



# NEWS



## News Headlines 10/25/2016

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## Two-Alarm Fire at J&K's Feed in Hesperia

Victor Valley News

Posted: October 23, 2016



(Photo by Cheryll Dougherty)

HESPERIA, CA:(VVNG.com)– **San Bernardino County Fire** responded to a second alarm fire at J & K's Feed and Vet Supplies in Hesperia.

The fire was reported at about 12:45 a.m. on Sunday, October 23rd in the 16300 block of Yucca Street.

When firefighters arrived, they located hay bales approximately 10 feet high fully engulfed with exposures to commercial buildings, per SBC Fire.

Firefighters worked quickly to extinguish the fire and contain it to the 100×100 ft area.

The fire was knocked down in approximately 10 minutes. Firefighters remained committed to the scene for several hours to conduct extensive overhaul.

An estimate on the dollar loss to the business was not available.

No civilians or firefighters were injured. The exact cause of the fire is under investigation.

<http://www.vvng.com/two-alarm-fire-at-jks-feed-in-hesperia/>

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## Weather Causing Several Power Outages in The Area

Victor Valley News

Posted: October 23, 2016



(Steven Brittain, for Victor Valley News.)

APPLE VALLEY, CA:(VVNG.com)– A power outage caused by a blown transformer has left nearly 2,000 Southern California Edison customers without power.

Per scanner reports, lightning struck a transformer in the area of Standing Rock and Nanticoke Road in Apple Valley.

The outage was reported at 7:24 p.m. on Sunday, October 23rd.

**San Bernardino County Fire** responded and located downed lines spanned across several driveways.

According to the Southern California Edison website, 1,440 customers are affected by the outage and power is expected to be restored by 9:00 p.m.

The city of Victorville is also experiencing a power outage in the area of Minnetonka Street and 9th Avenue.

The outage is affecting 289 customers and service is expected to be restored by 10:00 p.m.

We will continue to update this post with the latest information. Be sure to check back later for updates.

<http://www.vvng.com/weather-causing-several-power-outages-in-the-area/>

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## Octagon House, site of Esperanza fire tragedy, becomes place to mourn, learn

*Property is often visited by fallen firefighters' families, colleagues.*

Alex Groves, Press Enterprise

Posted: October 24, 2016



Greg Koeller, walks in front of the marker for AFEO Jason McKay who was killed in the Esperanza Fire in 2006, trying to save the home of Koeller called "The Octagon", this marker is in front of the garage, near where the engine was parked, Thursday, October 13, 2016. (KURT MILLER, THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE/SCNG)

In the remote hills above Banning and surrounded by steep dirt roads is the "Octagon House" site, a place that was forever changed Oct. 26, 2006, when five U.S. Forest Service firefighters died protecting it.

Now, 10 years later, what once was a weekend vacation home has become the site of multiple memorials, a place where loved ones gather to mourn and remember, and where firefighters come to learn.

And while the home has taken on a special significance for the families and the firefighting community, it has also taken on a different meaning for Greg Koeller, the site's owner.

"It'll never be the same as it used to be," Koeller said. "When something bad happens, you can't turn back the clock."

Koeller, 63, now retired from his job as a tool and die maker, spends about a week of every month at the site. Some time is spent working on the eight-sided concrete home, but a lot of his time is spent tending to many of the memorials at the site.

### HONORING THE FIREFIGHTERS

U.S. Forest Service firefighters Capt. Mark Loutzenhiser, Jason McKay, Daniel Hoover-Najera, Pablo Cerda and Jess McClean were overrun by flames the morning of Oct. 26, 2006 as they tried to protect the home.

White metal crosses planted 10 years ago at the spots where each man fell still dot the ground. Their friends and family often leave items there, such as flowers, coins, cigarettes and six-packs of beer.

Koeller, who has taken to storing many of the items to protect them from the elements, has spent the past year working on a large glass case to display at least some of them.

“When people do leave stuff behind it doesn’t do any good to have it left in my garage,” he said. “It’s nice for them to be out there for people to see.”

So far he’s put in a T-shirt, a child’s painting and a pair of boots from Forest Service Engine 52, which was nearby when the firefighters of Engine 57 were killed. He hopes to fill the case more as time goes on.

For the fire’s five-year anniversary, Koeller worked with the San Bernardino National Forest on a memorial that consisted of a plaque embedded within a huge boulder. He selected the boulder and carved out a space for the Forest Service to put in the plaque.

Most years on the anniversary date, Koeller has held a private memorial event outside his house for firefighters’ families and members of the Forest Service.

## THE BURNOVER

The fire, set near Cabazon by an arsonist just after 1 a.m., was propelled by 40- to 50-mph Santa Ana winds through the dry brush and up the slopes of the San Jacinto Mountains. A deep natural drainage that runs down the mountain toward Cabazon acted like a chimney as the fire approached Koeller’s property.

When the blaze, with 15-foot-tall flames and temperatures up to 1,600 degrees, reached the firefighters, they didn’t have time to flee.

Koeller said he can still recall the shock of learning what had happened.

“You’re thinking the building might have burned down, but you never would have thought five people had died,” he said.

The fact that the fire moved in so quickly was also a surprised to Koeller, who had though about fire and tried to prepare for it, clearing back brush and trimming trees.

It wasn’t enough.

“They say you need at least a 100-foot clearing,” he said. “But when you’re in an area like this, where there’s a lot of up and down, and a lot of drainage, you need more than 100 feet.”

## LEARNING FROM TRAGEDY

Koeller said he has taken some lessons away from the fire, which gutted the dream home he spent years designing and building.

He said everything he has built on the site since that time has been built with materials other than wood.

Though much of the dry brush outside the Octagon was burned away by the Esparanza fire and 2013 Silver fire, Koeller tries to keep things as cleared as possible.

Koeller’s property also has become a place where firefighters regularly go to learn.

San Bernardino National Forest spokesman John Miller said firefighters participate in what are called staff rides, educational experiences where they learn about the burnover and try to make sense of how and why it happened.

“(They) basically study everything that led up to that incident and of course what happens once the incident happened,” Miller said. “Here’s what the conditions were, here’s what we were thinking, here’s what we were doing.”

The home has been somewhat rebuilt – it’s been cleared of debris, cleaned and given a new roof. But it’s still mostly empty, save for some fold-out chairs, tools and an antique car.

Koeller doesn’t live in the home like he once did, but instead stays in a detached garage built about four years ago.

He said he doesn’t know if the Octagon House will ever again be a living space.

As Koeller surveyed the inside of the sparsely decorated house, he said he might turn it into a hobby room, and a place where the firefighters could take a break during their visit.

“They can set up chairs in here if they want to,” he said.

<http://www.pe.com/articles/koeller-816743-firefighters-fire.html?page=1>

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## **THE OLD FIRE: Arsonist Ignited Fire 13 Years Ago – October 25, 2003**

Michael P. Neufeld, Rim of the World News

Posted: October 25, 2016, 12:06 AM



Thirteen years ago, on October 25, 2003, an arsonist started the Old Fire in Old Waterman Canyon. (Photo Courtesy Craig C.)

Mountain Communities, CA – Thirteen years ago, on October 25, 2003 at 9:16 a.m., arsonist Rickie Lee Fowler ignited the Old Fire in Old Waterman Canyon and for the next eight days Santa Ana winds fanned the fire that changed the lives of mountain residents and the way wildfires are fought. . . forever!

The Old Fire, burned 91,281 acres, destroyed 993 homes and caused six (6) deaths. Some 80,000 residents were forced to evacuate their homes before the fire was contained on November 2, 2003, thanks to snow and rain.

### **THE OLD FIRE**

At the peak of the Old Fire (October 25-November 2), there were 4,211 firefighters battling the fire that also destroyed 50 commercial structures.

The environmental issues that contributed to the Old Fire included high fuel loads, long-term drought and a major tree mortality caused by the Bark Beetle infestation in the higher elevations, with chaparral fueling the fire in the lower elevations.

The leaders of the unified command, from federal, state, county and local agencies directed fire operations during the Old Fire and saved countless homes and businesses.

### **ARSONIST ON DEATH ROW**

Fowler was sentenced to death on January 25, 2013, and was received at San Quentin on February 5, 2013. He remains on Death Row.

On that Saturday, October 25, 13 years ago, Fowler tossed lighted road flares out of a moving vehicle in Waterman Canyon.

Two years later, the driver of the van — identified by authorities as David Valdez, Jr, — was shot to death.

The last execution in California was Clarence Ray Allen in 2006. State-approved executions were first authorized in 1851.

Several legal challenges have halted executions over the past few years.

<http://rotwnews.com/2016/10/25/the-old-fire-arsonist-ignited-fire-13-years-ago-october-25-2003/>

## Rain could bring mudslides to Inland Empire burn areas

Beatriz Valenzuela, San Bernardino Sun

Posted: October 25, 2016, 9:31 AM



Two golfers walk the fairway during a round of golf in the rain at Arrowhead Country Club in San Bernardino on Monday, Oct. 24, 2016. That rainstorm didn't lead to mudflows in San Bernardino County burn areas, but rain arriving Thursday into Friday might cause problems. (Photo by John Valenzuela/The Sun/SCNG)

**San Bernardino County fire** officials reminds people who live in burn areas to take precautions as more rain has been forecast to hit the Inland Empire in the coming days.

The fast-moving storm that hit the area Sunday night and lingered into Monday afternoon dropped nearly 2 inches of rain to the Crestline area, which was burned by the Pilot Fire in early August. However, that was not enough to cause any significant flooding or mudslides, "Surprisingly (there were) no major issues," said Tracey Martinez, county fire spokeswoman. "There was short bursts of significant rainfall but not for a long stretch of time."

Meteorologists with the National Weather Service expect to see more rain to hit the Inland Empire Thursday night into Friday and possibly into the weekend.

Normally vegetation absorbs rain, but after a wildfire like the back-to-back Pilot and Blue Cut fires that devastated several square miles of vegetation in rural San Bernardino County, the charred ground can no longer easily absorb rainwater, increasing the risk of flooding and mudflows for several years.

Authorities urge anyone who lives in or near the recent burn areas to take precautions and plan ahead, according to a San Bernardino County Fire statement.

They advise following the Ready!Set!Go! Flood Preparation plan which include signing up for emergency alerts, identifying fire stations that have sandbags available and how to build an effective an emergency kit.

Authorities also advise downloading the new San Bernardino County Office of Emergency Services app, Ready SB, which provides residents with multiple disaster resources. Ready SB is available from the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store.

<http://www.sbsun.com/general-news/20161025/rain-could-bring-mudslides-to-inland-empire-burn-areas>