



NEWS



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Update 44: Vegetation Fire Near Silverwood Lake – 70% Contained – 7,899 Acres

Michael P. Neufeld, Rim of the World News

Posted: August 7, 2016, 12:22 PM



San Bernardino County's Emergency Operations Center in Rialto has been activated since Sunday, August 7 at 2:15 p.m. (Photo by San Bernardino County Fire)



San Bernardino County Fire Chief Mark Hartwig provides a Pilot Fire briefing for Supervisor Janice Rutherford. (Photo by San Bernardino County Fire)



Local firefighters and law enforcement personnel met briefly with Second District Supervisor Janice Rutherford. (Photo by San Bernardino County Fire)



A small satellite fire camp is being set up at Lake Gregory. (Photo by Phyllis Anania-Ross for ROTWNEWS.com)



Tankers are playing an important role in containing the Pilot Fire. This drop was near The Pinnacles. (Photo by Phyllis Anania-Ross for ROTWNEWS.com)

UPDATE 44: Thursday, August 11 – 6:28 a.m.

Silverwood Lake – The Pilot Fire — according to the U.S. Forest Service — is now at 7,899 acres and 70 percent contained.

Full containment is now expected by Sunday, August 14.

UPDATE 43: Wednesday, August 10 – 8:26 p.m.

Silverwood Lake – The U. S. Forest Service’s latest Pilot Fire update indicates that the acreage remains at 7,861, containment at 64 percent and that 1,662 firefighters are working the fire.

A satellite Fire Camp has been established at Lake Gregory in Crestline with extra traffic on roads in and around the camp.

The report shows that full containment is now expected for Sunday, August 14.

RED CROSS CENTERS

The American Red Cross Care and Reception Center at Oak Hills High School closed this evening. The Rim of the World High School center remains open.

UPDATE 42: Wednesday, August 10 – 4:55 p.m.

Silverwood Lake, CA – There are a lot of people working behind the scenes of the Pilot Fire including the County’s Emergency Operations Center in Rialto. It was opened at 2:15 p.m. on Sunday and has been utilizing about 25 personnel at a Level II activation.

Spokesperson Cheryl Nagy told ROTWNEWS.com that the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is a central location from which governments can provide interagency coordination and executive decision making in support of incident response and recovery operations.

The purpose is to provide a centralized location where public safety, emergency response and support agencies, coordinate planning, preparedness, and response activities.

There are two EOC locations in San Bernardino County the Valley and the High Desert to serve more of the county.

There are over 200 trained EOC responders to help staff the EOC 24 hours a day as well as OES staff. The partners come from local, state and federal agencies and others representing law, fire, public works, medical, utilities and agencies that are and could be needed, according to Nagy.

OFFICIAL BRIEFING

Meanwhile, Second District Supervisor Janice Rutherford visited the Pilot Fire to be briefed by **County Fire Chief Mark Hartwig** and to thank local firefighters and law enforcement personnel for their efforts to protect the mountain communities.

Rutherford was informed the fire currently stands at 7,861 acres and is 64% contained.

The supervisor represents a large portion of the mountain communities.

Yesterday, Congressman Paul Cook’s staff visited the Victorville Command Center and obtained a briefing that was then provided to Congressman Cook in Washington, D.C.

Cook represents all of the mountain communities.

UPDATE 41: Wednesday, August 10 – 12:50 p.m.

Crestline, CA – San Bernardino County Fire Public Information Officer Marc Peebles has announced that the incident management team is putting a small satellite fire camp at Lake Gregory (San Moritz area) for fire crews to be closer to the mountain portion of the Pilot Fire.

“Expect to see increased numbers of fire equipment and personnel,” Peebles stated. “Please drive safely and thank you for your patience.”

UPDATE 40: Wednesday, August 10 – 10:10 a.m.

Silverwood Lake – In an EXCLUSIVE phone interview with ROTWNEWS.com, Bob Poole from the U. S. Forest Service has confirmed the containment number — 64 percent — and explained how that number was changed from last night’s 6 percent.

“Since Sunday afternoon when firefighters began working the Pilot Fire,” Poole stated, “they have been establishing containment lines. Over the past couple of days they have been building those containment lines.

“Last night, they made good progress and improved those containment lines so that the Incident Commander had confidence that they would hold,” he added.

Poole further explained to ROTWNEWS.com that then, and only then, was the number upgraded to 64 percent.

UPDATE 39: Wednesday, August 10 – 8:50 a.m.

Silverwood Lake – Bob Poole from the U.S. Forest Service has informed ROTWNEWS.com that the Pilot Fire now stands at 7,861 acres and is 64% contained.

UPDATE 38: Tuesday, August 9 – 8:01 p.m.

Silverwood Lake – Schools in Apple Valley, Hesperia and Oro Grande will be closed again Wednesday, August 10, due to anticipated poor air quality from the Pilot Fire near Silverwood Lake.

UPDATE 37: Tuesday, August 9 – 7:03 p.m.

Lake Arrowhead, CA – The U.S. Forest Service has updated the Pilot Fire acreage to 7,738 with 6 percent containment.

The number of firefighters assigned has now reached 1,475.

SECURITY CONCERNS

Meanwhile, some residents of Deer Lodge Park and Lake Arrowhead have raised concerns about security in the evacuated areas.

The Twin Peaks Sheriff’s Station has increased patrols in the area and several units were in the area earlier today when this reporter visited Deer Lodge Park.

The District Attorney’s office has also reminded everyone that looting in a disaster area carries additional penalties.

UPDATE 36: Tuesday, August 9 – 5:10 p.m.

Silverwood Lake – The Pilot Fire — which is still shown as burning 6,963 acres — prompted the San Bernardino County Supervisors to issue a local state of emergency to qualify for state assistance.

CONGRESSMAN PAUL COOK BRIEFING

Congressman Paul Cook (R-Hesperia/8) — who represents the mountain and desert communities — dispatched staff members Monday to the command post for the Pilot Fire that is burning near Silverwood Lake and close to Deer Lodge Park and Lake Arrowhead..

Following that visit, Cook was briefed by his staff on the fire and issued the following statement:

“I want to thank all of the brave firefighters who are working to keep our homes and communities safe.”

On Monday, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Federal Emergency Management Agency authorized the use of federal funds to help fight the Pilot Fire that was reported at 12:10 p.m. on Sunday, August 7.

UPDATE 35: Tuesday, August 9 – 3:15 p.m.

Silverwood Lake – Gusty winds are bringing heavy drift smoke to residents in the Apple Valley/Hesperia area and causing problems for tanker and helicopter pilots working the Pilot Fire behind The Pinnacles.

However, no additional or changes in evacuations have been announced.

Two heavy-duty dozers were escorted by the California Highway Patrol this morning on Highway 173 to the area of the Forest Service’s Rock Camp.

Crews are constructing dozer lines from Pilot Rock to the Lake Arrowhead Community Services District Wastewater Treatment Plant and the new dozers will be sent to connect with dozers from Pilot Rock.

<http://rotwnews.com/2016/08/07/vegetation-fire-reported-near-silverwood-lake/>

FEMA authorizes federal funds to help fight Pilot fire

Beatriz Valenzuela, San Bernardino Sun

Posted: August 9, 2016, 11:29 AM



San Bernardino County firefighter Mike Callaway looks back as the Pilot fire approaches Highway 173 in Summit Valley near Silverwood Lake on Monday. Will Lester.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has authorized the use of federal funds to help battle the growing Pilot Fire which has chewed through nearly 7,000 acres of vegetation in the San Bernardino Mountains as of Tuesday morning.

California authorities submitted a request Monday for a Fire Management Assistance Grant declaration for the Pilot Fire, according to a statement from the federal agency.

“At the time of the request, the fire was threatening 750 homes in and around the communities of Hesperia, Deer Park Lodge, and Summit Valley,” according to the statement.

Firefighters say the blaze remains about 6 percent contained. Despite the intense growth and limited containment, no one has been injured, and no structures have been lost in the Pilot Fire, said **San Bernardino County Fire** Battalion Chief Marc Peebles.

<http://www.sbsun.com/general-news/20160809/fema-authorizes-federal-funds-to-help-fight-pilot-fire>

'Significant' Progress

Authorities: Stubborn blaze now 64 percent contained; Firefighters focus on reinforcing, extending containment lines

Jose Quintero, Victor Valley Daily Press

Posted: August 10, 2016, 6:48 AM



Firefighters gather near fire retardant-covered rocks as the Pilot Fire continues to burn in the background on Wednesday. David Pardo.

HESPERIA — Firefighters took advantage of the weather to increase containment of the massive Pilot Fire near Hesperia and Lake Arrowhead to 64 percent, authorities said Wednesday.

San Bernardino County Fire Department officials said “significant” overnight progress on containment lines resulted in the substantial progress compared to Tuesday when just 6 percent containment had been reached.

Still, officials said the blaze has consumed 7,861 acres— more than 12 square miles — in the San Bernardino Mountains and Summit Valley.

“These guys and girls really busted their butts overnight and really built some containment lines,” Spokesperson for Southern California Incident Management Team 3 Eric Sherwin said. “Looking at the ops map, we knew that we made good progress last night with the decrease in fire activity, which allowed our crews to get in there and really start building this containment line. But 64 percent containment just shows how eager the firefighters were to get in there as soon as the fire activity allowed them to make the progress that we have been anticipating for the last four days.”

Sherwin said there was currently 1,662 firefighters battling the Pilot Fire. The firefighters focused Wednesday on reinforcing and extending containment lines, especially near the Deer Lodge Park area near Lake Arrowhead, which is under mandatory evacuation orders.

“Fire activity in southeastern Hesperia has decreased significantly,” he said. “We made good progress with the line construction out there in the Summit Valley and we will be working in that area as well.”

However, residents should expect to see active burning continuing on the interior of the fire, which will produce significant amounts of smoke across the Victor Valley, according to Sherwin.

More than 4,700 homes are under either voluntary or mandatory evacuation orders in the mountain communities. In Hesperia, about 500 homes east of Santa Fe and south of Rancho Road remain under voluntary evacuation notice.

"Incident Command recognizes the impacts to residents that are created by these evacuations and road closures and are constantly evaluating these areas based on the activity of the fire and the threat to the communities," Sherwin said.

Heat, rough terrain and unpredictable winds continue to hamper the firefighting efforts. Temperatures are expected to rise in the next few days, with 100-degree plus highs expected this weekend. Sherwin said crews expect significant winds on the fire overnight and low humidity.

According to Sherwin, crews have opened up a second fire camp in the mountains near Lake Gregory. "This is being done for logistical reasons and to prevent firefighters to make the hour commute from the base to Victorville," Sherwin said. "We will see a significant increase in number of personnel and vehicles in the area."

Schools in Hesperia, Apple Valley and Oro Grande were closed for a second straight day because of concern over the poor air quality in the Victor Valley, but all three school districts said Wednesday afternoon they planned to reopen classrooms on Thursday.

The Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District issued an air quality warning because of smoke on Sunday and it remains in effect.

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/news/20160810/significant-progress>

Pilot fire containment at 64 percent; schools to reopen Thursday

The fire has burned 7,861 acres - over 12 miles - by its fourth day.

Beatriz Valenzuela and Anne Millerbernd, Press Enterprise

Posted: August 10, 2016, 8:07 PM



Rachel Luna

Firefighters made significant progress battling the 7,861-acre Pilot fire in the San Bernardino Mountains, increasing their containment of the blaze from 6 percent to 64 percent by Wednesday morning.

The focus remained on “reinforcing and extending the established lines,” said **San Bernardino County Fire** spokesman Eric Sherwin. More than 1,700 firefighters were in the mountains battling the blaze.

Sherwin said specific attention was placed around the Deer Lodge Park area and the line closest to the mandatory evacuation zone.

Mandatory evacuations were still in effect for the Deer Lodge Park community and a handful of neighboring streets. Highway 173, between Highway 138 and Arrowhead Lake Road, was evacuated, according to a fire incident report.

All other evacuations were voluntary and included areas to the north and northwest of the fire.

Active burning on the interior of the Pilot Fire produced significant amounts of smoke expected to impact the High Desert, said Sherwin.

Fire officials also reported that 5,300 structures were threatened by the Pilot fire, however none were damaged or destroyed.

While the fire did not appear to threaten homes in Summit Valley early Wednesday, crews were still stationed along Highway 173.

Weather was still a concern for firefighters, including lower humidity and hotter temperatures forecast for this weekend.

“There’s a bit lower humidity today, and it already feels a bit hotter,” said San Bernardino County Fire Battalion Chief Marc Peebles. “There may be increased fire activity, but we hope not.”

Temperatures are expected to reach the low 90s by Friday and the upper 90s by Sunday near Silverwood Lake, according to the National Weather Service. Some wind gusts were expected through Thursday morning, the NWS reported.

Utility crews from Southern California Edison were spotted in the area Wednesday repairing damaged power poles.

Later, San Bernardino County fire officials said one county fire strike team and one task force were expected to be released from firefighting that evening.

County officials declared a local emergency Tuesday and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency has authorized the use of federal funds to help battle the fire.

Hesperia and Apple Valley school districts were expected to reopen campuses Thursday after having closed schools because of the fire. Hesperia Unified schools will follow their normal, full-day schedule, while Apple Valley Unified will be on an early-release schedule Thursday, and full-day schedule Friday, according to statements from both districts.

<http://www.pe.com/articles/overnight-810219-evening-percent.html>

Too Close for Comfort

Fire Burns 7,861 Acres

Mike Harris, Mountain News

Posted: August 11, 2016, 6:00 AM



Sky crane helicopters looked as though they were doing a ballet as they dipped into Lake Arrowhead, picking up water to drop on the flames of the Pilot Fire. Harry Bradley.

The Pilot Fire, the biggest fire to threaten mountain communities since the 2007 Grass Valley Fire when 199 homes were destroyed, was still burning this morning but hopes remained high that improved fire lines would hold.

As of Wednesday, the fire had grown in size to cover 7,861 acres and was reported as 64 percent contained, up from just 6 percent containment that had been reported on Tuesday.

“The footprint has not changed drastically as of this morning,” said U.S. Forest Service public information officer Bob Poole on Wednesday. “Yesterday afternoon we saw a lot of interior pockets (of brush) taking off, and (vegetation) was burning out. The hope is that the fire will remain in the footprint and we can increase the amount of containment.”

The fire, which began Sunday around noon east of Silverwood Lake between Pilot Rock Ridge and State Highway 173 in Hesperia, quickly spread as winds pushed the flames northeast toward the Pinnacles near Lake Arrowhead. A five-year drought has turned vegetation into tinder-dry fuel.

Cause of the fire remains under investigation by the Forest Service.

Mandatory evacuations were ordered for the entire community of Deer Lodge Park. Also included in the mandatory evacuation order was Aleutian Drive, Klondike Drive, Evergreen Lane, Yukon Drive; and Highway 173 north and south from Highway 138 to Arrowhead Lake Road.

Voluntary evacuations were ordered for the northern portion of Lake Arrowhead—the Grass Valley Lake area—in addition to the area north of Peninsula and North Bay Roads to Highway 173, and south of Highway 173 from North Bay Road to Grass Valley Road.

The fire also forced the closure of the Pacific Crest Trail from the Deep Creek Hot Springs (3W02) to Lake Silverwood.

No structures were reported being destroyed or damaged as of Wednesday. One firefighter reportedly suffered an injury and no civilians had been injured.

An American Red Cross reception and care center was set up for a time at Rim of the World High School. School district administrators were monitoring the progress of the fire, since the new school year was scheduled to start next Tuesday. Mary Putnam Henck Intermediate School was in the area designated for voluntary evacuation on Tuesday.

Initial response to the fire was quick, and quickly grew to include more than 1,700 personnel. Agencies from as far away as Kern County responded to the incident.

As of Wednesday the plan was to hold the fire within current containment lines, to continue to construct and improve the fire line and to mop up flare ups to meet perimeter security needs.

The biggest change to holding the fire came on Wednesday morning when the incident command announced that containment had gone from just 6 percent to 64 percent.

Helping firefighters were cool temperatures that dropped to around 60 degrees during the night and humidity increasing to 55 percent in Wednesday's early morning hours. Winds remained out of the south at 10 to 15 miles per hour with gusts to 25 miles per hour.

With a low pressure system pushing the cooler weather into the interior for much of the early part of the week, winds blew the flames away from Crestline and Lake Arrowhead and toward the north and east.

Weather conditions were expected to change toward the end of this week as meteorologists were expecting a high pressure system to move in and change the weather pattern to include shifting winds from the north to the south and increase temperatures.

The greatest concern came Tuesday when fire began to eat into brush around the Pinnacles and near Deer Lodge Park. The concern was that if winds shifted, fire might move into the Deer Lodge Park area.

A major factor in keeping flames at bay was a concerted effort to send a large number of fire fighting aircraft over the rugged terrain. Residents reported seeing flight after flight of very large aerial tankers that included two DC10s, a converted four-engine C-130 and other four and two-engine aircraft, along with helicopters which included the large sky crane helicopters.

Residents on Tuesday and Wednesday reported seeing helicopter after helicopter taking water from Lake Arrowhead and Lake Gregory.

As of Wednesday morning the incident command reported 46 hand crews, some from as far away as Sequoia, working on fire lines. Additionally, as many as 22 bulldozers were called in to cut fire breaks. "There's been a lot of hard work on the ground from hand crews," said Poole.

http://www.mountain-news.com/news/subscription_news/article_b203c6a2-5f4e-11e6-850b-93e91381c647.html

Pilot Fire Morning Update: Fire officials report 70 percent containment

Victor Valley Daily Press

Posted: August 11, 2016, 6:44 AM



A firefighter hoses down dirt and ash in Summit Valley on Wednesday as fire crews moved into a clean-up mode for that area of the Pilot Fire. David Pardo, Daily Press

HESPERIA — Fire officials announced Thursday morning the Pilot Fire is 70 percent contained and the blaze has consumed 7,899 acres — more than 12 square miles — in the San Bernardino Mountains and Summit Valley.

Southern California Incident Management Team 3 spokesman Eric Sherwin said fire crews continued to increase working on fire containment lines overnight. Sherwin estimates firefighters have now created containment lines on the blaze's northwestern perimeter.

"The only open line we have is on the mountain side of the fire," Sherwin said. "We will continue to work with fixed winged aircraft, helicopters and ground crews to continue to build containment lines up there," Sherwin said a little before 7 a.m. "We will also continue to improve the lines on the Hesperia side of the fire and mop up into the interior of the fire."

Sherwin said firefighters battled overnight winds that "carried through the night."

"For the last three days we have had a period each night where the wind dies off," he said. "That didn't take place last night. The winds pushed through the night. Our humidities were extremely low. But even with those factors we were able to maintain the containment lines previously established."

Hesperia residents awoke to smokeless skies Thursday morning, as firefighters continued to get the upper hand on the Pilot Fire, which is now in its fifth day.

Children across the Victor Valley will return to school, many after an unscheduled two-day vacation brought on by heavy smoke from the blaze that has charred more than 12 square miles of the San Bernardino Mountains and Summit Valley.

More than 1,700 personnel are involved in the massive effort, which has resulted in the voluntary or mandatory evacuation of more than 5,300 homes, most in the mountain communities of Crestline, Lake Gregory and Lake Arrowhead.

The animal evacuation center at the San Bernardino County Fairgrounds will close today, and any animals not claimed by their owners by noon will be moved to the Devore facility, officials said.

It is likely the Red Cross evacuation center at Oak Hills High School also will close soon.

Students in the Apple Valley Unified, Hesperia Unified and Oro Grande school districts will return to class. All three districts closed all their campuses on Tuesday and Wednesday because of health concerns brought about by poor air quality.

A smoke advisory remains in effect for the Victor Valley, but the fire produced little smoke in the area on Wednesday evening and blue skies were the norm again for the first time since Sunday morning.

This story will be updated throughout the day. Return to www.vvdailynews.com frequently for the latest information and updates on the Pilot Fire.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20160811/pilot-fire-morning-update-fire-officials-report-70-percent-containment>

38-Year-Old Helendale Man Killed in Crash

Victor Valley News

Posted: August 9, 2016

HELENDALE, Calif:(VVNG.com)- Officers with the California Highway Patrol and emergency medical providers with the **San Bernardino County Fire Department** responded to a single vehicle collision.

The crash was reported at about 7:10 a.m. on August 8th in the area of Wild Road and Crouch Road in Helendale.

Upon arrival, they located a 1992 Ford Explorer off the roadway with two occupants. According to the San Bernardino Coroners, Wayne Jaco, 38, a resident of Helendale was found unresponsive and pronounced dead the scene.

Authorities said the SUV was traveling southbound on Wild Road when the driver turned to the left causing the Ford to enter the dirt shoulder and collide with a power pole. After colliding with the power pole the Ford overturned and came to rest on its wheels.

Both occupants of the Ford were not wearing their seatbelts and were ejected.

An air ambulance was requested to transport a 38-year-old female passenger with major head and chest injuries to Arrowhead Regional Medical Center.

Drugs and alcohol are not a suspected factor in this collision. This collision is still under investigation by the California Highway Patrol, Barstow Area.

<http://www.vvng.com/38-year-old-helendale-man-killed-in-crash/>

A birthday for Ryan to remember

Natalie Williams and Judi Bowers, Big Bear Grizzly

Posted: August 10, 2016



Kelsey Bowers

A local boy just wanted cards for his 11th birthday, but he received much, much more instead. Ryan Fritsinger, 11, has autism and struggled to make friends in the past. So members of the Big Bear community and beyond came out to show their support at two separate birthday parties thrown in his honor.

The first party was a surprise for Ryan on Aug. 4. The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department Big Bear Station planned a party at the station. Word spread and soon the Valley's fire departments, the California Highway Patrol, county probation, Caltrans, other Sheriff's Department stations and more joined in.

Ryan's family was escorted to the Sheriff's Station by motorcycle officers and Sheriff's Department vehicles with lights and sirens. Ryan asked his mother why they were being pulled over, not realizing the pomp and circumstance was all for him.

When Capt. Tom Bradford of the Big Bear Sheriff's Station learned about Ryan wanting birthday cards, he went to Detective Jim Wijnhamer and said "you know what to do,"

Wijnhamer said. The detective is also involved with Southern California Special Olympics and got Ryan involved right away. Then Wijnhamer went about planning a birthday party.

Ryan was the star of the day enjoying pizza, delivered by the CHP, cake and ice cream, and of course presents and cards. The Lego fan received passes for the entire family to LEGOLAND, and NFL Denver Broncos T-shirts. There were Star Wars Legos, Caltrans T-shirts and more.

“Wow, no way, oh wow!” Ryan exclaimed as he opened some of the gifts from his new friends. Ryan’s mother Lori thanked all those who came out to make the day special for her son.

“This community is amazing,” Wijnhamer said.

And it continued to amaze at party No. 2 at Sugarloaf Park Aug. 6.

“We were sad for Ryan that his mom said they threw parties for him but nobody ever showed up,” said Monica Dwyer, one of the co-organizers of the party. “We wanted to throw him a party and make sure there were people there for him.

Party guests included community members, players from the Big Bear High School varsity football team, and a dozen Storm Troopers and other Star Wars villains.

“Everybody is loving it so far,” said Nic Snavely, squad leader of the Inland Empire Squad. “All the kids, their eyes are bugging out of their heads. He seems to really enjoy it and his mom is really happy.”

Ryan’s mother, Lori, estimates that he has received anywhere from 500 to 700 birthday cards from around the world and presents such as a Denver Broncos gift box, an all-expense paid trip to LEGOLAND, a Respawn Entertainment gift for his Xbox and much more.

“Thank you for putting a smile on Ryan’s face,” Lori said. “Thank you, thank you for making him feel important. He’s got a friend in you guys.”

Ryan was scheduled to begin bowling with his local Special Olympics team this week, according to Wijnhamer. It’s just one more way he’s making friends he didn’t know he had.

http://www.bigbeargrizzly.net/news/a-birthday-for-ryan-to-remember/article_edf4b9c2-5e9b-11e6-8d37-f342dacd59b2.html