



NEWS



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Wind funnels of Cajon Pass, Waterman Canyon have sparked wild fires for over 100 years

Harvey Kahn, Inland Empire Community News

Posted: August 24, 2016



Photo Courtesy Matt Artz/Esri 2003 Old Fire joined with two fires to span from Running Springs to Glendora. Shown here burning above East Highlands Ranch.



1980 Panarama fire seen here burning above Del Rosa. Photo Courtesy/City of San Bernardino

The Waterman Canyon Fire of 1911 was the first in recorded history to put San Bernardino residents on notice that Mother Nature rules. It burned for two weeks covering an area from below Big Bear and Crestline to Cucamonga Canyon almost to Hesperia. It created enough panic that San Bernardino's Mayor J.S. Bright put out a distress call for help from the Department of Defense.

The story of the 1911 fire was picked up by the Associated Press wire service, with newspapers as far as the Tampa Bay Tribune running banner headlines calling the Waterman Canyon Fire the largest in the history of the San Bernadino Mountain Range. However, old timers from San Bernardino swore there was a fire in 1888 that burned from Big Bear to Orange County into Los Angeles County. Another in 1889 allegedly came down the Twin Creek Stream in Highland and burnt its way past Baseline Ave. to threaten the City of San Bernardino. Fields of fire resistant sunflowers were said to have saved the city.

In 1911, every available male in the greater San Bernardino area was called to fight the Waterman Canyon Fire, wrote the San Bernardino Evening Telegram. There were no water dropping aircraft, buffet tables, or overtime. Fire fighters used shovels, brush hooks and faced the fire head-on. All city and county

administrators picked up shovels including Assistant District Attorney R.B. Goodcell and County Humane officer J.J. Arbias. The Edison Company sent a 50-man crew to help protect its newly installed power line and transmitter in Devil's Canyon. Personnel were shuttled into fire zones by motorcycle.

Riverside Daily Press reported that the 1911 fire erased thousands of years worth of nature in the twinkle of an eye. It wrote that both sides of the proud San Bernardino Mountains "were transformed into a waste heap of rock and clay."

The Press wrote that the Waterman Canyon Fire took two weeks to extinguish due to the lack of experience and organization of U.S. Park Rangers who were the lead agency in the fire fight. This, despite not having firefighting in their job description. One week into the fire, the Associated Press reported that 100 fire fighters became sick, disabled, with shoes burned from their feet. They were stranded in San Bernardino wearing clothes reduced to rags. Back then, the government made no allowance for caring for injured fire fighters.

Waterman Canyon and the Cajon Pass have served as wind funnels to propel many of the most destructive fires in San Bernardino history. Early aviators were warned to avoid the Cajon pass at any cost due to unpredictable wind pockets capable of sucking light craft up and down into death spins.

The current Blue Cut Fire is just one example of how treacherous Cajon Pass can be and those winds don't compare to those during the October Santa Ana wind season. But at over 100 homes incinerated, the Blue Cut Fire numbers ranks down that list. In 1980, Waterman Canyon powered the Panorama Fire that burned down 280 homes in the city's northend and damaged another 100 structures.

In the arson started Old Fire that started on Oct. 25, 2003, it was Waterman Canyon that again fanned that record setting blaze. After merging with two other fires it burnt down 993 homes, causing \$1.3 billion in damage, according to a report by the U.S. Forest Service. It covered 91,000 acres from Lake Arrowhead, down Del Rosa to 30th St., whipping through Wildwood Park and the 40th Street wash paralleling Valencia Ave. It came close to the San Manuel Casino and burnt part of Cal State San Bernardino.

The next night it connected with the Grand Prix Fire between Devore and Fontana and ravaged new homes near Rancho Cucamonga. It covered a distance of about 70 miles spanning Running Springs to Glendora. Eight days later, snow and rain finally extinguished the Old Fire.

<http://iecn.com/wind-funnels-cajon-pass-waterman-canyon-sparked-wild-fires-100-years/>

East West Bank Donates \$50,000 to Support Blue Cut Fire Recovery

Victor Valley News

Posted: August 25, 2016



Front row: David North (third from left), FVP-Regional Manager at Desert Community Bank; Robin McCarthy (fourth from left), President of Fire Family Foundation; Mike McClintock (third from right), President of San Bernardino County Firefighters Association; Tina Hwang (second from right), SVP-Consumer Bank Regional Director at East West Bank. Second row: Jim Johnstone (far left), Deputy Chief of San Bernardino County Fire Department; Robert Lovingood (second from left), 1st District Supervisor of San Bernardino County.

Pasadena, California – August 25, 2016 – East West Bank announced that it has donated \$50,000 to **San Bernardino County Firefighters Association** to support relief efforts for the Blue Cut fire in the county.

A check presenting ceremony took place on Wednesday, August 24, 2016, at the Phelan branch of Desert Community Bank, a division of East West Bank. Tina Hwang, SVP, Consumer Bank Regional Director at East West Bank, and David North, FVP, Regional Manager at Desert Community Bank, handed the check to Mike McClintock, President, San Bernardino County Firefighters Association.

“The five-year drought has made every brush fire in California potentially destructive to our communities,” said Emily Wang, SVP, Director of Marketing and Community Development at East West Bank. “As members of San Bernardino County, we are here with our community during difficult times. Therefore, upon learning the wide-spreading fire, we immediately contributed to the relief effort to help minimize the damage. We are grateful to the firefighters who have been on the frontline risking their lives to protect the community.”

“I cannot thank Desert Community Bank, and its parent company East West Bank enough for its generous donation to San Bernardino County Firefighters Association. San Bernardino County firefighters serve the Tri-Communities and many other communities with pride, and are committed to providing premiere fire services,” said McClintock.

Jim Johnstone, Deputy Chief, San Bernardino County Fire Department; Robert Lovingood, First District Supervisor of San Bernardino County; Robin Mc Carthy, President of Fire Family Foundation, organization representatives and local officials also attended the ceremony.

A portion of the donation will also be allocated to Fire Family Foundation to support families of firefighters, fire victims, fire departments and charities.

For impacted customers, East West Bank will be waiving certain service fees and late fees on payments for mortgage, home equity lines of credit, or other loan products through September, 2016. Desert Community Bank operates a total of eight branches in the High Desert area.

About San Bernardino County Firefighters Association

SBCoFFA was born in the 1930s as the Fontana Firefighters Association, which transitioned over the years into the Fontana Fire Protection District, was merged into the Central Valley Fire District and then finally became the San Bernardino County Fire Department. The primary mission of SBCoFFA has always been to provide support to its members in times of need, illness and injury. SBCoFFA is also a proud supporter of many local charities, Fire Explorer programs, and betterment of the fire service as a whole.

About East West Bank

East West Bancorp, Inc. is a publicly owned company with total assets of \$33.0 billion and is traded on the Nasdaq Global Select Market under the symbol “EWBC.” The Company’s wholly owned subsidiary, East West Bank, is one of the largest independent banks headquartered in California. East West is a premier bank focused exclusively on the United States and Greater China markets and operates over 130 locations worldwide, including in the United States markets of California, Georgia, Massachusetts, Nevada, New York, Texas and Washington. In Greater China, East West’s presence includes full service branches in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Shantou and Shenzhen, and representative offices in Beijing, Chongqing, Guangzhou, Taipei and Xiamen. For more information on East West, visit the Company’s website at www.eastwestbank.com.

<http://www.vvng.com/east-west-bank-donates-50000-to-support-blue-cut-fire-recovery/>

Fire, county officials offer advice amid ash, debris cleanup

Jose Quintero, Victor Valley Daily Press

Posted: August 25, 2016, 11:25 AM



A wooden beam from a home which was destroyed in the Bluecut Fire. San Bernardino County officials are warning residents to be cautious when cleaning up ash and debris. James Quigg, Daily Press

CAJON PASS — After news broke Tuesday stating the Bluecut Fire, which burned more than 36,000 acres over in less than a week, was fully contained, fire and county officials warn residents to take precautions when cleaning up ash and debris from the blaze.

San Bernardino National Forest spokeswoman Lynn Sieliet said residents in areas not directly affected by the fire should not worry about ash posing an immediate threat. Despite ash deposited from wildfires being nontoxic to the environment, Sieliet still recommends any residents who live in an area where there may have been falling ash or even traces of smoke should consider changing their air conditioning filters as soon as possible.

Those residents closer to the fire's perimeter who may have been evacuated for an extended period likely returned home and found significant ash on their properties, and maybe even inside their homes, that resembled a residue, Sieliet said. But water and soap will do the job to clean the residue, she said.

The homes that could see any posed threats are homes that were partially or fully destroyed. Ash and debris inside burned structures can contain more toxic substances than wildfire ash because of possible synthetic materials, she said.

"It all depends on what kind of chemicals were inside the homes," she said. "A factor is the year the home was built in because of insulation, possible asbestos. Paint, oil, gasoline in a garage could also pose a threat.

"There are some services that are being provided as far as removal of some of the debris and things that were left on the lot. But as far as personal belongings or materials that were left from the home, I believe that's something that has to be handled through insurance."

Sieliet said there are currently suppression and repair crews in place that are assessing all areas burned by the fire. The team will formulate a plan to tackle specific areas along the fire perimeter, especially in areas that are more hazardous.

"For example, if there is a bulldozer containment line that appears to be a dirt road and it leads you to nowhere, that could pose a significant threat to public safety and that would have to (be handled) first rather

than something that was just ash along the road,” she said. “But they will get to all those areas. Sometimes suppression repair could take weeks, it just all depends on various circumstances.”

If you find yourself cleaning any debris or ash from the fire, San Bernardino County officials warn that ash contains small amounts of hazardous chemicals that may cause various health risks.

San Bernardino County Health Officer Dr. Maxwell Ohikhuare warns that ash could be irritating to sensitive skin. Inhaled ash can cause coughing and irritate your nose, throat and lungs. Those who have asthma could see asthmatic attacks due to exposure to airborne ash.

County officials offer these bits of advice in the wake of the Bluecut Fire.

— Do not allow children to play in the ash. Wash ash off toys before children play with them. Clean ash off house pets.

— Wear gloves, long sleeved shirts and long pants and avoid skin contact.

— If you do get ash on your skin, wash it off as soon as possible. Some wet ash can cause chemical burns.

— If you have a vegetable garden or fruit trees, wash the fruits or vegetables before eating them.

— Avoid getting ash into the air as much as possible. Do not use leaf blowers or take other actions that will put ash into the air.

— Shop vacuums and other common vacuum cleaners do not filter out small particles. They blow particles out the exhaust into the air where they can be inhaled. The use of shop vacuums and other non-HEPA filter vacuums is not recommended.

— Well-fitting dust masks may provide some protection during cleanup. A mask rated N-95 or P-100 that forms a seal on you face will be more effective in blocking particles than simple surgical or dust masks. In general, many ash particles are larger than those found in smoke. Thus, wearing a dust mask can significantly reduce, but not completely eliminate, the amount of particles inhaled.

— Anyone with heart or lung disease should consult a physician before using a mask during post-fire cleanup.

— Gentle sweeping of indoor and outdoor hard surfaces followed by wet mopping is the best procedure in most cases.

— Avoid washing ash into storm drains as much as possible.

— Use as little water as possible to wet down ash.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/article/20160825/NEWS/160829811/0/SEARCH>

This Desert Life: Reflections on a community united

Matthew Cabe, Victor Valley Daily Press

Posted: August 25, 2016, 5:48 PM

A friend of mine visited me last weekend. On Sunday morning, we ate at the Mile High Cafe and had one of those good chats only hot coffee and eggs seem to allow.

He's from Ridgecrest originally, but works as a camera operator in L.A. He was on set at the Four Aces Movie Ranch in Palmdale when the Bluecut Fire broke out last Tuesday, and we exchanged text messages after he noticed the rising smoke.

We talked more about the fire while we ate. About the lost homes, the people who did and didn't evacuate. At one point, Summit Inn regular Jerry Leighton walked over to discuss the diner's demise. We heard mourning in Jerry's voice.

I didn't mention it to my friend, but after Jerry returned to his table, I eavesdropped on numerous conversations that focused on the fire. Maybe my friend eavesdropped, too.

"This feels like a really interesting time to be here," he said suddenly. "The whole community seems like it's come together."

You don't know the half of it, I thought. But, as it turns out, neither did I.

All this week, though, I've learned the limitlessness of human kindness. I've witnessed the lengths to which people will go to help those in need. And as a result, I've written — almost exclusively — about truly compassionate people both in and out of the High Desert.

Jessica Schwartz, Andrew Badger and his brother Steven were among the first. The trio drove a U-Haul up from Chino Hills, where that community had spent the last week gathering much-needed donations for Bluecut victims. They unloaded it at the Apple Valley Municipal Animal Shelter, Mea Ola's Place in Phelan, and — I believe — one other location.

After meeting them, I saw pictures on Mea Ola's Place's Facebook page of Andrew and Steven petting displaced animals. Not only did they take time out of their lives to help strangers, they showed affection to those strangers' pets.

I also met Dave Gross this week; he coordinated the relief effort at the High Desert Event Center. Almost 800 animals were taken in under his guidance between Pilot and Bluecut evacuations.

He and his team worked tirelessly, and, in the end, found themselves caring for what Dave described as "the Noah's Ark of the High Desert."

In Dave I saw a man both proud of his community's response and changed by his experience. I wrote my article on him with that observation in mind. His wife, Kirsten, and daughter, Katelin, helped coordinate the relief effort via Facebook.

Their selflessness mustn't go unnoticed.

Then there's Ann and the volunteers at Mea Ola's Place. When I called her the other day and said I wanted to hear her story, she nearly started to cry.

“There’s so many emotions,” she said. “I think because there was so much fear initially when we were out in the middle of it grabbing animals and fielding calls. And asking for so much help.”

Ann and her volunteers took in more than 200 displaced animals, including a raven that was badly burned in the Pilot Fire and flew — as if it knew where to go — to Ann’s 10-acre horse rescue.

Fire victims continue to go to Mea Ola’s Place for help; Ann’s team continues to provide.

And these are just the people I’ve met. There are countless others who’ve given time, money, clothing, toys, shelter and food to those affected.

I, for one, am overwhelmed by it all. And I’m certain such a monumental outpouring of support and solace has moved us closer to one another. Made us more aware and appreciative of our neighbors and our strangers.

There’s a line David Foster Wallace wrote in “Infinite Jest” I’ve been repeating to myself as I try to process my feelings. I’d like to share it with you:

“That there might not be angels, but there are people who might as well be angels.”

So, to all the "might as well be angels" out there, thank you.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/article/20160825/NEWS/160829783/0/SEARCH>

Thank you!

Victor Valley Daily Press, Letters to the Editor, Lesly McConnell

Posted: August 26, 2016

We just want to say thank you from the depth of our hearts!

Last week, Tuesday, Aug. 16th at about 6 p.m., I was coming home from Barstow where I teach. It was just a few hours before the Bluecut Fire had destroyed the Summit Inn. I knew that the interstate was closed up to Rancho Road, but I wasn’t sure of the devastation until I pulled off at Main Street and took the back road to Rancho Road. There were cars and semis parked on both sides of Rancho, black smoke plummeting in the air. It looked quite apocalyptic.

I tried to turn on to Mariposa Road toward Oak Hills Road, but there were cones blocking the entrance. My heart was racing, the devastation made it so real. You see my father-in-law is homeless/schizophrenic and resides in the desert east of Oak Hills Road, right by the Summit Inn. I pulled over and walked to the man blocking the roadway and told him my story. I was almost in tears as I could see the flames and black smoke in the background. He let me through and told me that there wasn’t any way I was going to get all the way out there, but I could go as far as the road block. As I drove out there, I could see flames and black smoke behind the lights of the road block.

There were a lot of vehicles pulled to the side of Mariposa Road, watching and frightened of their own homes burning to the ground. When I finally made it to the road block, I got out of my car. In a daze, I walked up to the officer and explained my situation and that I needed to get out there. He said that he couldn’t allow that because that part of the desert was currently on fire. I told him that I wasn’t sure what to do. My father-in-law was schizophrenic and may not realize that the desert was on fire. He said he would pass the message, and assured me that there were people assessing the area. He asked me his name and the whereabouts of his

location. I told him and then turned around and walked away. I felt helpless and prayed that he would get out of there. I did as much as I was allowed to do.

Luckily that evening, we got a knock on the door, and a rough looking Bill Windham had made it out. He told a story of being woken up by the sound of a tractor and a lot of smoke. The guy on the tractor had approached him and told him the desert was on fire and he had to leave. He drove him out on the tractor to the main road and told him he would try his hardest to save his home.

On Saturday morning, my sweetheart and I drove through the desert to see if his dad's homestead had made it. What we saw as we drove out there was pure devastation. The desert was blackened and desolate. We continued to look for his home, but thought the worst, after all everything was burnt. Then we saw it. The man on the tractor kept his promise. Everything around Bill's makeshift home was burnt, but his home and his belongings were saved. The compassion of the men who saved a homeless man's home and belongings brought a smile to Scott and my faces. This wasn't a home that contained expensive cars, furniture, electronics, and photos of children. This was a home that sheltered a homeless man. Humanity at its finest.

Now I don't know if my going down there had anything to do with Bill being found or if God guided that tractor driver to his area. But I do know not only was a life saved, but so were his belongings. So thank you so much to ALL of you who risk your lives to fight devastating fires and to save lives. You ARE a godsend!

Lesley McConnell
Hesperia

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20160825/letters-to-editor-8262016>

Special Report: Housing in San Bernardino

Slumlords in San Bernardino? The first of a three part series

Anthony Victoria, Inland Empire Community News

Posted: August 24, 2016



A writ of possession (eviction notice) lay on top of the kitchen counter inside apartment 44 of a multi housing complex located at 2995 Mountain Avenue in San Bernardino. Left behind were empty bottles of liquor, several packages of top-ramen soups, and graffiti with the statement, “YB Nation” scrawled on the walls throughout.

Weeks ago on June 6, the apartment’s occupant Branden Ross was evicted, according to San Bernardino County court documents. He’s among several dozen residents who have been removed by property management company MR Investments in the past year and a half.

“We have about nine people at our complex on Citrus Street that are on eviction status,” said Maria Nambo, one of the company’s supervisors. “We tried to work with these people for months, but they insist on causing problems.”

Jesse Ceballos, 23, and Krystah Laguardia, 21, are among the nine facing removal from the Cedarwood Apartments on 1414 Citrus Street. They both believe they were misled and lied to by MR Investments, who promised to deal with their living concerns.

“We’re trying to live as comfortable as possible, but we can’t even do that here,” Laguardia exclaimed. “We’ve been promised air conditioning and we’ve been told our issues with mice, cockroaches, and water leaks would be resolved. Nothing has been done.”

Many complexes rife with crime, blight

According to San Bernardino Police spokesperson Lt. Rich Lawhead, there are a little over 1,000 multi-housing complexes in the city.

In order to better deal with both tenants and landlords, Lawhead said the Code Enforcement department, with the help of the Police department’s crime analysis division, have identified the top 100 buildings that provide them with the most crime and code enforcement problems.

The Cedarwood Apartments complex is on the list—along with a neighboring property at 2995 Mountain Avenue and other small complexes at 150 E. King Street, 2669 W. 5th Street, and the River Glen Apartments, located at 1277 E. Lynwood Drive.

According to the city's crime mapping data, approximately 120 criminal incidents took place 1000 feet or less from both the Cedarwood and River Glen Apartments from March 1 through August 20 of this year.

Data also demonstrates that 17 incidents took place within 500 feet of the duplex on 5th Street, and 34 incidents occurred 1,000 feet from the complex on King Street in the same time frame. Incidents of assault, drug violations, theft, robbery, and vandalism were listed for all four complexes.

"There are a high number of problems coming out of those complexes," said Lawhead.

He explained that Code Enforcement is inundated with cases dealing with sub-standard conditions. Issues confronted by code enforcement officers include vermin (mice, rats, cockroaches, bed bugs, termites), roof leaks, molded wood, and improper maintenance.

Lawhead is aware landlords uphold a "minimum standard" at their complexes—meaning they do the very minimum to meet Code Enforcement guidelines. He believes more can be done to encourage property owners to improve living environments for residents.

"The only thing I can hold them to is a guideline," Lawhead said. "Not one entity could solve this issue. It becomes an effort with us all working together."

A River Glen tenant, who went by the name of Tonie, said living conditions were fair. Nonetheless, she suggested to stay away from the area.

"This area is kind of ghetto if you ask me," she said. "I would try the north end by Kendall or something. It's much nicer, with less problems."

What is crime-free housing?

About 900 of multi-housing complexes are designated as crime-free buildings. However, not all of them are certified explained Community Policing Specialist Matthew Gillespie.

"In order for a complex to be designated as a crime free zone, it must meet specific requirements to receive certification," said Gillespie, who oversees the city's Crime Free Multi-housing Program. "We give property owners tools to help them deter crime."

The City Council adopted an ordinance in 2011 to prioritize the stability of neighborhoods and reduce crime and blight in rental properties. Under the citywide ordinance, managers and owners of properties of four or more units are mandated to undergo training to understand crime prevention and learn of safety issues.

Gillespie, with the help of law enforcement officers, attorneys, and **San Bernardino County Fire** officials, helps landlords learn of fire prevention, health and safety issues, tenant screening, and the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) standards.

CPTED standards mandate landlords to upkeep their property by following a lengthy checklist. Inspection items include ground and exterior walkways, lighting, swimming pools, spas, recreational facilities, building infrastructure, and signage.

After undergoing training, landlords are required to issue a Crime-Free Lease Addendum for all new tenants—informing them of criminal activities (drug, gang, and prostitution activity) will not be tolerated. Gillespie said any tenant who violates the addendum will be subject to eviction.

According to the city’s website, 62 complexes are considered crime free properties—meaning they undergo certification annually, maintain CPTED standards, and actively engages with tenants through community events.

Juan Orozco, property owner of the Parkdale Apartments, said the Crime Free Multi-housing Program is a straightforward and self-explanatory process.

“I think it’s nice because if we ever have problems with a tenant, [Code Enforcement] shows up,” explained Orozco. “It’s for our protection.”

Lawhead was unable to pinpoint how many calls for service are made by certified properties, but did point out that incidents do occur at these complexes. “Just because they are certified, it doesn’t mean there aren’t issues,” he said. “It just helps us deal with it better. The program has helped reduce calls.”

Property owners who aren’t certified are not restricted from utilizing their own addendums for tenants. However, Lawhead explained they may not have the same enforcement privileges or capabilities as certified properties. He also said Code Enforcement officers are still required to address concerns at uncertified locations.

“The whole idea is to educate managers that don’t understand all the obligations, tools, avenues, that there is something out there.”

Landlord or slumlord?

MR Investments, a limited liability company (LLC) out of North Hollywood, owns four of the six properties that sit on a square block surrounding Lynwood Drive and Loma Avenue in the northern part of the city.

Rami Grinwald, who supervises Nambo, mentioned at the outset, is among the company’s management partners. Nambo said the company invested in the properties because they wanted to “branch out to the Inland Empire.”

“[Rami] doesn’t see this as an investment,” Nambo said. “We’re investing about \$500,000 in remodeling and refurbishing units. He simply wants tenants to be happy.”

However, Grinwald has been labeled as a “slumlord” in the past for his misdealings with various properties in Los Angeles County. The *Los Angeles Times* reported back on July 30, 1995 that Grinwald was charged with 10 violations of fire, health, building and safety codes inside a two story, 37-room hotel complex in Westlake.

Violations included missing heaters, damaged doors, damaged walls and ceilings, defective and missing light fixtures and smoke detectors, faulty plumbing, cockroach and rodent infestation and accumulated trash on the premises. Two years prior in 1993, Grinwald was also held responsible for 10 code violations inside a 60-unit Highland Park apartment complex.

Repeated attempts to reach Grinwald went unanswered.

Lawhead said Grinwald and his partners have so far cooperated with the Code Enforcement department.

“The new owners are working with us to stay on top of things,” he said. “They come to our monthly meetings to find out what’s going on.”

<http://iecn.com/special-report-housing-san-bernardino/>