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Bluecut Fire relief fund launched with \$100K donation

Victor Valley Daily Press

Posted: August 19, 2016, 10:54 AM

The Inland Empire United Way announced Thursday that it has established a Fire Relief Fund in collaboration with other community and nonprofit partners for the collection of financial donations to help residents impacted by the Bluecut Fire.

The Community Foundation, which serves San Bernardino and Riverside counties, has committed \$100,000 to the fund and encourages others to join in their concern for those whose lives have been affected by 37,000-plus-acre blaze, according to a press release.

“We are deeply concerned about the High Desert community and the devastation we are witnessing in the wake of this horrific fire,” said Dr. Jonathan Lorenzo Yorba, president and CEO of The Community Foundation.

“By providing this grant, we hope to inspire more giving to the Fire Relief Fund at the Inland Empire United Way, and to support the recovery efforts of the many nonprofit organizations that are providing critical services to fire victims in our region.”

Contributions will be used to address the short- and long-term needs of those affected by the Blue Cut Fire, according to the United Way, and 100 percent of all contributions will be directed to recovery efforts for those affected by the Blue Cut Fire.

County of San Bernardino 1st District Supervisor Robert Lovingood offered his support, saying “The Blue Cut fire has devastated many families. Just as the community rallied during the peak of the fire, now it is even more important for all of us to come together to support those who have lost homes, pets, vehicles and all of their worldly possessions. I hope you will find it in your heart to give generously to this Blue Cut Fire Relief Fund. One-hundred percent of the proceeds will go to help the victims rebuild their lives.”

Donations can be made online at www.IEUW.org/help, by texting RELIEF to 40403 or by check made payable to Inland Empire United Way and sent to IEUW Fire Fund, 9644 Hermosa Avenue, Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/article/20160819/NEWS/160819728/0/SEARCH>

‘God brought us here’: Blue Cut fire evacuees facing terminal cancer return home

Beau Yarbrough, The Sun

Posted: August 21, 2016, 5:02 PM



Blue Cut fire evacuee Roberta Clark, 58, thanks God for her safe return to her Lytle Creek home on Sunday. Clark's wife, who has terminal cancer, is in hospice care. David Bauman/Staff Photographer

LYTLE CREEK >> Roberta Clark unpacked the silver hatchback by herself.

Her wife, a stick-thin and exhausted Debbie Permenter, remained in the car, reclining in the front passenger seat. End-stage carcinoma that has spread to her lungs has sapped Permenter's strength.

"It's so heartbreaking," Clark, 50, said of the devastation brought to her mountain community by the Blue Cut fire. She and Permenter were among the evacuees from Lytle Creek allowed to return home Sunday.

"We were driving so slowly, looking around, crying, thanking God."

Even if they'd wanted to stay when the fire erupted Tuesday, Permenter's hospice nurse and her pharmacy deliveries wouldn't have been allowed around the barricades.

"You try and make sure you won't forget things," Clark said, pulling plastic grocery bags of food from the back seat. "But you still do. I forgot my insulin."

She worried that the insulin sitting in the refrigerator would no longer be good; the house lost power while the couple was spending the week in a Motel 6.

"We were in the hotel, watching (the firefighters) in the fire, hoping they would get it," Clark said.

When they saw firefighters fighting the blaze at Mountain Lakes Resort, less than two miles from their home, their hearts froze.

"We saw them at the (valley's) mouth and we knew it was coming into the neighborhood. We were praying," Clark said.

"I did worry, because there's oxygen bottles here," she said. "I thought they were going to explode."

The couple, together 21 years, got married in April. They have lived in Lytle Creek since 2011, in a tiny rental house on a shady one-lane street.

“It’s our first fire,” Permenter, 58, said.

From the front yard, the visible San Gabriel Mountains were still green and lush, framed by the trees on their street. But only a few blocks away, the eastern slope of the mountains bordering this tiny community of only about 700 people, was bare.

The mountainside was scorched black and gray. The burn areas were outlined with stripes of magenta fire retardant, sprayed by airborne firefighters in an attempt to keep the flames from spreading.

They previously lived in El Monte.

“It’s nice there in the summer,” Permenter said. “It’s almost got its own weather system.”

“Kind of like here,” Clark said, going around the car to half-carry, half-walk Permenter inside.

As Clark talked, a bicycle bell rang, and a white-haired man slowly bicycled up the street, nodding as he passed, a burbling stream to his left.

“Hello, neighbor,” she called. “Did you ever go?”

“No,” the bicyclist replied, pedaling out of sight.

Clark laughed. The family dog, a middle-aged brown and white terrier-Chihuahua mix named Petey, bounced around her feet, delighted to be home.

Their first wildfire behind them, and a short road together remaining before them, they said they have no regrets about moving to Lytle Creek, down the street from Permenter’s sister.

“I think God brought us up here for her to be with her family at the end of her life,” Clark said.

<http://www.sbsun.com/general-news/20160821/god-brought-us-here-blue-cut-fire-evacuees-facing-terminal-cancer-return-home>

Bluecut Fire fully contained, operational costs estimated at \$12.3 million so far

Jose Quintero and Shea Johnson, Victor Valley Daily Press

Posted: August 23, 2016, 7:58 AM



Southern California Edison crews and subcontractors replace fire-damaged power and utility poles along Cleghorn Road and Cajon Boulevard on Tuesday. Fire officials declared the Bluecut Fire 100 percent contained on Tuesday. James Quigg, Daily Press

CAJON PASS — After announcing the Bluecut Fire was fully contained Tuesday morning, fire officials say the blaze has cost \$12.3 million so far, which is half the total operational cost of the 8,110-acre Pilot Fire.

According to San Bernardino National Forest spokeswoman Lynn Sieliet, the Pilot Fire, which was announced fully contained just hours before the Bluecut Fire erupted in the Cajon Pass on Aug. 16, had an operational cost of \$25 million.

Sieliet said operational costs include firefighters, aircraft, bulldozers and other equipment used to combat a fire. However, operational costs do not include fire suppression rehab costs, she said.

Sieliet said the Bluecut Fire's operational cost is expected to rise, but she could not estimate if the total would surpass the Pilot Fire's total.

Sieliet told the Daily Press of the operational costs just after **San Bernardino County Fire Chief Mark Hartwig** told the County Board of Supervisors that the 36,000-plus-acre blaze that started in the Cajon Pass would cost County Fire an estimated \$2 million.

A FEMA grant was expected to pay 75 percent of that cost, while state funding would cover 75 percent of the remaining 25 percent, Hartwig said.

The full containment announcement comes exactly a week after full containment was achieved on the Pilot Fire, which burned over 8,000 acres in the San Bernardino Mountains and Summit Valley for over a week.

The 36,000-acre-plus Bluecut blaze was a "quick, fast-moving front that had a lot of fuel and really was the result of many years of drought in the county," Hartwig said.

Incident Command also revised the total acreage for the Bluecut Fire to 36,274 acres, down from 37,020, which had been reported by fire officials for over three days.

"We think we're pretty steady at 36,000 acres," said Hartwig, who added that the revision was a result of better mapping.

According to the Incident Command website, the ongoing plans for the fire are continual mop up and securing and reinforcing containment lines, along with "demobilization of excess resources to the incident."

The Incident Command website showed Tuesday morning that 1,223 firefighters still remain assigned to the fire.

San Bernardino Forest Service spokeswoman Lauren Durocher told the Daily Press on Monday that fire crews were focusing on the lone open line in the fire in the western portion of the perimeter at Gobblers Knob near Lytle Creek. Durocher said the area was "rather steep."

The Bluecut Fire, which is believed to have destroyed 110 homes, 216 outbuildings and over 200 vehicles, began as a second-alarm vegetation fire on Aug. 16 in the Cajon Pass, near Cajon Boulevard about a quarter-mile west of I-15. The blaze raged through the Cajon Creek and spread to 6,500 acres in less than four hours and 18,000 acres by the end of the day. The fire forced authorities to evacuate over 34,500 homes and 82,000 residents as Gov. Jerry Brown issued a state of emergency.

Sheriff John McMahon told Supervisors it appeared that 50 percent of residents under mandatory orders ultimately evacuated their homes.

"Some neighborhoods didn't truly believe they were in that much danger," he said.

McMahon also explained how integral it had been to return evacuees home as soon as it was safe to do so. He and others lauded the multi-agency partnership on display over the last week.

But the fire also appeared to bring out the worst in some. As sheriff's deputies secured neighborhoods and enhanced patrols, they also arrested "several" looters, McMahon said.

"That's a sad day when we evacuate people and they're in that kind of pain ...," he said, "and criminals are stealing their property while they're gone."

The cause of the fire remains under investigation and fire investigators are asking for the public's assistance in determining the cause. Fire officials told the Daily Press that investigators did not have any leads on how the fire may have started. Photos or videos that might assist investigators are especially welcome. If you have any information you can call 1-800-47-ARSON. Those wishing to remain anonymous may call the WeTip hotline at 800-782-7436 or visit www.wetip.com.

People affected by the fire who still require services can call 877-410-8829, county officials said.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20160823/bluecut-fire-fully-contained-operational-costs-estimated-at-123-million-so-far>

Lending a hand: Area churches band together to help residents affected by Bluecut Fire

Monica Solano, Victor Valley Daily Press

Posted: August 23, 2016, 4:59 PM



Calvary Chapel of Phelan, in partnership with other churches, is offering donated clothes to people affected by the Bluecut Fire. David Pardo, Daily Press

PHELAN — With the Bluecut Fire now fully contained, local churches are joining together to meet the needs of families and residents impacted by the blaze.

For the next two weeks, New Life Church of the Nazarene, Calvary Chapel of Phelan, Hillside Community Church and High Desert Church are partnering together and will be handing out food, clothing and other necessities to those affected by the 36,000-acre-plus fire, with each church in charge of handing out specific items to residents.

“This last weekend we picked up over 8,000 pounds of food donated by Feeding America and this week will be picking up another shipment of food,” said New Life Church Pastor Jeff Mosley. “These donations are based off each family’s needs determined by the number of family members. There’s no financial qualification, people can just show up and sign in so that way we can keep track of how much good we’re giving out.”

As New Life Church volunteers and members handed out bags filled with non-perishable groceries, as well as medical and hygiene supplies, others made the effort to go out and deliver food to those who suffer from disabilities or do not have access to transportation.

“We also have team going out today to the burned homes along Highway 138 and making contact with any resident who may be there and to help them with whatever they may need,” Mosley said.

Further down the street from New Life Church of the Nazarene, Calvary Chapel and Hillside Community members were assisting those in need of clothing. The churches designated two rooms full of clothing to provided families with attire of all ages.

“Most of the churches got together Sunday afternoon to talk and see what was possible and what we thought was the best way to meet the imminent the need of the community and for now food and clothing were the best options,” said Calvary Chapel Pastor Daniel Flores. “We’ve gotten so much clothing that we had to turn people away and have asked to hold off until next week for now because there’s no room to hold it all.”

Aj Juarez, 69, of Phelan, who stopped by with his wife to pick up some new clothes, said seeing all of the churches come together and lend a hand to those in need after the fast-spreading fire has been amazing.

“They way these churches are uniting together has been a huge blessing here for our community,” Juarez said. “Never in my years have I seen a community of churches such as them come together for the neighborhood to help those in need.”

Pilar Brown, a board member for New Life Church, said the churches have collectively helped over 500 residents in the Tri-Community area.

“This ministry is something we already do here at the church, but with the fire having occurred it kind of pushed us all to up our game and help those around us,” Brown said. “We’re just happy to help and hope those who come know we’re here for them.”

Food and clothing distributions will continue throughout the week for those in need of resources or who would like to donate.

Food distributions will be scheduled daily from 2 to 4 p.m. at New Life Church of the Nazarene in Phelan. Clothing distribution is scheduled from 2 to 4 p.m. at Calvary Chapel in Phelan until Friday, and from noon to 4 p.m. on Saturday.

For more information or to make a donation, contact any of the following churches: Hillside Community Church, 3221 Hwy 2 in Wrightwood, at 760-524-7418; Calvary Chapel of Phelan, 4501 Nielson Road, at 760-868-5102; New Life Church of the Nazarene, 4232 Phelan Road, at 760-868-5646; High Desert Church, 14545 Hook Blvd. in Victorville, at 760-245-2415.

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/article/20160823/NEWS/160829892/0/SEARCH>

Residents returning after Blue Cut fire try to return to normal life

Beatriz Valenzuela, San Bernardino Sun

Posted: August 23, 2016, 5:38 PM



Julie Shin, 51, on Tuesday walks through the damage to her families business, Bethal Farms, caused by the Blue Cut fire. Will Lester — Staff Photographer

WEST CAJON VALLEY >> Hundreds of evacuees returned to the West Cajon Valley to find nothing but ashes, while others returned to find their homes had been spared by the massive Blue Cut fire only to learn their battles to return to normalcy have just begun.

“Right now we have no power and no water so we cannot stay here,” said Julie Shin, whose family owns Bethel Farms off Highway 138 west of the 15 Freeway. “We cannot stay here.”

She and her parents fled the family jujube and honey farm Aug. 16, the day the enormous wildfire tore through the Cajon Pass devouring 36,274 acres — nearly 57 square miles — by Tuesday morning.

One week after it ignited west of the 15 Freeway in the Cajon Pass, the Blue Cut fire is completely contained.

The fire peaked just above 37,000 acres, but by Tuesday, it was downsized to 36,274 acres.

Tuesday, Shin stood in the rubble that once was her bedroom, not sure of where to begin digging for keepsakes, important documents and any artifact of her life from only a week ago.

“All my clothes are gone,” she said.

She, her older brother John Jeong of Phelan, their parents and a friend sifted through the remains of the farm’s workers’ living quarters and several storage buildings.

Her father, Byung Jeong, fished out a set of keys to the main house and to the burned out Mercedes the family just purchased a few months ago.

Several of the jujube trees, which bear fruits similar to dates, survived the intense flames but Jeong worries they lost too much of the crop to salvage this year’s harvest.

“I don’t know if we’ll be able to fill orders this year,” he said. “I really don’t think so. I don’t even know when they can live here again.”

For the past few days, the siblings have been in contact with insurance agents, utility companies and customers trying to get their home and more importantly, they say, their business back on track.

“This is how they make money,” said Shin of her parents. “They’ve been here since (the) Northridge earthquake.”

Bittersweet Return

Once Scott Sayle knew his home had been saved, he began making calls to his insurance carrier to help cover the repairs that must be made to his property.

Sayle’s main home, built by his grandfather in 1917, still is standing, but several other buildings and necessary infrastructure including his water well, were damaged or destroyed by the blaze.

“I have no power right now and the controls to our well were destroyed so I have no water either,” said Sayle. “I’ve been dealing with the insurance company and talking to the well drillers trying to figure out when everything will be back to normal,” he said.

Southern California Edison crews with help from Aggreko, a commercial generator rental company from Santa Fe Springs, have been working since last week to provide power to the 70 homes and businesses still in the dark Tuesday.

A large trailer-sized generator sat at the corner of Hess Road and Highway 138, one of the areas hardest hit by the massive wildfire, providing electricity to nearby homes. It’s just one of about a dozen such generators being used, said SCE spokeswoman Susan Cox.

Several more large generators will be placed in areas to get power back to homes as SCE crews continue to repair and replace damaged poles and power lines, Cox said.

“Right now we don’t have a clear timetable as to when we will have power restored because some homes will require complete repair of infrastructure,” Cox said Tuesday. “And we’re working with county officials to make sure we get that down as quickly and safely as possible.”

Patrols, Aid Efforts Continue

More than 1,200 firefighters are still at the blaze, mostly to reinforce containment lines around the fire and for mop up efforts.

After several people were arrested allegedly trying to get into homes left vacant by fleeing homeowners, many were left feeling uneasy not being able to stay on their property.

“I already lost a lot,” said Sayle. “I don’t want to lose any more to looters.”

San Bernardino County sheriff’s authorities will continue to patrol the burn areas of the valley looking for suspicious people and working to protect homes from looters, said Jodi Miller, spokeswoman for the department.

The Board of Supervisors ratified an emergency proclamation because of the Blue Cut fire Tuesday, allowing most of the firefighting costs to be reimbursed.

The fire district spent about \$2 million related to the fire, but one grant will cover 75 percent of that spending and a second grant will cover 75 percent of the remainder, **Fire Chief Mark Hartwig** said in a presentation to the Board of Supervisors.

Hartwig and Sheriff John McMahon praised the partnerships between their departments and with others from around the state.

“It’s fitting that we’re sitting next to each other now,” Hartwig said. “I don’t think we could’ve been any closer and worked together any better than we did.”

Hartwig said the fire destroyed about 110 single-family residences, a number that may fluctuate some.

“Sometimes, what looks like an outbuilding to you or me, it turns out that was someone’s home,” he said.

Firefighters applied gel to 107 structures in the path of flames that they knew they wouldn’t be able to defend, and only three of those structures were destroyed, Hartwig said.

McMahon said deputies spent about 5,500 hours of staff time, including 3,700 hours of overtime, related to the fire.

Much of that was related to evacuations.

“We have a responsibility to get (evacuees) home as soon as possible,” McMahon said. “If they don’t see smoke and they hear it’s safe but we don’t get them home, we lose credibility and they’re less likely to evacuate next time.”

About 50 percent of people followed evacuation orders, with more in some neighborhoods than others, McMahon said.

“We have to continue to educate the public on the importance of that (evacuation),” McMahon said. “We did a great job getting them back as soon as we could, and I think that goes a long way.”

Deputies also patrolled the evacuated areas and will continue to do so.

“That is a sad day when we evacuate people because they could lose their house and people come in to steal their property,” McMahon said. “Fortunately, we were able to arrest a few of them.”

The cause of the blaze still is under investigation, Hartwig said.

<http://www.sbsun.com/general-news/20160823/residents-returning-after-blue-cut-fire-try-to-return-to-normal-life>

A life-changing experience

Volunteer recalls two-week relief effort for nearly 800 displaced animals

Matthew Cabe, Victor Valley Daily Press

Posted: August 23, 2016, 6:13 PM



Dave Gross talks about the two weeks he's been supervising the Large Animal Evacuation Center at the High Desert Event Center in Victorville. Gross supervised the animals through both the Pilot Fire and the Bluecut Fire. James Quigg, Daily Press

VICTORVILLE — Dave Gross has slept a total of 48 hours in the last two weeks.

As the volunteer animal coordinator, Gross — a local landscaper — has headed one of the largest local relief efforts during the Pilot and Bluecut fires, and he's seen nearly 800 displaced animals evacuated to the High Desert Event Center.

As a result of the Bluecut Fire alone, during which more than 82,000 San Bernardino County residents fell under mandatory evacuation orders, the center took in 667 animals, 208 of which were horses.

On Monday afternoon, Gross held a clipboard with a list of the remaining animals — llamas, roosters, chickens, pigs and goats among them — scrawled onto a sheet of white paper. As he spoke, a hint of slight astonishment was detectable in his voice.

“We had nothing to start with,” Gross said, thinking back to the call he received from San Bernardino County Fair CEO Geoff Hinds amid the start of the Pilot Fire. “(He said), ‘Dave, I need help putting up panels.’ — meaning the stalls (for the animals) — and we had one rake and one broken wheelbarrow. That was all we had on the grounds that we could get to. Everything else was locked up in maintenance at the time. Geoff could get to it, but we needed something right away.”

But now, more than two weeks after the Pilot Fire started on Aug. 7, Gross has more tools than he knows what to do with thanks to donations from the community, local businesses and Amazon.

“I got a call from Amazon ... just after (the Bluecut Fire) started,” Gross said. “I thought it was a joke. I really thought it was a joke ... Then, on Friday, I was doing a TV interview, and all the sudden all these women with black Amazon T-shirts come walking into the barn ... (and) tears just started rolling out of my eyes.”

The Amazon employees arrived in a U-Haul. Gross asked them what was inside. “All the stuff you wanted,” was the reply. The truck was loaded “from the front to the back, from the floor to the ceiling” with essentials for Gross and his volunteers, all of which was utilized outside of two pallets that will be stored for future use.

But it wasn't just Amazon. Gross pointed to an assortment of food, water, bins and tools before rattling off names like Home Depot, Lowe's, Cactus Feed and Supply and CageCo Inc.

"(CageCo) brought all the panels to put all the stalls out," Gross said. "If we needed to keep bringing in more panels, all we needed to do was make a call to CageCo. and Mike, the owner, he would bring out truckfuls."

Gross said he and his volunteers "cleaned out the High Desert" of plastic cement-mixing troughs, which were used during feeding because Gross didn't want the animals eating off the ground.

"Every feed store in the High Desert pretty much brought something," he said. "Every restaurant in the High Desert fed us. It was incredible ... I can't even emphasize how proud I am to say I'm from the High Desert. Everybody always gives the High Desert a bad reputation. I don't see anything bad about the High Desert. I've been up here for 27 years, and I'm really proud to say I'm from the High Desert."

In addition, San Bernardino County Animal Control played a crucial role, according to Gross.

"Working with Animal Control has just been a blessing," he said. "They're sort of seen as the bad guys, but they took the official end of everything in terms of intake of the animals, which took that burden off the volunteers so they could tend to all the animals. If it wasn't for them, we couldn't have pulled this off."

For Gross, the experience has helped him better understand his wife's passion. Kirsten Gross has donated much of her life to working with dog and cat rescues, and Dave Gross said he always wondered why she was willing to give up so much time and effort to that cause.

But he said seeing a person reunited with a pet — or pets in many cases — stirred powerful emotions within him and led him to a personal awakening.

"Now I understand," he said, smiling. "I get it. I didn't get it before, and now when she says she wants to go (help animals) for the next seven days, I've got her back. Because she's had my back through this. If it wasn't for my wife and daughter (Katelin), and the power of social media, you wouldn't see any of this."

Kirsten and Katelin Gross are administrators of the "Blue Cut /Pilot Fire and SB Fairgrounds Info Group" on Facebook, which helped coordinate volunteer and donation efforts over the last two weeks.

As of 6 p.m. Tuesday, just 13 animals remained at the center and donations were still coming from the community, according to Dave Gross, who said everything received will equate to an even better relief effort when the next "inevitable" emergency arises.

For now, though, he's is happy with the hard work that was done to save so many animals. And when asked if he would do it again?

"Absolutely," Gross said. "I could write a book on this experience I've had. I've never done anything like this before. Why I did it? I have no idea, but ... it was worth every second."

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/article/20160823/NEWS/160829890/0/SEARCH>

Worsening Wildfire Environment Spurs Call for New Strategies

The ongoing California drought is blamed for increasingly destructive fires throughout the state.

Patrick Healy, NBC4

Posted: August 23, 2016

In the midst of an ongoing drought, with the wildfire toll increasing despite the allocation of more firefighting resources, calls for new strategies are getting attention.

"We have put ourselves in danger," said Char Miller, Keck Professor of Environmental Analysis at Pomona College. "And so, some of this is not about nature, it's about us."

Miller calls for more efforts to increase defensible space around homes near wildland, retrofitting of older structures to make them more fire resistant and action by local government to scrutinize and control development into wildland.

"If we're in those landscapes, then we have to accept the risk and we have to defend ourselves," Miller said. "But that's not a discussion that any zoning commission has on any regular basis."

Last week, the Blue Cut Fire grew so quickly from its origin in the Cajon Pass that fire officials said no amount of resources on ground or air could have stopped its charge.

"In all honesty, I don't think anything would have made a difference," said John Chamberlin, Assistant Chief of the **San Bernardino County Fire Department**. "It was so aggressive there was no way to get ahead of it."

Like many veteran firefighters, Chamberlin blamed the ongoing drought for conditions and fire behavior the likes of which he had not previously encountered.

"Drought is the essential driver of firestorms we've been looking at," Miller said.

In California history, 13 of the 20 largest wildfires by area have occurred in the 16 years of the new millenium, according to CalFire, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. This period has also seen drier than average conditions throughout the western United States.

The cost of fighting major wildfires has accelerated since the most recent drought began in 2012.

Three years ago, the state budgeted \$127 million for the emergency fire fund, and ended up spending \$242 million, according to data from CalFire. Last fiscal year, the state budgeted \$398 million, and spent \$547 million, the difference made up by transfers from other areas of the budget, explained CalFire's Daniel Berlant.

For the 2016-17 fiscal year, which began in July, California budgeted \$424 million, and has already spent \$155 million, Berlant said.

On the national level, a bill developed by the Senate Natural Resources Committee, the "Wildfire Budgeting, Response and Forest Management Act" would attempt to stabilize funding for coping with fires on federal land.

The very model of extinguishing wildfires has come into question by many, including UC Riverside Earth Sciences Professor Richard Minnich. He contends a century of suppressing wildfires has created more

dangerous conditions by interfering with the natural process of lightning-sparked fires burning off dry vegetation and naturally thinning forests. As a result, under the theory, during high-risk conditions of wind, heat and low immediate, a fire that starts and cannot be suppressed will have more fuel to burn and be more destructive than it otherwise would have been.

In some cases, firefighters do allow wildland fires to burn and consume fuel. It is more easily done in areas far from where people live. In the area where the Blue Cut fire burned, though relatively rural by Southern California standards, the homes of more than 80,000 were threatened by the fire, incident commanders calculated.

"We were so engaged with evacuations during the initial operations period that we were not even able to set backfires, we were so focused on saving life," Chamberlin said.

"There's a new normal we have to adjust to," Miller said. "Rather than trying to manage the fires, let's manage the people."

<http://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/local/Worsening-Wildfire-Environment-Spurs-Call-for-New-Strategies-390981141.html>

DA Warns About Post Blue Cut Fire Fraud and Scams

Victor Valley News

Posted: August 23, 2016



(photo by San Bernardino County Fire)

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif.– Although, the Blue Cut Fire is now fully contained the San Bernardino District Attorney is warning those affected to protect themselves from post-disaster related fraud and scams.

After a disaster, contractors will often go door to door in affected neighborhoods offering clean up and construction services. While the vast majority of these service providers are legitimate, some dishonest individuals may attempt to scam innocent victims. Please take into consideration the following:

Price Gouging

For at least 30 days after an emergency is declared, businesses and individuals are not allowed to increase prices by more than 10% for rental houses, hotels and motels, food, drink, (including for animals), tools, construction materials, flashlights, blankets, batteries, soaps, diapers, prescription and nonprescription medicines and first-aid products. The rule applies for 180 days for emergency cleanup and reconstruction services. Save any estimates or receipts.

Public Adjusters

Public adjusters are people who want to represent you in dealing with your insurance company. Public Adjusters get a percentage of the money the insurer pays for your loss. Check carefully to see if they are what you need. Public adjusters need to be licensed and can be checked with the Department of Insurance.

Vendor Fraud

These types of individuals represent themselves as professional intermediaries who claim for a fee they can arrange low-interest loans, expedite relief grants and insurance adjustments and claims. Unscrupulous vendors will often sell substandard materials to victims.

Charity Scams

Con artists try to collect funds for non-existent charities. Only give to those you know are reliable. Beware of copy-cat or similar names to reputable charities. Ask for written information and proof that your contribution is tax-deductible.

Door-To-Door Solicitations

Be cautious, some of these people are just trying to take your money. Do not be hurried or intimidated. If you choose to purchase from or use their services, get all the information and promises in writing.

Fraudulent Contractors

There are two categories: Those working without a license and those who have licenses, but have accepted more work than can be capably met. They do not have the resources, work is often sub-standard or not completed.

Fake Disaster Officials

Always ask for identification and check it out before letting anyone into your home. Some of these rip-off artists will claim that you must pay a processing fee to secure relief.

<http://www.vvng.com/da-warns-about-post-blue-cut-fire-fraud-and-scams/>

Blue Cut Fire: Supervisors Briefed By Fire Chief And Sheriff

Michael P. Neufeld, Rim of the World News

Posted: August 24, 2016, 12:05 AM



Fire Chief Mark Hartwig and Sheriff John McMahon briefed San Bernardino County Supervisors about the 100 percent contained Blue Cut Fire. (Photo by San Bernardino County Fire)

San Bernardino, CA – While the cause of the Blue Cut Fire in the Cajon Pass remains under investigation, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors were informed the fire is now 100 percent contained and that all evacuations have been lifted.

Supervisors were briefed by Fire Chief Mark Hartwig who talked about **County Fire**'s costs to help battle the 36,274-acre fire and Sheriff John McMahon on how his agency safely evacuated 82,000 residents and arrested several "looters."

Also addressing the board were Office of Emergency Services (OES) Director Mike Antonucci and Local Assistance Center (LAC) Director Miguel McQueen

Fire Chief Mark Hartwig

"It was a quick, fast-moving fire front that had a lot of fuel," Fire Chief Hartwig noted. "It really was the result of many years of drought in the county."

Chief Hartwig told supervisors County Fire's costs would be about \$2 million.

He went on to explain that 75 percent of that amount will be covered by a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). That leaves a balance of 25 percent with the State of California picking up 75 percent of that amount.

Sheriff John McMahon

Sheriff McMahon talked about how his department patrolled the area looking for individuals who didn't belong and were trying to take advantage of the mandatory evacuation orders.

"It's a sad day," McMahon stated, "when we evacuate people and they're in that kind of pain...and criminals are stealing their property while they're gone."

He reported numerous arrests were made within the evacuation areas for looting and in one case vehicle theft.

He also addressed the number of people who declined to leave their homes even in mandatory evacuation areas.

“Obviously,” McMahon said, “some neighborhoods didn’t truly believe they were in that much danger.”

The Sheriff informed supervisors that deputies eventually witnessed that about 50 percent of county residents ultimately evacuated their residences within the mandatory evacuation areas.

<http://rotwnews.com/2016/08/24/blue-cut-fire-supervisors-briefed-by-fire-chief-and-sheriff/>