



NEWS



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Stolen Truck Plows Through Victorville Home

Gabriel D. Espinoza, Victor Valley News

Posted: November 19, 2016



(Gabriel D. Espinoza, Victor Valley News)

VICTORVILLE, Calif: (VVNG.com) A woman was arrested after she plowed through a Victorville home at a high rate of speed, causing major structural damage.

Deputies responded to the 13000 block of Claremont Road and Cobalt Road just before 4:00 p.m. on Saturday, November 19th, reference a white full-size pickup truck that plowed through a home.

The homeowner was outside in the front yard washing his car when he heard the loud skidding. “I looked back and just saw the truck going right through the garage, I was in shock,” stated the homeowner, who was less than 15 feet away from the where the impact occurred.

The truck hit a Toyota Tundra that was parked in the driveway and continued into the garage and through the home. The truck was lodged about 20 feet into the home, resting partially in the kitchen and living room.

“Once on scene, we realized the magnitude of the vehicle that far into the house, so we started Rescue 40 out of Hesperia and also requested building and safety to respond,” stated Captain Dan Nafzgar with the **San Bernardino County Fire**. “Sheriff’s shut down the roadway for us, and we went around and shut down all the utilities.”

Southwest Gas was requested to respond due to a gas leak in the home, and SCE was also requested.

The homeowner helped the female driver out of the vehicle. According to witnesses on scene the woman was acting erratically and yelling obscenities from the back of the patrol unit.

Deputy Demara confirmed that the truck was stolen, and as a result, the woman was taken into custody.

<http://www.vvng.com/stolen-truck-plows-through-victorville-home/>

Stolen truck crashes into home, triggering gas leak; driver arrested

Daily Press

Posted: November 20, 2016, 11:51 AM



After a truck crashed and traveled 20 feet into a residence in the 13000 block of Claremont Drive in Victorville on Saturday afternoon, County Fire officials worked to shore up the compromised building. (Photo by County Fire Battalion Chief Dave Meddles)

VICTORVILLE — A woman was arrested Saturday after reportedly driving a stolen truck approximately 20 feet into a home in a crash that triggered an active gas leak at the residence and displaced one person, authorities said.

Jessica Blan, an adult female whose age was not immediately released, was taken into custody following the crash, San Bernardino County Sheriff's spokeswoman Jodi Miller said Sunday.

No one was injured. The incident was reported at 3:48 p.m. Saturday in the 13000 block of Claremont Drive.

"Crews assessed the driver of the vehicle for injuries and initiated a primary search of the residence. The impact of the vehicle also created an active natural gas leak on scene," County Fire said in a statement. "Southwest Gas Company was requested, and the roadway was shutdown for a short time until the leak could be secured."

County Fire's Heavy Rescue 40 from Oak Hills, a specialized team trained in urban search and rescue techniques, also responded to the scene "to shore up the compromised building and reduce the risk of structural collapse."

The team is one of four such companies within the County Fire jurisdiction that are strategically placed over the department's 19,000-square-mile coverage area.

County Fire ultimately responded with a paramedic engine, truck company, heavy rescue and battalion chief, for a total of 10 personnel on scene. The Sheriff's Department is handling the investigation into the crash.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20161120/stolen-truck-crashes-into-home-triggering-gas-leak-driver-arrested>

Officials: Drought kills 102 million trees in California

Scott Smith, Associated Press via Daily Press

Posted: November 18, 2016, 12:39 PM



Authorities say the California drought has now killed more than 102 million trees. Mark Humphrey, Associated Press

FRESNO — The California drought has killed more than 102 million trees in a die-off of forests that increases the risk of catastrophic wildfires and other threats to humans, officials said Friday.

The latest aerial survey by the U.S. Forest Service shows there are 36 million more dead trees since May in the state and there has been a 100 percent increase since 2015.

"These dead and dying trees continue to elevate the risk of wildfire, complicate our efforts to respond safely and effectively to fires when they do occur and pose a host of threats to life and property," U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said in a statement.

California has endured five years of drought marked by a record low mountain snowpack and warm temperatures. The drought has left trees thirsty and prone to infestation by bark beetles.

Late last year, Gov. Jerry Brown formed a task force charged with finding ways to remove the trees that threaten motorists and communities.

Vilsack called on Congress to act, saying more federal funding goes toward fighting fires than forestry management, such as removing dead trees to improve forests' health.

Officials are pushing to turn more trees into lumber, burn them in energy plants or dispose of them in incinerators to eliminate them as fuel for wildfires.

Some environmentalists argue, however, that a die-off is part of a healthy forest's life-cycle. They favor leaving the trees that need to be cut down on the forest floor to decompose and serve as wildlife habitat.

Most dead trees are in the central and southern Sierra Nevada, officials say. However, they're also beginning to find dead trees in Northern California counties such as Siskiyou, Modoc, Plumas and Lassen.

More trees are expected to die into 2017, U.S. Forest Service officials say.

People assume the tally amounts to too many dead trees, but fire suppression has created unnaturally green forests with far too little wildfire and dead trees, said Chad Hanson, a forest ecologist at Earth Island Institute's John Muir Project.

"We don't want too much and we don't want too little," he said. "This is not too much."

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20161118/officials-drought-kills-102-million-trees-in-california>

Tree die-offs soaring, bringing fire danger and exacerbating water problems

It has increased 114 percent in a year in the state to 'downright scary' total of 62 million.

Jim Steinberg, Press Enterprise

Posted: November 18, 2016



This June 6, 2016 file photo shows a tree stained by a fungus carried by the bark beetle, which diminishes the tree's value as lumber, near Cressman. The California drought has killed more than 102 million trees in a die-off of forests that increases the risk of catastrophic wildfires and other threats to humans, officials said Friday, Nov. 18, 2016. The latest aerial survey by the U.S. Forest Service shows there are 36 million more dead trees since May in the state and there has been a 100 percent increase since 2015. (AP Photo/Scott Smith, File)

This has been a disastrous year for California's trees.

Some 62 million trees died statewide on federal, state and private lands this year, officials in the U.S. Forest Service Pacific Southwest Regional office said Friday.

The increase was nearly 114 percent more than the 29 million that died in 2015.

And it brings to 102 million the estimated number that have died since 2010, the Forest Service said in a report generated from the agency's aerial detection survey, which began in 2010.

"This is pretty shocking," said Cameron Barrows, an assistant research ecologist who is coordinating the Center for Conservation Biology's Desert Studies Initiative at UC Riverside. "This is something we should really be concerned about."

The shocker is how many died this year compared with past years, he said.

"This is disturbing and downright scary," said Tim Krantz, a professor of environmental studies at the University of Redlands.

"This has huge ramifications, not just for plants and animals but for all of us (people) in California," he said. For example, without trees and other vegetation, rainfall will not be effectively held in place so it can soak into groundwater. It will just wash away, Krantz said.

Climate change is happening so fast, he said, that plants won't have time to adjust.

“Baja California is moving our way,” he said.

From 2010 to 2014, 11 million trees died, and 29 million more trees died in 2015, according to the survey.

Millions of additional trees are weakened and expected to die in the coming years.

With public safety as its most pressing concern, the U.S. Forest Service is trying to help impacted forests, including reprioritizing \$43 million in California in fiscal 2016 to conduct safety-focused restoration along roads, trails and recreation sites.

However, limited resources and a changing climate hamper the Forest Service’s ability to address tree mortality in California.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and Forest Service officials are seriously hampered not only by short-term budgets passed by Congress but also a broken budget for the Forest Service that sees an increasing amount of resources going to firefighting while less is invested in restoration and forest health, Vilsack said in a statement.

Most of the 102 million dead trees are within 10 counties in the southern and central Sierra Nevada region. The Forest Service also identified increasing tree mortality in the northern part of the state, including Siskiyou, Modoc, Plumas and Lassen counties.

This year, California had a record-setting wildfire season, with the Blue Cut fire alone scorching over 30,000 acres, mostly in the San Bernardino National Forest, and triggering the evacuation of 80,000 people, the statement said.

As the state enters the sixth year of drought, water-starved trees have lost their ability to fight off bark beetles and disease, Barrows said.

This is compounded by the rapid warming of winter temperatures, caused by global warming, which would turn the winter season into a continuation of their breeding season, he said.

Cold winters would kill or at least slow the growth of tree enemies like the bark beetle and bacteria. Now their numbers can multiply significantly in their normally dormant season, Barrows said.

The recently dead or ailing trees are mapped by a surveyor using a digital aerial sketch-mapping system flying in a light fixed-wing aircraft about 1,000 feet above the ground, the Forest Service said.

Trees act as a huge carbon dioxide “sponge,” soaking up this gas to feed new growth, he said.

If what’s happening in California is happening on a global scale, then the pace of global warming will increase rapidly, Barrows said.

In California, the loss of these trees likely will create a “domino effect” because they were important to maintain many plants, birds, insects, mammals and other life forms in the California forest, Barrow said.

The loss of trees has a negative impact on water supply because trees, like the snowpack, hold onto water and release it slowly, he said.

The hardest-hit counties in the state were Tulare, where nearly 13 million trees died this year; Fresno (12 million); and Madera (nearly 9 million), the Forest Service said.

By comparison, the drought has had less impact on trees in Southern California. Los Angeles County lost 28,000 trees, and numbers dropped by 15,000 in Riverside County and 7,000 in San Bernardino County. San Diego County has lost 14,000.

The survey recorded no dead trees for Orange County this year but said it has 1,000 acres of dead trees accumulated from 2010 to the present.

Barrows speculated that Southern California trees have experienced more drought and warmer temperatures for decades or longer and therefore might be more adapted to the drought than trees in Northern California.

“The number of dead trees in our state is truly saddening and another widespread impact of this historic drought we are managing in our state,” Mark Ghilarducci, director of the California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services, said in a statement. “Through the Governor’s Tree Mortality Task Force, we’re actively leveraging all of our resources around California to ensure protection of lives, critical infrastructure and the environment in our wooded communities and wildlands.”

In response to the massive tree die-off across California, Cal Fire said it is continuing its work with federal, local and utility partners to remove dead and dying trees that pose the greatest risk to public safety. Cal Fire and its partners have removed over 423,000 trees in 10 counties, inspected and cleared dead trees from nearly 52,000 miles of roads and power lines, treated more than 26,000 acres and created roughly 1,300 acres of fuel breaks.

<http://www.pe.com/articles/trees-818988-california-forest.html?page=1>

Large fire ignites at Perris pallet yard, causes multiple explosions (UPDATE 2)

Anne Millerbernd and Alex Groves, Press Enterprise

Posted: November 18, 2016

A fire that ignited in a Perris pallet yard Friday morning, Nov. 18, is the most recent in a spate of fires that have befallen Inland pallet yard owners recently.

Alarmed by a handful of recent fires, local pallet yard operators say they are taking extra security measures to avoid being the next victim of what they believe is an arsonist.

But fire officials haven’t been so quick to call the recent spate of pallet fires arson. Officials said a late October fire in Fontana was started intentionally, but two others in Bloomington and San Bernardino have thus far been called suspicious.

San Bernardino County Fire spokesman Eric Sherwin said those fires are still under investigation as separate incidents.

As is Friday's fire in Perris, say Cal Fire/Riverside County Fire officials.

Multiple people reported the flames at 2:49 a.m., said Battalion Chief Josh Janssen. Firefighters arrived at the yard on Ramona Expressway between Perris Boulevard and North Webster Avenue to find about a quarter-acre of the five-acre yard aflame.

Within hours, nearly half of the yard was ablaze.

Multiple explosions from propane tanks hindered the efforts of firefighters early on, Janssen said, including one very large explosion.

Ultimately, two acres of the five-acre parcel burned, causing about \$300,000 in losses, said a Cal Fire/Riverside County Fire spokeswoman.

Janssen said the fire had not been declared an arson as of early Friday afternoon.

He did say pallet yard fires seemed to be more frequent in recent weeks.

If the fires were the result of an arson, "I don't know what the motive or intent would be," Janssen said.

Lina Montes, owner of G. O. Pallets, Inc. in Fontana, can't give a reason either.

Earlier in the year when pallet yards in Fontana were being targeted, local yard operators got together and created the North American Pallet Association. Montes is their secretary.

At the time, because multiple fires ignited exclusively in Fontana, she thought it was a land ownership issue. But since then, pallet yard fires have popped up in Riverside and Los Angeles counties as well.

She said it's unlikely that it's pallet yard operators starting the fires themselves to make insurance money.

"It's not for insurance because we lose more than insurance gives us. We make more selling to a company," Montes said.

When her pallet yard ignited Jan. 17, she said she got a \$22,000 bill from the fire department. Her insurance covered \$5,000 of it.

Damages from a fire isn't usually enough to shut down a pallet yard, they just bother the operator and cost them a lot of money, she said.

"They're not putting us out of business, they're just making it harder to do our business," she said.

But they're also worrying local pallet yard owners.

Maira Perez, a manager at GMA Pallet & Recycling's Jurupa Valley location, said she was shocked to hear about Friday's fire in Perris.

She said the recent fires strike her as unusual.

"To me, I feel there's human involvement because it just seems like a trend in the hours they're reported," she said. "There's a pattern.

Perez has been in the pallet industry for about 17 years. Toward the beginning of her career, she had only heard of a couple fires.

“You go to sleep thinking, ‘is my pallet yard going to be there in the morning,’” she said.

GMA Pallet & Recycling is now considering video surveillance and has a renewed effort to keep the pallet yard clear of debris that can start fires, like wood scraps.

Montes said that G.O. Pallets has put up extra cameras and will hire a security guard to roam the premises at night.

<http://www.pe.com/articles/fire-818879-morning-commercial.html?page=2>

Authorities identify two men killed in Friday crash

Daily Press

Posted: November 19, 2016, 1:32 PM

PHELAN — Two Phelan men were pronounced dead after suffering fatal injuries in a head-on collision Friday night, officials said.

Just after 11 p.m., officials with the California Highway Patrol responded to reports of a three-vehicle collision on Phelan Road near Wilson Ranch Road in Phelan.

San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department officials said Kase Chip, 19, and Anthony Soto, 22, both of Phelan, were pronounced dead at the scene at 11:43 p.m. and 11:50 p.m.

San Bernardino County Fire Department firefighters were on scene to assist with the crash with three medical helicopters, three paramedic ambulances and three paramedic engines, according to their official Twitter page.

Three people sustained major injuries and another suffered minor injuries in the crash. All were transported to local hospitals by ambulance or helicopter.

CHP officials are currently investigating the crash.

Phelan Road from Buttmere Road was shut down for the remainder of the night. As of 2:30 p.m. Saturday, the road was reported to be open again.

This story is still developing as more information becomes known from the ongoing crash investigation.

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/news/20161119/authorities-identify-two-men-killed-in-friday-crash>

Thanksgiving safety tips from San Bernardino County fire, health officials

Doug Saunders, The Sun

Posted: November 19, 2016, 2:01 PM



Thanksgiving turkey dinner. Courtesy photo

Holiday music, pumpkin pie, the delicious smell of a turkey roasting in the oven, football on the television and family and friends gathering around a table filled with decadent foods are just some traditions of Thanksgiving Day.

But for some, the holiday could turn to disaster and despair.

Chino Valley Fire District officials have drawn out a guide with the hopes of reducing threats found in the kitchen.

Fire officials start the tutorial by saying clean appliances and food preparation areas are essential to having a holiday at home rather than spending it in an emergency room.

The celebration on Thanksgiving day is traditionally centered in and around the kitchen, making it the peak day for home cooking fires, according to CVFD officials.

Although that statistic can seem daunting, there are many steps the public can take to ensure they don't become victims of a fire or injuries, CVFD spokeswoman Massiel DeGuevara said.

"There are many things that the public can do to help prevent a cooking fire," she said. "The first step to ensuring a safe holiday is to start the day with a clean stove and oven that is free of any grease or food splatters."

Grease and food splatters are known to ignite at high temperatures, potentially causing an oven fire.

DeGuevara recalled a Thanksgiving 2015 fire response to a kitchen fire. Firefighters found the oven fire was sparked from residual grease build up from previous use.

Officials also advise home holiday chefs to avoid wearing clothing with loose fitting or long sleeves that might ignite if too close to a flame as well as dangling jewelry that might get caught on kitchenware handles.

The National Fire Protection Association reports that 30 percent of all home fires start in the kitchen.

San Bernardino County Fire officials want residents to know what to do in the event of a stove top fire.

They say if a small grease fire starts in a pan, smother the flames by slowly sliding the lid over the pan. They also suggest turning the burner off and not removing the lid until it is completely cool. They also suggest if there's a fire in a microwave to keep the door closed, turn off the microwave, and disconnect the power.

Many people in the Southland like cooking their Thanksgiving bird in a deep-fryer.

"We deep fry our bird every year," 47-year-old Redlands resident Robyn Ramsey said. "My husband is extremely careful when he plops the Tom in the tank."

If there's too much oil in the pot it may spill over when the turkey is dropped in causing a flash fire, Ramsey went on to say.

"My husband is a former firefighter and responded to several fires during the holidays," she said. "Many of them started because of the amount of oil in the pots."

Officials recommend setting up the turkey fryer more than 10-feet away from the home and keep children and pets far away.

Never leave it unattended. They also say the fowl should be thawed and completely dry before gently lowering it into the hot oil.

San Bernardino County Department of Public Health say clean areas for preparing a Thanksgiving meal also are key to preventing food borne illnesses.

Always wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling the raw turkey, health officials said in a written guide.

"Fresh turkeys need no thawing and are ready to cook," the guide reads. "Frozen turkeys can be purchased weeks in advance, but can require several days to thaw before cooking."

Cook the turkey immediately after it is thawed. Use a meat thermometer by inserting it into the thickest part of the thigh, not touching any bone, and cook to a minimum internal temperature of 165 degrees.

DeGuevara also suggests having a fire extinguisher close at hand.

"I suggest having a 5-pound extinguisher nearby just to be on the safe side," she said. "And hope everyone enjoys their holiday festivities without an unexpected visit from a firefighter for an emergency incident."

<http://www.sbsun.com/lifestyle/20161119/thanksgiving-safety-tips-from-san-bernardino-county-fire-health-officials>

County Fire tackles dense compost fire

Shea Johnson, Daily Press

Posted: November 20, 2016, 2:19 PM



San Bernardino County Fire Department battle a compost fire at American Organics in Victorville on Sunday. David Pardo, Daily Press

VICTORVILLE — In piles roughly 50 feet high, at least three acres of mulch caught fire Sunday afternoon, prompting fire officials to declare a second-alarm response as the blaze threatened nearby brush.

On its Twitter account at about 12:30 p.m., **San Bernardino County Fire** announced it was battling the fire at the site of American Organics just south of the Victor Valley Wastewater Reclamation Authority in northwest Victorville. The location is in the area of Shay Road and Phantom East.

An hour later, 32 personnel were counted on site, including an inmate hand crew, Battalion Chief Dave Meddles told the Daily Press at the scene. He said that moisture in the compost can break down and essentially create spontaneous combustion.

While only smoke holes could be seen in the mulch, Meddles warned that the unseen fire was burning deeply in the dense piles, requiring crews to douse the compost and then create a perimeter to ensure the blaze did not spread to nearby vegetation.

He said that crews would remain on scene well into the afternoon with plans of ultimately shifting command to American Organics. Shortly before 2 p.m., County Fire requested more units to assist in controlling and knocking down the blaze.

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/news/20161120/county-fire-tackles-dense-compost-fire>

Drunk Driver Causes Multi Vehicle Crash on Mojave Drive

Victor Valley News

Posted: November 20, 2016



(Gabriel D. Espinoza, Victor Valley News)

VICTORVILLE, Calif:(VVNG.com)– A 19-year-old drunk driver caused a multi-vehicle traffic collision that shut down a stretch of Mojave Drive for several hours.

On Saturday, November 19th, At about 10:45 p.m. Dispatch received reports of a three-vehicle traffic collision on Mojave Drive just west of Amethyst Road in Victorville.

Upon arrival, deputies located a white Toyota Camry, a Kia, and a Nissan sedan with major damage.

According to deputy Adam Hysin, the Toyota Camry being driven by a male under the influence was traveling westbound on Mojave Drive when the vehicle jumped over the center divider.

The Camry collided with a Kia sedan that was traveling eastbound on Mojave Drive. The Camry spun around and collided into the Nissan.

The female driver of the Kia was trapped in the vehicle and required minor extrication from **San Bernardino County Fire**. Due to her injuries, she was airlifted to an out of area trauma hospital.

A female driver inside of the Nissan was transported by ground ambulance to a local hospital. The 19-year-old deuce driver was arrested and booked into jail for DUI.

The crash shut down eastbound traffic on Mojave Drive at Brucite Road for a couple of hours while deputies investigated the collision.

<http://www.vvng.com/drunk-driver-causes-multi-vehicle-crash-on-mojave-drive/>

Man Falls Hanging Christmas Lights, Airlifted To Trauma Center

Hugo C Valdez, Victor Valley News Group

Posted: November 20, 2016



(Photo courtesy of LLN)

VICTORVILLE, Calif:(VVNG.com)– A 51-year-old man was airlifted Sunday afternoon after he fell from his roof while hanging Christmas lights.

At about 1:49 p.m. dispatch received reports of a male who had fallen from a roof on the 14400 block of Via Roca in Victorville.

A yellow ladder was propped up on the roof against the exterior of the second floor as the man attempted to hang lights on the edge of the two-story home.

The patient was transported by ground ambulance to Liberty Park where the landing zone was established.

According to **San Bernardino County Fire** public information officer Peter McKernan, the male was airlifted to Loma Linda University Medical Center in critical condition.

The incident prompted San Bernardino County Fire to call on residence to be safe this Holiday season while putting up lights. This includes wearing proper footwear and ensuring equipment such as ladders are in good working condition and used on a stable ground.

In fact, during the months of November and December, there were 15,000 injuries involving holiday decorating seen in emergency department nationwide in past years, per the CPSC. These numbers tend to increase year over year.

It's unknown if the injured male had a spotter with him at the time of the incident.

The man's prognosis was not readily available Sunday afternoon.

<http://www.vvng.com/man-falls-hanging-christmas-lights-airlifted-to-trauma-center/>

Car Crashes Into Bedroom Trapping Person

Victor Valley News

Posted: November 21, 2016



A Ford Flex crashed into a home at high speeds at the intersection of Yucca Ave and Heartsease Lane in Victorville, pinning an adult male. (Gabriel D. Espinoza, Victor Valley News)

VICTORVILLE, CALIF: (VVNG.com) A person was pinned by a car after a vehicle collided into their home late Sunday night.

A call to 911 stated that a man was trapped under a car that crashed into a house at around 11:22p.m. on Sunday, November 20, on the 16500 block of Yucca Ave at the corner of Heartsease Lane.

A woman driving a Ford Flex drove into the home at a high rate of speed and crashed into a bedroom of the residence, pinning an adult male.

The **San Bernardino County Fire Department** worked for over 30 minutes to extricate the man from his bedroom.

The female driver was apprehended and placed into the back of a Sheriff's unit. Two teenage girls were in the vehicle with the woman at the time of the incident.

According to a witness, the driver lives a few houses away from where the incident occurred. A screeching of tires was heard, followed by the sound of the crash.

A gas meter and gas pipes were struck as the vehicle entered into the bedroom, prompting deputies to tape off the immediate area as they warned neighboring houses of the major gas leak.

The male victim was transported by ground ambulance to Victor Valley Global Medical Center with unknown injuries. A teenage boy was also in the house at the time of the crash, but was able to exit the home unharmed.

The female driver and the two teenage passengers did not sustain any injuries.

The crash is currently under investigation, and it's unknown if the driver is facing any charges at this time.

<http://www.vvng.com/car-crashes-into-bedroom-trapping-person/>