who pays the $200-per-year fee will spend occasional weekends and holidays in the mountain home.

Instead of taking the trash down the hill to a primary residence, the homeowner leaves the trash in a barrel at the curb, upon departure Sunday or Monday afternoon.

Regular trash pick-up for that neighborhood is on Wednesday or Thursday. In the meantime, the bears, coyotes and raccoons have picked up the scent of something scrumptious. The barrel is overturned, ransacked and scattered on the road and in neighbors’ yards.

The trash collectors are not obligated to pick up the scattered trash. It remains behind for someone else to pick up. Who will do that?

One Mountain News reporter does that every holiday weekend when her three part-time neighbors show up and depart, leaving their trash behind. What about everyone else in the mountain communities? Will they clean up after the part-timers — or will Burrtec?

After all, Burrtec’s motto is: “We’ll Take Care of It.”
Organizations that serve those in need must first get the city's blessing before distributing food on public property, according to a new Redlands ordinance.

On Tuesday Dec. 19, the City Council approved the ordinance. It requires individuals or organizations to obtain a permit from the city before sharing food with the homeless or low-income individuals and families on city-owned property such as parks.

"Up until this point in time, there has been no ordinance in place that regulates the specifics about how those events can be conducted," Chris Boatman, Quality of Life director, told the council on Tuesday. "This simply provides a process for those organizations to coordinate with staff, to ensure the proper safety measures are put in place and the event is conducted in an organized manner."

Boatman said the ordinance addresses a recent increase in these type of events.

A number of the people served are homeless, but many are also people with very limited economic means who are housed and avoid homelessness in part by securing food from these events, according to the ordinance.

City employees have been called to address public nuisance and other illegal behavior, such as clean up of human waste, litter, trash and other debris, left over from the events, according to the ordinance.

The council will set the fee for the permit. In addition, organizations will be required to provide a refundable $500 deposit for maintenance and cleaning costs, show proof of liability insurance and provide proof of compliance with all San Bernardino County regulations related to food preparation and distribution. Organizers also will be asked to follow several event regulations.

The ordinance does not apply to Thursday Market Night, Farmer’s Market or events with commercial food distribution.
Tempers Rise as Planes Descend

By Heidi Fr on, Reporter | Posted: Thursday, December 21, 2017 10:00 am

Continued efforts are underway to persuade the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to change the flightpath that sends aircraft flying directly over Lake Arrowhead. Second District Supervisor for the County of San Bernardino Janice Rutherford reported in a Dec. 18 email: “We had a very productive meeting with the FAA last week. Progress is being made.”

As a result of that meeting, it appears that the FAA might send a representative to meet with the community at one or more meetings of the Municipal Advisory Councils in the mountain communities.

This in itself would be a major accomplishment: A perusal of online sources will show that the FAA most frequently declines to attend meetings with individual communities, preferring to work only through administrative channels.

Rutherford’s communications director, Scott Vanhorne, said that last week’s meeting also covered changes that might be made to alleviate noise from the planes.

Noise reduction, however, is not the only aim. Supervisor Rutherford has consistently supported efforts by Lake Arrowhead residents to move the flight path back over Heaps Peak, and she recognizes that it is a reasonable solution that could be achieved without litigation.

Also supporting the possibility of that remedy is U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein, who wrote to FAA Administrator Michael P. Huerta in November, stating, “In the case of Lake Arrowhead, the flight path adjustment resulted in planes that formerly flew over an unpopulated mountain peak now travel directly above the lake community en route to Ontario International Airport.”

Feinstein went on to request, “As the FAA engages in its post-implementation review of its SoCal Metroplex project, I ask that you consider all options to reduce the noise impact on affected communities. Also, please address these specific issues: 1. Adjustments to the current flight paths, or a return to previous flight paths to limit the noise in particular communities.”

A second issue that Feinstein cited was enforcement of FAA-established altitude levels for planes flying above residential areas, noting that many planes are not in compliance with prescribed altitude levels.

Looking toward the future, Feinstein’s third issue was a recommendation that the FAA make plans to improve its analysis of flight path changes to avoid noise disruptions in other communities. The senator is already juggling complaints from Malibu, Pacific Palisades, Los Angeles and Culver City, as well as Lake Arrowhead.
She noted in her letter to Huerta, “These complaints echo the concerns I have heard in northern California, which I understand you are working to address. In addition, I suspect there are communities throughout the state that are experiencing similar disruptions.”

It remains to be seen whether complaints from numerous other locations are in competition with Lake Arrowhead for the attention of Huerta and other FAA bureaucrats. On the other hand, it might be that consistent and common complaints could be more persuasive than individual voices from fewer communities.

For example, a medical doctor from Newport Beach has been sending to the FAA articles from medical journals that connect airport noise to serious health issues. Specifically, studies show that the psychological stress induced by airplane noise can lead to high blood pressure, heart disease, heart attacks and strokes.

Those health conditions are higher in people who live near flight paths and airports, according to the studies. Individuals who already have those diseases suffer more because the conditions progress more rapidly in those who live near an airport and flight paths.

The same doctor has submitted additional studies showing that children’s cognitive development can be impaired by airport noise — a concern that arises as planes descend directly above Rim of the World High School.

Open Letters to FAA’s Huerta

As airplanes continue to fly directly over Lake Arrowhead and surrounding communities, citizens persist in their efforts to persuade the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) of the need to eliminate the flightpath directly over Lake Arrowhead, and to move the path back to its original location above Heaps Peak.

Michael P. Huerta, the administrator of the FAA, was sworn into office on Jan. 7, 2013. He serves a five-year term and is responsible for the safety and efficiency of the world’s largest aerospace system. The FAA has a budget of $16.3 billion and more than 47,000 employees.

Two recent examples of letters to Huerta are printed below: one from a first-time correspondent, and one from a repeat writer. The letters have been edited for length and clarity.

Dec. 3, 2017

To Michael Huerta:

A few nights ago, I was traveling from “down-the-hill” back home up a winding section of Rim of the World Highway (State Highway 18), when I pulled into a turnout to listen to a special announcement on a radio show. This was also a perfect opportunity and vantage point from which to enjoy a spectacular sunset that was turning a scarlet color. I was at approximately 4,000 feet elevation.

From this vantage point, I noticed the first of a string of commercial jet aircraft virtually skimming Rim of the World Highway on their descent into Ontario International Airport. I was at what most of us consider to be the highway’s most beautiful segment, both day and night, in terms of foliage and panoramic views. I was devastated.
The next morning around 5 a.m., I was reflecting on the horrible experience I had endured the evening before. Within a span of 20 minutes, two very loud jet aircraft spewed their way above my home and across our pristine 2.5-by 2.75-mile lake.

Michael, this is too much for our beautiful rural community to bear. It is absurd for us to endure this interruption in our peace and serenity when all that has to happen is for the FAA to abandon “EAGLZ-ONE” and direct incoming aircraft back to “ZIGGY6,” which passes over our dump. Really.

Upon further reflection, it struck me that Rim of the World Highway is a Scenic Byway federally designated by — yes — the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Federal Highway Administration. How can one body in your department destroy what another body in the same department has identified as worthy of preservation? It makes no sense at all.

Jim Price
A deeply concerned citizen
Dec. 18, 2017

To FAA and Legislative Members:

UPS 5x920 crossed over my house and our community this morning, as my clock read 5:18 a.m. I was awakened from a sound sleep due to the loud roar and thunder of a cargo aircraft crossing overhead.

Using playback on Planefinder.net, I found the aircraft and the altitude recorded at Highway 18 and Highway 173 to be only 7,550 feet mean sea level, confirming that the very low crossing of this aircraft was 1,770 feet above ground as it roared overhead.

This email is to register yet another complaint with the FAA over this type of aggravation in the sky. Nobody in Lake Arrowhead should be subjected to such harassment, disregard for human habitation and destruction of quality of life. This continuing nuisance must stop!

Moreover, the engine pollution from these cargo planes will accumulate and eventually pollute the drinking water of Lake Arrowhead, along with the air. The particulate matter is already noticeable to me because this is the first time in 20 years of living here that I actually find “black” filth on the window of my vehicle. Brown dirt is common, but black never before collected on our windows.

Further, I can smell the jet exhaust. Considering that my sense of smell is not that good, smelling the effluent is really surprising and disturbing.

My location is the same altitude/elevation as Rim of the World High School. The plane crossing is the intersection of Scenic Highway 18 (Rim of the World Drive) and Highway 173. The elevation is 5,780 feet, according to Google Earth. Again, this plane was only 1,770 feet above ground.

* * *

There is no reasonable justification for any cargo or passenger carrier to frighten and frustrate a community by crossing loudly over the roofs of homes at such a low altitude when other flight paths are available and suitable for use.
Please do something to stop the aircraft aggravation.

David Caine
Lake Arrowhead
San Bernardino grappling with how to deal with new marijuana laws

By Rob McMillan

Wednesday, December 20, 2017 05:37PM

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. (KABC) -- Two large marijuana grows were busted in San Bernardino within the last few weeks, and its raising questions as recreational marijuana is about to become legal.

San Bernardino police said the facility raided in the 600 block of N. E St last week had nearly 25,000 plants inside the building. The facility that was raided in the 4000 block of Georgia Blvd. on Tuesday was "significantly larger," according to police.

"Those facilities did not have any permits to be doing what they're going at those locations," said San Bernardino police Chief Jarrod Burguan. "Zero permits whatsoever. They were not legally operating cultivation sites."

The owner of the property, 43-year-old Stephanie Smith, of Pacific Palisades, was not arrested. She fired back a statement after the bust.

"As a mother of 5 young children, I am disappointed that I must explain that these military style raids are the way City leaders handle zoning violation," she said, "Just as unfortunate is the situation for the tenants in my buildings who had spent tens of thousands of dollars on applications for licensure in a properly zoned facility and were ready to begin paying taxes to the State and local government on
didn't know what we were going to encounter once we got inside."

No one was hurt during the raids. But the lack of an arrest underscores the blurry nature of the law in the aftermath of the passage of Proposition 64 last year.

The initiative allows for the sale of marijuana starting Jan. 1. But it’s still up to local cities to implement how that will work, and how permits are granted. Voters in San Bernardino approved Measure O, which sets in motion a plan to replace the city’s ban on marijuana businesses. But the city council is still grappling with how to grant permits.

"Measure O says we're going to allow a certain number of dispensaries or cultivation sites," Burguan said. "It doesn't necessarily outline that entire process as to how we're going to do that."

There will be further discussion at Wednesday's city council meeting.

Report a Typo

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business, marijuana, legal, drugs, drug bust, pot bust, San Bernardino, San Bernardino County

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LOCAL NEWS

Red flag warnings expiring this morning, frosty in some Southern California areas

By CITY NEWS SERVICE | citynewsservice@scng.com |
December 22, 2017 at 7:03 am

The enhanced infrared satellite image of the Western US for Friday, Dec. 22, 2017, shows considerable storm activity in the Pacific Ocean, and some in the Pacific Northwest and Northern California. But Southern California is dry and cold. Temperatures are expected to rise between 4 and 12 degrees on Saturday. (Image courtesy of the National Weather Service)

LOS ANGELES — A red flag warning signifying a high risk of wildfire will be in force in much of the Southland until late this morning because of strong and gusty Santa Ana winds and low humidity, giving way to dry and cold conditions, with frost warnings in place for San Bernardino County.

The red flag warning will be in force until 10 a.m. in the San Gabriel Mountains, the Angeles National Forest, the Santa Monica Mountains Recreational Area, the San Fernando and Santa Clarita valleys, beach cities, metropolitan Los Angeles and the Hollywood Hills. Red flag warnings will also be in effect in large areas of Ventura and Santa Barbara counties but one in Orange County expired at 6 p.m. Thursday.

The strongest winds will blow in the San Gabriel mountains — 20 to 30 miles per hour with gusts of up to 60 mph, according to the NWS. In the other areas under warning, including both the Santa Monicas and the city of Los Angeles, winds of 15 to 25 mph are expected, along with gusts of up to 45 mph.

In all cases, the winds will coincide with humidity levels of between 8 and 15 percent.

In San Bernardino County, a frost advisory is in effect through 9 a.m. today.
Red flag warnings expiring this morning, frosty in some Southern California areas – Pasadena Star News

The NWS forecast sunny skies in L.A. County today and highs of 54 degrees on Mount Wilson; 56 in Palmdale and Lancaster; 60 in Avalon; 63 in Santa Clarita; 65 in Van Nuys, Pasadena, Burbank, Woodland Hills, San Pedro and Torrance; and 66 in Long Beach, downtown L.A., Northridge, North Hollywood, at LAX and in West Covina and Whittier. On Saturday, temperatures will be 12 degrees higher on Mount Wilson, 7 degrees higher in Woodland Hills and 4 degrees higher in Downtown L.A., remaining roughly at those levels for at least through Thursday.

Sunny skies were forecast in Orange County today, along with highs of 63 in San Clemente; 64 in Laguna Beach; 66 in Newport Beach; 67 in Yorba Linda, Fullerton and Mission Viejo; and 68 in Anaheim and Irvine. Orange County conditions will remain the roughly same at least through next Thursday.

In San Bernardino County, it will be 48 in Big Bear; 55 in Hesperia; 56 in Victorville; 60 in Yucaipa; 65 in Ontario, Rancho Cucamonga and Redlands; and 66 in San Bernardino.

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By Adtaxi

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City News Service

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https://www.pasadenastarnews.com/2017/12/22/red-flag-warnings-expiring-this-morning-warmer-temps-on-the-way-to-southern-california/
As 2018 rapidly approaches, many individuals and businesses are already thinking about tax time.

One way to increase deductions and minimize tax hits is through charitable contributions, even with those made in the waning days of the year.

The High Desert is home to numerous nonprofits that can be ideal recipients of funds taxpayers are looking to clear off the books before Jan. 1.

We’ve wrangled some of those charitable groups into a brief overview here. This is by no means a comprehensive list of local nonprofit organizations, but groups listed here offer a sample of those that continue to make sizable improvements in the region.

**Victor Valley Rescue Mission**

As the nights get colder, the Victor Valley Rescue Mission is igniting its efforts to help warm the homeless community.

With the managerial and financial support this year of High Desert Home Services, the Rescue Mission, directed by Bill Edwards, has been running the Victor Valley Community Warming Shelter at the High Desert Event Center in Victorville for years. The shelter opens when overnight temperatures drop below 40 degrees.

The Rescue Mission also provides thousands of meals to hungry individuals all year long. Additionally, their programs include transitional housing, education, counseling and substance abuse recovery, according to its website.

The mission was established in 2000 and in 2008 joined the Rescue Mission Alliance, a 501(c)(3).

Visit [www.vvreescuemission.org](http://www.vvreescuemission.org) or call 760-955-5958 to donate.
Desert Manna

Based in Barstow, Desert Manna operates a shelter and food pantry that feeds scores of hungry folks throughout the year.

Desert Manna President and CEO Darrin Fikstad says Desert Manna is looking toward some big accomplishments in 2018 that'll be easier to achieve as generosity continues to empower the organization.

“We’re looking to obtain a 5,000- (to) 8,000-square-foot food bank in the Victor Valley area, preferably in Victorville proper,” Fikstad told the Daily Press in early December. “There’s a big need for us to come to Victorville and expand our food services.”

In 2016, Desert Manna supplied about 500 tons of surplus food to the Barstow area, Fikstad said, and they plan to extend that reach to the Victor Valley communities.

They’re also planning the inaugural No Kid Hungry Golf Tournament at Apple Valley’s Ashwood Golf Course in April. Money raised from the tournament, as well as year-end charitable contributions, will help fund the No Kid Hungry food program that feeds local youth, specifically during the summer months when children don’t have access to school lunches, Fikstad said.

“There’s a disproportionate amount of kids at risk in the summertime who aren’t getting a nutritious meal every day,” Fikstad said. “There are thousands in the Barstow area alone — we served about 5,000 last year in about nine weeks. It’s really important to push the success of these programs to the whole High Desert and Victor Valley districts.”

According to its website, Desert Manna was the first homeless shelter in San Bernardino County when it opened 24 years ago.

Visit www.desertmanna.org or call 760-256-7797 for more information on donating.

Happy Trails Children’s Foundation

Though it was originally called the Victor Valley Child Abuse Task Force, the enormous support of the late Roy Rogers and Dale Evans helped it become the Happy Trails Children’s Foundation.
The foundation built the Cooper Home in Apple Valley, a safe haven for severely abused boys. Today, it continues to serve as a long-term treatment center and residential care facility and is the main benefactor of the foundation’s fundraising work.

“We have right now 44 boys between the ages of 13 to 16 who’ve been severely abused, and we have a staff of 65 employees taking care of those boys,” said Joel “Dutch” Dortch, executive director of the foundation. “That’s the reason for everything we do.”

Call 760-240-3330 or visit www.happytrails.org for more information on the foundation and to contribute financially.

**Phoenix Foundation**

When someone in the High Desert suffers a tragedy due to a sudden death from crime or an accident, the Phoenix Foundation is there to help.

After two local teens were murdered in a Helendale bunker in 2008, the Phoenix Foundation materialized from the desire of local residents Julie Norton and her granddaughter, Kymberly Suchomel, to help grieving family members.

Later in 2008, the foundation continued to move beyond its original intent as it jumped in to help another grieving family find comfort. Victorville resident Claro Claridad died on Christmas Day 2007 while trying to rescue two children in a frozen lake in Wrightwood. The following August, the Phoenix Foundation was able to send his wife, four daughters and other family members to Disneyland for two days.

Nearly 10 years after it began, the Phoenix Foundation continues to raise money to help families in the grieving process — including that of its founders.

Suchomel died suddenly in October after escaping the Las Vegas mass shooting a week earlier.

To support Suchomel’s family or any of the other families who benefit from the work of the Phoenix Foundation, visit www.hdphoenixfoundation.com or call 760-247-2290.

**Family Assistance Program**

For more than 30 years, Family Assistance Program has been providing shelter and advocacy services to victims of domestic violence.
The Victorville-based program has grown its shelter, expanded to a separate outreach office and satellite offices in San Bernardino and Fontana, among several other new programs.

One of the new additions is an expansion of its youth center, the FamSpot, in Old Town Victorville.

The expansion boasts new computers, a rec room, free snacks and WiFi, all in an effort to help local teens find a job, progress in school or hang out with friends.

The program also provides assistance with restraining orders, advocacy, homelessness, homeless prevention, rapid re-housing, preventative services through teen violence classes, family/group/individual counseling, supervised visitation, and the distribution of household commodities, according to its website.

Visit www.familyassist.org or call 760-843-0701 for more information.

**Sunset Hills Children’s Foundation**

Named in mid-2017 as Nonprofit of the Year by Assemblyman Jay Obernolte, the Sunset Hills Children’s Foundation aims to help meet the educational and emotional needs of children who have abruptly lost a loved one.

The foundation last year opened the Sunrise Center in Apple Valley, which provides peer support groups to help people work through their grief after the death of a loved one. In doing so, both children and adults are given the opportunity to discover that they are not alone in coping with a tragic loss.

Founded by Chet Hitt in 2004, the nonprofit has seen exponential growth over the last 10 years, now with the ability to award $20,000 scholarships to deserving students who have experienced a tragic loss or hardship.

The foundation also assists local Boy Scouts by offering a matching grant for their Eagle Scout projects.

To make a donation or find out more about Sunset Hills Children’s Foundation, visit www.sunsetchildren.org or call 760-247-0155.
LOCAL NEWS

Pediatric playroom at San Antonio Regional Hospital gets an upgrade with gifts from sheriff’s deputies, Upland police officers

Santa Claus, along with San Bernardino County sheriff deputies from the West Valley Detention Center along with officers from both the Upland and Rancho Cucamonga police departments deliver a set of toys to San Antonio Regional Hospital pediatric patient Max Avila, 5, as his mother Wendy Meza looks on Thursday. The departments secured donations of televisions, toys, furniture, video games and other items which they delivered Thursday December 21, 2017 to the pediatric unit at San Antonio Regional Hospital in Upland. The Stuff the Bus drive is a program the departments hope to continue with each year. Officers and deputies distributed toys to children currently at the hospital. (Photo by Will Lester-Inland Valley Daily Bulletin/SCNG)

By STAFF REPORT | Press-Enterprise
December 21, 2017 at 7:40 pm
The playroom in the Pediatric Ward at San Antonio Regional Hospital in Upland got an upgrade Thursday, Dec. 21, thanks to some dedicated law enforcement officers.

San Bernardino County Sheriff’s deputies at West Valley Detention Center, the Transportation Division and the Rancho Cucamonga station joined with Upland police officers to secure donations that will make the playroom a more enjoyable space for children.

The deputies and officers stuffed a bus with new flat screen televisions, video game units, toys and furniture and delivered them to the hospital.

Sheriff John McMahon joined the deputies and officers as they presented the gifts to the hospital Thursday.
A man who tampered with an electronic monitoring device and walked away from a residential program for offenders in Upland was apprehended Thursday afternoon, Dec. 21, according to a California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation news release.

David Martel, 41, was captured at around 3:30 p.m. at a business complex by state agents in cooperation with the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department without incident. He was transported to the California Institution for Men in Chino.

The arrest location wasn’t clear, but appeared to be in the Upland/Rancho Cucamonga area.

Officials learned Monday night, Dec. 18, about the tampering and the device was found at Jesus Alive Ministries on 9th Street where Martel had been in an alternative custody program since November.

The alternative custody program allows eligible offenders to serve up to the last 12 months of their sentence in a community program in lieu of prison confinement.

He was committed to state prison in August 2015 to serve a five-year sentence for possession of a controlled substance for sale and possession of a controlled substance while armed with a loaded firearm.
He had been due for release in May 2018, but his case will be forwarded to the San Bernardino County District Attorney’s Office for consideration of escape charges, according to the news release.

Tags:  Top Stories IVDB

Gail Wesson

Gail Wesson has covered news for The Press-Enterprise for decades, mostly in Riverside County, with occasional forays across the county line. Datelines on her stories span the county – from the state agricultural inspection station in Blythe, to the Circle in Corona, the Stringfellow Acid Pits in Mira Loma, Temecula before there were traffic signals and to the highest point in the county, Mount San Jacinto. Most of her time has been spent covering local governments or how county, state or federal government affects communities. Breaking news, from floods to wild land fires and the consequences of disasters, watchdog reporting, criminal courts coverage and environmental explainers on water rights/supply issues and why bald eagles and San Bernardino kangaroo rats should be saved are icing on her news cake.

Follow Gail Wesson @PE_GailWesson

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See how Americans living in poverty fight to make ends meet.

By Salvation Army

From buying groceries to keeping the lights on, life is full of battles for those in need. Help them win. Join the...
San Bernardino Mayor Cary Davis, right, swears in newly elected officers of the San Bernardino Republican Women Federated at the club’s Dec. 18 meeting. They are President Karen Contreras, (hand raised), Vice President Betsy Voss and Treasurer Shirley Collins.

Highland Community News photo by Charles Roberts

San Bernardino Mayor Cary Davis paints a rosy picture for San Bernardino as it recovers from an economic downturn and bankruptcy reorganization.

Speaking to the Dec. 18 meeting of San Bernardino Republican Women Federated, Davis said the listed goals in the bankruptcy agreement were public safety and job creation.

“WE WENT FROM A $45 million deficit to a $30 million surplus,” Davis said.
Part of the changes included the hiring of a city manager and then giving her more responsibility, eliminating elected city council members from micromanaging, having the council work to set policy and then having staff carry out that policy.

The city has recovered from layoffs in public safety, hiring more police officers and contracting with the county for fire services. He mentioned the Little Mountain fire and the strong response the county was able to bring to hold it to a minimum.

Davis said Oakland has used a plan to reduce homicides, “and we plan to duplicate that.”

The improved policy structure has enabled the city to reduce staff from 1,200 to 700 in a streamlined city government.

There is still work to do to reduce homelessness with 90 percent of the county's homeless citizens living in San Bernardino, but the number has been reduced from 908 in 2013 to 491 today.

“We still have a lot of challenges,” Davis admitted, “but working with our partners in the sheriff's department, education and others we have a new attitude to make San Bernardino strong.”

Davis also swore in officers for the club: President Karen Contreras, Vice President Betsy Voss and Treasurer Shirley Collins. Contreras announced that the club will meet every other month in the new year. Meetings will be held ion the fourth Friday of the month in January, March, and May, taking the summer off until September.

There also will be a concerted effort to add 10 new members for the new year.
K-9 Dare Helps Deputies Track Suspect

Posted: Thursday, December 21, 2017 10:00 am

Deputies from the Twin Peaks Sheriff’s Station and the sheriff’s K-9, Dare, tracked down a suspect who was arrested on suspicion of the attempted murder of a Valley of Enchantment resident on Dec. 12.

Deputy Kelly Bush responded within seven minutes after receiving a report of a disturbance at a residence in the 23000 block of Cedar Way. Upon arrival at 1:52 a.m., Deputy Bush made contact with the victim, who was suffering from multiple stab wounds.

He had been in a heated argument with the suspect, Robert Todd Stanislowski, 32, of San Jacinto. The dispute turned into a physical altercation. Stanislowski reportedly grabbed a knife and allegedly stabbed the victim several times. He then fled on foot from the residence.

Additional deputies arrived at the scene and conducted an area check for the suspect. Unable to locate him, the deputies requested assistance from the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s K-9 Division.

K-9 Dare and her handler, Deputy Girard, arrived at around 3 a.m. to assist the deputies. In the area of State Highway 138 and Waters Drive, they located the suspect at approximately 4:10 a.m. The deputies took Stanislowski into custody without further incident.

The victim was transported to a local hospital for treatment of his stab wounds. He is listed as being in a serious but stable condition, and is expected to recover from his injuries.

Due to the nature of the victim’s injuries and circumstances surrounding the incident, Stanislowski was arrested on a charge of California Penal Code §664/187, attempted murder. He was booked into the West Valley Detention Center in Rancho Cucamonga, where he is being held in lieu of $1 million bail.

At his in-custody arraignment on Dec. 14, Stanislowski pleaded not guilty to PC §245(A)(1)-F, assault with a deadly weapon; not guilty to PC §12022.7(A)-E, inflicting great bodily harm on a person; and entered a denial as to PC §1170.12 (A)-(D)-A, prior felony convictions.

A pre-preliminary hearing is scheduled for Dec. 22, and a preliminary hearing is set for Dec. 27.
Inspiring new ideas: Endeavor students using Genius Hour to help the community

By Susan Monaghan / For the Daily Press

VICTORVILLE — The way Gia Devlin sees it, if given the time to let their creative juices flow, students will never cease to amaze.

The Endeavor School of Exploration teacher has put that theory into practice with her sixth-grade class this year, implementing a Genius Hour program that has resulted in donations to the Hesperia Animal Shelter and visits with local dementia patients, among others.

Genius Hour allows students to work on projects they're passionate about outside of regular school work every week. So far, sixth graders at Endeavor have also built hammocks, bow-and-arrows, miniature race cars and homemade makeup.

Since Devlin officially began the program this year, her classroom has produced two year-long projects with significant community impact.

Sixth-graders Mia August, Madison Hartley, and Selina Zheng have spent the last 12 weeks selling handmade dog toys and collecting donations for the Hesperia Animal Shelter. The group donated $338 to the shelter on Dec. 14, one of the largest non-sponsor donation the shelter has ever received, according to Devlin.

At the same time, sixth-graders Paige Southern, Audrey Nguyen, and Kaylee Brown have been organizing student visits to the dementia patients at the Sterling Inn every other month.

“My grandma currently lives in a nursing home,” said Brown. “I know how lonely she gets and how much our visits brighten her day, and I wondered if by visiting other people I could make their days a little better.”

On Wednesday the students sang songs and handed out holiday cards at the Sterling Inn.
Devlin tested out Genius Hour two years ago, and learned how to sharpen the program at the 2016 CUE Teacher Conference.

At the beginning of the school year, students brainstormed ideas and teamed up on projects based on similar interest. For two hours every Friday, the students have worked on their passion projects with guidance from Devlin and outside community members.

“In the 1940s, the 3M company ... implemented something similar with their employees,” said Devlin. “Fifteen percent of the time employees could work on something they were passionate about, and they found that it increased productivity and work ethic.”

Out of that, according to Devlin, came Post-Its and masking tape. She also cited Google’s “20 percent time” policy as inspiration, where employees are allowed to divert 20 percent of their time toward side projects they’re passionate about.

“People started looking at it from an educational perspective and seeing the value and benefits that students can have in the classroom,” said Devlin.
Human Trafficking Operation Nets 11 Arrests

Posted: Thursday, December 21, 2017 10:00 am

The San Bernardino County Human Trafficking Task Force conducted a prostitution operation on Dec. 8, and arrested 11 male suspects from San Bernardino, Los Angeles and Riverside counties.

According to a report from the San Bernardino Sheriff’s Department, investigators posted a decoy advertisement on the online classified website www.backpage.com. The decoy posed as a female prostitute, and received several phone calls from males who were interested in meeting with a prostitute.

Of all the callers, 11 men made dates and met with undercover officers. Each of the suspects was arrested without incident for violation of California Penal Code §647(b)(2), solicitation of prostitution. All were transported to the West Valley Detention Center in Rancho Cucamonga for booking.

The sheriff’s report noted that human trafficking is an ongoing issue across the nation. In fact, trafficking in persons is a serious crime and a terrible violation of human rights. Every year, thousands of children, women and men fall into the hands of traffickers in their own countries and, often, when traveling abroad.

In San Bernardino County, the Human Trafficking Task Force continually runs operations to combat human trafficking and the commercial sex trade.

For example, on Dec. 14, the San Bernardino County Human Trafficking team, along with Yucaipa agencies, conducted compliance checks at three massage therapy clinics in Yucaipa. The first business had minor violations; the second and third businesses were in violation of the massage therapy ordinance and the fire code. The businesses have 30 days to be brought into compliance with city and fire codes before they can re-open.

Other compliance checks in different locations produce various results. Even if no evidence of human trafficking is found, the effort helps ensure compliance with health, safety and fire codes.

Anyone with information related to human trafficking should contact the task force at (909) 387-8400. Anyone wishing to remain anonymous may contact WeTip at 1 (800) 78-CRIME or leave information on the WeTip Hotline at www.wetip.com.
Community Hospital of San Bernardino expands behavioral health unit with more beds

Dignity Health – Community Hospital of San Bernardino doctors tour a new room with Behavioral Health Services Director Sharon Pudlo during the opening Tuesday of the hospital’s expanded BHS unit. (Courtesy photo)

By STAFF REPORT
PUBLISHED: December 21, 2017 at 1:04 pm | UPDATED: December 21, 2017 at 1:07 pm
More than two dozen new beds have been added to the Behavioral Health Services Department at Dignity Health – Community Hospital of San Bernardino.

Representatives from San Bernardino County Department of Behavioral Health, local police departments and mental health service centers attended the opening earlier this week of the hospital's newly expanded Behavioral Health Services Department, according to a hospital statement.

Hospital staff and physicians toured the visiting representatives through the 25 new locked beds at Tuesday's opening. The year-long initiative brings the capacity of the hospital's BHS unit to 74 beds — 15 voluntary beds and 59 locked beds — improving safety for patients and the community, the hospital said in the statement.

Tags: healthcare, hospitals, Top Stories PE, Top Stories Sun

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California warns Nestle about millions of gallons of water drawn from San Bernardino National Forest

A state board notified Nestle that an investigation concluded it didn't have rights to about three-quarters of the water it withdraws from the San Bernardino National Forest for bottling. (Associated Press)

By Associated Press

DECEMBER 21, 2017, 7:35 PM

Nestle, which sells Arrowhead bottled water, may have to stop taking millions of gallons of water from Southern California’s San Bernardino National Forest because state regulators concluded it lacks valid permits.

The State Water Resources Control Board notified the company on Wednesday that an investigation concluded it doesn’t have proper rights to about three-quarters of the water it withdraws for bottling.

“A significant portion of the water currently diverted by Nestle appears to be diverted without a valid basis of right,” the report concluded.
Nestle Waters North America was urged to cut back its water withdrawals unless it can show it has valid water rights to its current sources or to additional groundwater.

The company, a division of the Swiss food giant, also was given 60 days to submit an interim compliance plan.

“We are disappointed by the fact that we have just received a copy of the report from the State Water Resources Control Board and that others appear to have received it much sooner,” Nestle said in a statement Thursday. “Once we have had an opportunity to review the report thoroughly, we will be in a position to respond.”

The move was applauded by activists who have fought to turn off Nestle's tap in the forest.

Amanda Frye, who filed one of the complaints that prompted the investigation, said she was pleased with the result although she hadn't read the entire report.

“I feel like it's a victory,” Frye told the Desert Sun of Palm Springs. “I'm happy that the State Water Resources Control Board did pursue it and look into it. I feel that they're protecting the people of California.”

Nestle took about 32 million gallons of water from wells and water collection tunnels in the forest last year. A water board investigation concluded that it had the right to withdraw only 26 acre-feet per year, or about 8.5 million gallons.

Nestle has contended that it inherited rights dating back more than a century to collect water from the forest northeast of Los Angeles. It uses the water in its Arrowhead Mountain Spring Water.

Opponents of the water withdrawal have argued that Nestle lacked proper permits and that the water usage could harm the local environment and wildlife, particularly in the midst of California's drought.

In 2015, the U.S. Forest Service was sued by environmental and public interest groups who alleged the Swiss-based company was being allowed to operate its Strawberry Canyon pipeline on a permit that expired in 1988. However, the court ruled that the company could continue water operations while its application to renew the permit was pending.

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California population grows by 300K, nearing 40 million

Early morning traffic makes its way along the 91 Freeway in Riverside County. California’s population is approaching 40 million after growing by nearly 300,000 people during the year ending July 1, 2017, state officials reported Thursday in their annual county-by-county population update.

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS | PUBLISHED: December 21, 2017 at 3:52 pm | UPDATED: December 21, 2017 at 4:22 pm

12 COMMENTS
SACRAMENTO — California's population is approaching 40 million after growing by nearly 300,000 people during the year ending July 1, 2017, state officials reported Thursday in their annual county-by-county population update.

That puts the state's total population at 39.6 million, by far the largest in the country.

California's counties range in size from 10.3 million in Los Angeles, which is larger than most states, to tiny Alpine with just 1,141 people — nine fewer than a year ago.

Most of the population growth came from births, which outpaced deaths by 220,000. More people moved out of California than in from other U.S. states, but foreign immigration made up the difference. Total net migration added 80,000 people, according to the report by the Department of Finance.

The largest numeric increases were in the Southern California counties of Los Angeles, Riverside, San Diego, Orange and San Bernardino, which each grew by more than 20,000 people. The biggest percentage jumps were in the Sacramento suburbs, the Inland Empire outside Los Angeles and the Central Valley.

Thirteen counties shrank, most of them sparsely populated areas in far Northern California and the Sierra Nevada range. Marin County, which includes wealthy San Francisco suburbs north of the Golden Gate Bridge, lost 161 people.

Nine counties with more than 1 million people each comprise 70 percent of the state's population. They include the cities and suburbs of Los Angeles, San Diego and Sacramento as well as Silicon Valley and the East Bay outside San Francisco.

With 880,000 people, San Francisco is the state's 12th largest county.
firefighters continued to make progress on the Thomas fire Friday as the monster inferno was within 500 acres of becoming the largest California wildfire on record.

As of Friday morning, the blaze was 65% contained after burning 272,800 acres, eclipsed only by the 2003 Cedar fire in San Diego County, which burned 273,246 acres.

This year is already the most destructive fire season on record in the state. In October, a series of fires in wine country burned more than 10,000 homes and killed more than 40 people. Those blazes, along with the Thomas fire, were fueled by dry conditions and intense winds.

“Today is one of those days where our firefighters had to work hard to find smoke” and hot spots, Mark Brown, an operations section chief for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, said Thursday evening.
Firefighters are still working on the hot spots they find — cooling them off, putting water on them, using their hand tools to stir them up — to ensure they are “gone, once and for all,” Brown said.

Firefighters are focusing on the north side of the blaze in the Highway 33 corridor near Hartman Ranch and the Bear Haven area, authorities said.

Depending on wind and weather conditions, firefighters plan to start a controlled burn near the highway with hopes that winds from the north will push the flames away from the highway and south toward the main body of the fire.

The burn operation could scorch up to 20,000 acres before it connects with the larger blaze, officials said.

The backfire operation began this week on the south side of Potrero Seco Road west of Highway 33 and is slowly crawling deeper into wilderness and toward the bigger Thomas fire footprint to the south, said Brandon Vaccaro, a spokesman for Cal Fire.

Crews prefer to burn a barrier into the forest to stop the Thomas fire’s spread so they don’t have to march in with boots and motor in with trucks and bulldozers that would create unnatural barriers for future plant growth, he said.

“In the wilderness, we try to do as little of that as possible,” he said. The fire will “get some of that older vegetation and we’ll have a healthier environment. The fire is doing it naturally at our pace,” he said.

Up to 300 firefighters are trudging along the edge of the fire as it moves southeast along a creek toward the larger blaze.

Despite its size, Thomas fire has been less destructive than either the wine country fires or the Cedar Fire, which destroyed 2,820 structures and killed 15 people. The Thomas fire has destroyed more than 1,000 structures and has been associated with one death.

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This article is related to: Wildfires, San Diego County
SF moves toward ending chronic homelessness among military veterans

By Kevin Fagan  Updated 5:01 pm, Wednesday, December 20, 2017

San Francisco came a big step closer to ending chronic homelessness for veterans Wednesday with the opening of a 70-unit supportive housing complex for people who have served in the military.

The complex is in the refurbished Auburn Hotel on Minna Street, near Sixth Street, and it brings to 300 the number of residential rooms or apartments opened in the past year in San Francisco for homeless veterans.

Filling these rooms means there are now fewer than 150 chronically homeless vets — meaning the most troubled, on the streets for at least a year — left living outside in San Francisco, according to Jeff Kositsky, head of the city Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing.

Kositsky said the city hopes to all but eliminate chronic homelessness among veterans in 2018. In addition to getting the remaining chronically homeless vets off the streets, that will involve finding shelter for the estimated 17 additional veterans who fall into that category each month in the city.

Officials try to deal with the problem by opening residential buildings like the Auburn, handing out rent vouchers, and giving people bus tickets home if there are...
people waiting for them there.

“It’s been a challenge, but we’re still committed to getting there,” Kositsky said. He noted that in 2014, there were 350 chronically homeless veterans in San Francisco, and since then more than 900 have been housed.

Acting Mayor London Breed said at the Auburn that “we are well on our way” to ending chronic homelessness among veterans. She called the new complex “the least we can do for people who put their lives on the line time and time again.”

The Auburn is being leased by the city and managed by the nonprofit Delivering Innovation in Supportive Housing. Episcopal Community Services, another nonprofit, will provide counseling services on-site — a key component of the “supportive” part of supportive housing.

Kevin Fagan is a San Francisco Chronicle staff writer. Email: kfagan@sfcchronicle.com Twitter: @KevinChron

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Newport Beach activist loses suit against city and councilwoman over record request comments

Newport Beach Councilwoman Diane Dixon. File photo
A Newport Beach activist lost his defamation suit against the city Tuesday, Dec. 19, with a court agreeing that Councilwoman Diane Dixon's comments that he owed more than $600 in public records requests were protected speech.

Orange County Superior Court Judge Thomas Delaney ruled in favor of Dixon, along with the city and Assistant City Clerk Jennifer Nelson, in a lawsuit filed in small claims court by Mike Glenn.

No money was awarded to either side.

Delaney had earlier denied the city's request to dismiss the suit based on the city's claim it was a “SLAPP,” strategic lawsuit against public participation. Such lawsuits are intended to intimidate, censor or silence critics by burdening them with expensive legal costs until they rescind all opposition.

Delaney said Dixon's statement during an April 11 City Council meeting was made in the “proper discharge of the Councilmember's official duty and in an official legislative proceeding.”

“Even assuming those statements were not privileged, Plaintiff (Glenn) failed to prove his case by a preponderance of the evidence,” the ruling read.

“The court's decision today affirms the first amendment rights of public officials, Dixon said in a statement.

At the time of Dixon's comments, the council was discussing the proposed Balboa Peninsula Trolley, which transported riders across the peninsula during summer weekends and was eventually approved on a 5-2 vote.

Dixon made the statement following Glenn's criticism of the city spending tax dollars on the trolley. Glenn has frequently criticized local government and the trolley on his website SaveNewport.com and social media.

In response, Dixon said he owed the city $619.93 for city staff time – 500 hours – retrieving public records regarding the trolley that had yet to be picked up.
Glenn argued he never asked for copies of the records and criticized Dixon for making the statement during the meeting.

Nelson was named in the suit because Glenn claimed she committed libel when she sent him an April 17 email, with two city employees copied, that said he had not paid for the records.

Delaney did say that Glenn was correct in that while he did request the records, he did not request printed copies.

However, Glenn failed to “show evidence that he has suffered any damages as a result of the false statement,” Delaney wrote. “He argued that his reputation as a businessman has suffered in the community, but showed no proof of how his reputation has suffered, nor did he prove that he has suffered any damage as a result of the statement.”

Glenn disagreed, saying public officials should be held accountable for their words.

“She can say literally anything she wants from the dais without any accountability,” Glenn said Wednesday. “That is absolutely terrifying and goes against the California state Constitution.”

Since filing the suit, Glenn has said he would drop it if Dixon issued him an apology. He filed a complaint with the city on May 1, asking for $5,000, an apology and retraction of Dixon’s statements.

Tags: politics
Insurance firms dispatch private firefighters in California

By Christopher Weber / Associated Press
Posted Dec 21, 2017 at 4:15 PM
Updated Dec 21, 2017 at 4:15 PM

LOS ANGELES — Among the army of firefighters protecting neighborhoods at the front lines of Southern California’s monstrous wildfire are small teams hired by insurance companies to provide personalized prevention and protection for homeowners.

Firms including American International, Pure Insurance and Chubb Limited have provided the service for policies for homeowners in wildfire-prone states for about a decade. Chubb contracts with licensed wildfire defense teams across 13 states, with the majority in California, where the fire season lasts all year and huge blazes destroyed thousands of homes in the fall.

The trucks these private firefighters drive to policyholders’ properties are indistinguishable from those used by public fire agencies and they carry much of the same equipment, including water tanks, hoses and flame retarding gels.

Chubb has dispatched 11 trucks carrying two firefighters each to about 500 homes in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties northwest of Los Angeles where the Thomas fire has destroyed more than 1,000 buildings since Dec. 4. It’s a welcome service for customers and smart business for an insurance company since saving a home is cheaper than paying out on a policy to rebuild it.

In one case, the teams visited a single home in the fire zone five times over two weeks, according to Kevin Fuhriman, Chubb’s “catastrophe manager” who oversees the company’s California fire response. Team members removed dry brush, patio furniture and anything else around the exterior that could catch fire if embers blew through. They also cleared the gutters and taped up vents.

During subsequent visits, as flames drew closer, sprinklers were installed to keep the ground moist and the property was treated with a hydrating gel. Fuhriman said at one point the private firefighters arrived to find fire on the property and quickly put it out.
The company provides regular updates to evacuated policyholders, who frequently stay in shelters or hotels miles (kilometers) away, anxiously awaiting word about the condition of their properties.

Seth Hatfield said he “started to read the fine print” of his homeowner’s policy several years ago and selected the wildfire defense option when he moved his family into a new house in Santa Barbara. At his previous nearby home, a 2008 blaze burned down the garage and devastated the neighborhood.

The option was included with his policy and did not add any cost to his annual premium, which Hatfield estimated at $3,500. Policyholders do not pay extra but have to opt in to the service because they are required to grant permission for access to their properties.

After the Thomas fire erupted and approached Santa Barbara, the insurance team arrived to check that preventive measures were in place for Hatfield’s property in the Mission Canyon area, where home prices commonly top $2 million.

“They gave me a couple of pointers of things that hadn’t occurred to me,” like removing doormats, taping vents and cleaning gutters, he said.

His family evacuated but returned to find the home still standing.

As potentially dangerous gusts whipped up again Thursday and threatened to blow embers back into neighborhoods, Chubb crews were keeping an eye on the shifting conditions and staging near the wealthy hillside community of Montecito, Fuhriman said.

There were 75 private firefighters on 41 engines assigned to the Thomas fire on Thursday, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

Firefighting contracting is not a new phenomenon within the insurance industry. Insurance firms in the United States had relationships with private firefighters dating back to the 1790s before public fire departments became common, according to Fran O’Brien, a Chubb division president.

Today’s contracted firefighters work at the discretion of government fire incident commanders, said Scott McLean, the deputy chief of the state forestry and fire protection department.
He said it is a relatively new process that’s still finding its way in California. The private crews attend briefings with state firefighters and must provide documentation and details about where in the fire zone they’re going. They must also heed all evacuation orders.

“They can’t just come and go. We need to know where they are,” McLean said.
Gov. Jerry Brown requests a major disaster declaration for SoCal wildfires

Gov. Jerry Brown on Wednesday requested a major disaster declaration from President Trump to assist with the response to the devastating wildfires that raged across Southern California this month.

The wind-driven blazes, which ravaged neighborhoods from San Diego County to Santa Barbara County, destroyed more than 1,000 homes and forced more than 200,000 people to flee.

The most destructive — and persistent — among them was the Thomas fire, which burned 272,000 acres across Ventura and Santa Barbara counties and destroyed more than 750 single-family homes. As of Wednesday, it was 60% contained.

“I have determined this incident is of such severity and magnitude that an effective response is beyond the capabilities of the state and affected local governments and supplemental federal assistance is necessary,” Brown wrote in the request.

He added that burn zones have large amounts of debris that must be “expeditiously removed to eliminate the immediate threat to public health and safety.”

Since July, Brown said he declared a state of emergency during 19 wildfires in California. Since January, he wrote, there have been more than 8,700 fire starts across the state.
In October, Trump approved a similar declaration to assist with the destructive fires that ripped through the Northern California wine country and claimed more than 40 lives.

"This declaration will allow FEMA to identify, mobilize and provide additional equipment and resources to assist with the emergency," Vice President Mike Pence said at the time. "This includes debris removal, emergency protective measures, search and rescue operations."

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This article is related to:  Wildfires, Donald Trump
Everything You Want to Know About Legal Weed in California

By Jessica Placzek, Ryan Levi and Eli Wirtschafter
DECEMBER 21, 2017

On Jan. 1, it will become legal for adults 21 and older to buy and sell recreational marijuana in California. In anticipation, Bay Curious is answering a bunch of your questions about commercially available marijuana.

Where will I be able to buy recreational marijuana on Jan. 1?

**Green light:**
- San Jose: 16 currently registered medical dispensaries will be allowed to sell recreationally on Jan. 1.
- Oakland: Any of the city’s licensed medical dispensaries will be able to sell recreationally on Jan. 1 with the proper state license.
- San Diego: 15 existing medical dispensaries and two new businesses are approved to sell recreationally on Jan. 1 with the proper state license.
- Sacramento: Any of the 30 existing medical dispensaries that complete permitting requirements will be able to sell recreationally on Jan. 1.

**Yellow light:**
Will jobs that drug-test employees still screen for marijuana after it’s been legalized?

Yes. Part of Proposition 64 specifically amends the state’s health and safety code, making it clear that employers can still ban their employees from using marijuana:

The rights and obligations of public and private employers to maintain a drug and alcohol free workplace or require an employer to permit or accommodate the use, consumption, possession, transfer, display, transportation, sale, or growth of cannabis in the workplace, or affect the ability of employers to have policies prohibiting the use of cannabis by employees and prospective employees, or prevent employers from complying with state or federal law.

Before Proposition 64, the California Supreme Court upheld (http://www.latimes.com/local/la-me-marijuana25jan25-story.html) the right of companies to fire employees for using physician-recommended marijuana even when they are not working, so recreational users aren’t likely to get any better treatment.

But there’s nothing that says companies have to drug-test, and many in California don’t. So check with your employer.
I have a medical card from the department of public health. What changes for me?

If you walk into a dispensary, you'll notice some changes. Cannabis products will have to go through much more testing to ensure there are no harmful pesticides and that the edibles have an even distribution of THC. After Jan. 1, there will be a grace period where untested products can still be sold, but they must be labeled.

The potency levels of edibles will also be capped, according to Greg Zeman, an associate editor at Cannabis Now Magazine. Some edibles currently contain as much as 1,000 milligrams per bar, but edibles sold in adult-use dispensaries will have to be capped at total strength of no more than 100 milligrams of THC and divided into clearly identifiable servings of no more than 10 milligrams in strength each.

However, state-approved medical cards will give patients a break from paying some state taxes, and while recreational users have a possession limit of 1 ounce of dried flowers or 8 grams of concentrate, card holders can exceed that limit. For weed neophytes, an ounce could make roughly 30 joints.

Where will the taxes go?

Money was a big incentive for the state to legalize recreational marijuana. State analysts have said legalization could add up to $1 billion annually to the state coffers.

Taxes from recreational marijuana sales will primarily go toward law enforcement programs, youth education programs and environmental causes, according to Alex Traverso, spokesman for the state's Bureau of Cannabis Control.

Traverso says the enforcement funds are necessary because, “if the goal of regulation is to diminish the black market, you have to take a percentage of those tax revenues and put them into enforcement and get people to come online.”

The state has set aside funds for the scientific study of marijuana and to see how regulations are working.
Another fund has been set up that will collect $50 million a year by 2023 to fund a suite of social and medical programs with an emphasis on mental health and job placement for at-risk individuals. Zeman says that this fund could help communities that have been hurt by the war on drugs.

**Is there any scientific standard for how much marijuana is too much to drive on?**

No. In California, the consequences for driving drunk and driving high are the same. But while there’s a clear blood limit for alcohol, there’s no such standard for marijuana.

“Marijuana is very different than alcohol,” says Jolene Forman, a lawyer with the Drug Policy Alliance. With alcohol, impairment links strongly with the amount you’ve had to drink, depending on your weight and gender, and disappears from your blood. But, according to Forman, marijuana can stay in your blood for weeks sometimes after you’ve consumed it, and THC can affect people very differently, making measuring THC not a very reliable measurement of someone’s driving ability.

On average, marijuana does impair driving skills for most people, especially 20 to 40 minutes after smoking, but measuring THC isn’t a good indicator of impairment.

This didn’t stop Washington and Colorado from setting a THC limit for drivers, but California doesn’t set a numerical limit on THC. Instead, the law says you can’t drive under the influence of any drug — period. It’s also illegal to consume cannabis while driving or riding in a vehicle.

Since a THC blood test won’t work, a marijuana DUI conviction in California depends on things an officer observes, such as the smell of marijuana in the car or a physical sobriety test like those given to drivers who may be drunk.

To learn more about California’s marijuana driving laws, including an Oakland-developed breathalyzer for marijuana, click here.

**What about equity programs?**

The war on drugs disproportionately affected people of color. While black people and white people smoke weed at similar rates, black people have been almost four times as likely to be arrested for marijuana-related charges.

With the “green rush” knocking at California’s door, cities such as Oakland, San Francisco and Los Angeles are looking at ways to help affected communities by creating cannabis equity programs.
To learn more about those programs and if they will work, check out this episode (https://ww2.kqed.org/news/2017/11/21/as-weed-is-legalized-are-marijuana-reparations-possible/) of the KQED podcast “Q’ed Up.”

**Why does the law prohibit marijuana products with seafood?**

There are several types of products that cannot be manufactured with cannabis, including:

- Alcoholic beverages
- “Any cannabis product that must be held at or below 41 degrees Fahrenheit to keep it safe for human consumption, including, but not limited to, cream or custard-filled pies; pies or pastries which consist in whole or in part of milk or milk products, eggs, or synthetic fillings; or meat-filled pies or pastries.”
- Dairy products of any kind, except butter
- Seafood products of any kind
- “Any cannabis product in the shape of a human being, either realistic or caricature, animal, insect, or fruit”

Seafood in particular is banned because officials in the Department of Public Health are worried about food poisoning. This means no weed shrimp, no weed tilapia and no weed crab. Sorry.
Commentary: Spinning to Explain Away Increase in Crime Rates

POSTED BY: GUEST COMMENTARY DECEMBER 21, 2017

By Michele Hanisee, President of the Association of LA Deputy District Attorneys.

Imagine the reaction if, after a loan officer told an applicant they would not receive a loan because of too much debt, the applicant asked “How about we just disregard 25% of my debt?”

As illogical as this sounds, it was the approach recently articulated by a group seeking to downplay the crime rate increases in California following various criminal justice “reforms.” In a study picked up by a few newspapers, the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice (CJJ) opined that the crime rate statewide in California decreased following these reforms—if you excluded Los Angeles County. Yes, Los Angeles County, where more than one out of four residents of California reside!

The propaganda espoused by proponents of these various reform measures is that crime is not really rising very much so long as it isn’t as bad as it was 30 years ago. They continue that trend with their attempt to manipulate the statewide crime rate increase by excluding more than 25% of the population.

Contrary to the line peddled by CJJ, the violent crime rate in California per 100,000 has risen since the passage of AB 109. AB 109 was enacted in October, 2011, a year when the violent crime rate in California was 413.3 per 100,000. In 2016, the violent crime rate in California was 443.9 — an increase of more than 7% over the 2011 violent crime rate.

Likewise noteworthy is the increase in the property crime rate since the 2014 passage of Prop 47 which reduced multiple theft offenses to inconsequential misdemeanors. The property crime rate in California increased in both 2015 and 2016 from the property crime rate in 2014, years in which the
rest of the United States marked two more years of a continuation of a 14-year decrease in property crime rates. Further, prior to Prop 47, California had seen three straight years of property crime rate decreases.

The ADDA has joined crime victims, law enforcement, business owners and public safety leaders working to pass the “Reducing Crime and Keeping California Safe Act of 2018.” This initiative will address some of the serious flaws brought on by “criminal justice reform.” Learn more about “Reducing Crime and Keeping California Safe Act of 2018” at www.KeepCaliforniaSafe.org

Originally posted at Fox & Hounds Daily.

Michele Hanisee is President of the Association of Deputy District Attorneys, the collective bargaining agent representing nearly 1,000 Deputy District Attorneys who work for the County of Los Angeles.
Commentary: All I Want for Christmas is a Safe & Thriving Cannabis Industry

by John Taylor

It's hard to believe that Christmas and 2018 are literally a stone's throw away. Time flies when you're having fun witnessing celebrity and politician workplace scandals, a national tax reform debate and the latest Star Wars blockbuster.

Well, regardless of denomination, tis the season where many of us get out our iPad and stylus – or even a good ole fashioned piece of paper – and scribble down either a wish list or resolutions as we peer ahead into the future. What do we want besides our two front teeth? What are our hopes and dreams for the holiday and coming 365 days?

With the New Year also bringing us new laws for California – notably voter-approved legalization of cannabis beginning January 1 – I thought I'd share my brief "back of Santa's cookie napkin" wishes for the industry and Golden State as we soon sled into the "Green Rush".

Striking the Right Balance between a Well-Regulated yet Thriving Industry

As a lifelong entrepreneur, I find it strange to proclaim but I do, in fact, welcome regulation with the cannabis industry – uniform lanes that all of us must understand and stay within to keep things on the right track. The Brown Administration and legislature have set out to do just that with this budding industry, starting with solid leadership from Laura Ajax at the newly-created Bureau of Cannabis Control and a set of new laws that govern safety, health and structure for cannabis. Having said that, a healthy regulatory climate must also ensure a healthy cannabis business climate. California has understandably earned the not-so-flattering reputation in recent years as being hostile to businesses,
notably start-up entrepreneurial companies, no thanks to its serious overreach with regulations and operational costs. According to the National Federation of Independent Business, small businesses end up paying 37 percent more than a large business or corporation to comply with regulations. Policymakers have rightly addressed the need to fix this problem with initial steps towards regulatory reform, which gives us hope. My wish is for industry professionals to continue to educate their elected officials and regulators about their business, challenges and needs so that we are, in fact, playing by the rules but that the rules don't extend so unreasonably far that they defeat our very purpose: helping our communities, creating jobs and feeding the economy.

**Promoting Safe and Healthy Cannabis Grows Everywhere**

There is understandably an exciting energy and frenzy among many Californians to grow cannabis in a speed-to-market manner to meet anticipated consumer demand. Still, we must all take good care not to let the health and safety of our communities suffer in our haste to grow, trim and sell the next promising bag of weed. Done wrong, human lives could suffer dire consequences. Growers would be wise to begin with such efforts as creating a regular and open dialogue with elected officials and members of the surrounding community – listening and working to mitigate issues; keeping facilities secure and monitored to prevent theft, tampering and contamination of the product; we at Smart Cannabis have developed leading state-of-the-art greenhouses that ensure maximum safety and protection for grower and consumer alike; well-trained employees using smart resources to assist in efficient growing processes – and a demand for testing and producing a consistent product that ensures positive outcomes for medicinal uses. At UC Davis last year, several patients were adversely affected by a deadly form of mold, aspergillus niger, after smoking untested cannabis. Engaging the services of respected testing leaders such as Steep Hill will be penny wise so that no grower will be pound foolish down the line.

**Better Collaboration and Mutual Support**

It is my estimated guess that voters in other states will soon follow California, Colorado and Washington with a choice to legalize cannabis. To that end, it will be even more important for all sides to respect and pursue a culture of collaboration, cooperation and support that ensures the most efficient and responsible implementation. The Obama administration, for the most part, took a hands-off approach to cannabis after Colorado and Washington legalized it for recreational purposes in 2012, but little is known how the Trump Administration will handle this, other than there have been signs pointing to greater scrutiny and enforcement – and heightened uncertainty among state and local officials. It is incumbent upon leaders at every level to regularly communicate with each other – and that means delegations to the U.S. Capitol, regular meetings and tours with elected and their district staff, and regular communication about ever-changing laws and regulations within the industry so that there is a mutual respect and support for the best possible outcomes. There must be stronger efforts to educate our young people in our schools, community organizations and the public about such themes as responsible use, addiction and medical benefits when it comes to all things cannabis. We are moving in that direction, but we can and should work diligently in every community to double down in our efforts to collaborate and help each other in the process.

This is, indeed, an exciting and auspicious season for the advent of legalization across our great state. If we all do our part to slow down in this green rush, and instead work together towards safe, responsible and efficient implementation, I'm confident that each of my California Christmas Cannabis wishes are bound to come true.

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California's former top cop forms marijuana distribution firm in new age of legalization

Patrick McGreevy
Former California Atty. Gen. Bill Lockyer is going from enforcing laws against marijuana to legally distributing the drug under the state’s new rules that allow the sale and possession of pot for recreational use.

With state-licensed sales of marijuana starting Jan. 1, Lockyer has co-founded a firm, C4 Distro, that will distribute packaged marijuana concentrates and edibles to stores in Los Angeles.

He says California’s new regulated system has a chance to be a model for the rest of the country.

“For me as somebody who was on the law enforcement side for so many years, I saw the inadequacies of the effort to regulate something just by calling it illegal,” Lockyer said. “I think legalizing will help stabilize and help legitimize this industry and result in better consumer protection and other public benefits.”

Lockyer, a Democrat who served in the state Assembly and was leader of the state Senate, has co-founded the firm with Eric Spitz, who was chairman and president of the former parent company of the Orange County Register.
The businessmen aim to get their products to pot shops in L.A. in late January or early February, Spitz said.

Asked if he uses marijuana himself, Lockyer, 76, said, “Not in any recent times, but there were college years.”

He said he sees his involvement in the marijuana industry as a mixture of helping to pay for his kids’ college tuition and public service to help the new regulations work. “This whole industry has to come from the dark side to the light,” he said.

By focusing on delivery to as many as 700 stores that might open in Los Angeles, C4 Distro hopes to capture a targeted market while other firms distribute statewide.

The business has a warehouse in southeast Los Angeles County and is close to applying for a distributor’s license from the state, Lockyer said.

Lockyer served a quarter century in the state Legislature before he was elected as state attorney general in 1999. He left that office in 2007 when he was elected as state treasurer, serving until his retirement from politics in 2015.

Before co-leading a group that bought the Register newspaper in 2012, Spitz served as chief financial officer at Narragansett Brewing Company. Spitz left the Register’s Freedom Communications in 2015.
In a surprising reversal, California Sen. Dianne Feinstein announced Thursday that she will not vote for an end-of-year spending bill that does not include protections for people brought to the country illegally as children as well as funding for a children’s health insurance program.

“It’s absolutely unconscionable that Republicans are leaving these items out of their bill to fund the government,” she said in a statement Thursday.

Earlier this week, the Democrat said she would vote for the bill, which must be passed in order to keep the government open past Friday.
Feinstein’s reversal is largely symbolic because the Senate likely still has enough Democratic votes to pass a temporary spending bill and push off a deal for so-called Dreamers until the new year.

Feinstein had been facing pressure from advocates and one of her 2018 opponents for refusing to block the bill if it didn’t include protections for Dreamers, who had benefited from the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program that President Trump ended in September. About a quarter of the nearly 800,000 so-called Dreamers live in California, and almost 2 million California children and pregnant women use the Children’s Health Insurance Program, which the state government says is expected to run out of money next month.

“I’ve talked with them, I’ve met with them, I understand their plight and it breaks my heart. In California, 200,000 DACA youth are living in fear. The government knows where they live, where they study and where they work, and unless Congress acts, they know the government can show up at any moment and deport them,” Feinstein said.

Protesters had flooded Feinstein’s California and Washington offices in recent days.

Some on the left in California have questioned whether Feinstein is too moderate for a state that feels it’s under attack by the new administration. Her most prominent 2018 opponent, Democratic state Senate leader Kevin de León, has tried to capitalize on her reluctance to block the spending bill.

An Institute of Governmental Studies at UC Berkeley poll released Thursday found Feinstein leading De León 41% to 27% among likely voters, with 32% of respondents saying they were undecided or would support another candidate. House Democrats who have pushed to block the spending bill in order to get a deal for Dreamers by the end of the year praised Feinstein.

Rep. Nanette Barragán of San Pedro, whose cousin is among the Dreamers anxiously waiting a resolution, said she spoke twice with Feinstein on Thursday morning.

“It was a really good conversation, and to see her take a stand and say “I’m with you guys’... is great to see,” Barragán said.

Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus Chairwoman Judy Chu (D-Monterey Park) said she’s glad Feinstein took a stand.

“It sends a powerful message, and it shows that we can be even more unified on holding the line on Dreamers and the [spending bill],” she said.