



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Wind Driven Fire Comes Dangerously Close to Homes

Update April 1, 5:00 p.m.

Crews made great progress today. The fire is now 95% contained at 185 acres. Fire crews will remain on scene throughout the evening, with additional crews to continue extensive mop up efforts Thursday.

One injury was sustained by an inmate hand crew member when he fell into a burned out stump hole. He was transported to a local hospital for treatment.

The fire has been determined to be accidental. An investigation is ongoing by San Bernardino County Fire investigators to determine if burning was conducted within the parameters of the issued permit. There were no state or county burn restrictions in effect on the day of the incident, nor was there a fire weather watch or red flag warning issued by the National Weather Service for the high desert region.

Update April 1

San Bernardino County Fire and Sheriff personnel flew the fire and mapped the burn area this morning. The fire actually burned 185 acres and remains 30% contained. Full containment is expected late this evening.

Over 110 firefighters and hand crews remain on scene, as well as two Sheriff water dropping helicopters. One helicopter is able to carry 350 gallons of water and the other carries 180 gallons of water. Over 200 water drops were made yesterday by Sheriff helicopters.

This morning's humidity was high and temperatures low, aiding the fire fight. Today's weather forecast is similar to yesterday, with winds expected at 10-15 MPH, with gusts upward to 40 MPH out of the West.

Heavy smoke will be seen throughout the day, as the fire is expected to continue burning in heavy brush in the river bottom. At this time all structure threat has been mitigated.

Resources:

3 Type 3 Strike Teams (SBCoFire strike teams, with assistance from Apple Valley FPD)
1 Firefighter Hand Crew (crew of 18)
2 Inmate Hand Crews (crew of 16 ea)
2 Dozers
2 Sheriff Helicopters

Date/Time: March 31, 2015, 11:50 a.m.
Location: Mojave Narrows Regional Park, 18000 Yates Rd, Victorville
Incident: Vegetation Fire

Initial Attack Summary: San Bernardino County Firefighters responded to a vegetation fire at Mojave Narrows Regional Park that quickly spread into the Mojave Riverbed in Victorville. The wind driven fire quickly crossed the dry riverbed bumping the ridgeline and threatening numerous homes on the East side in Apple Valley.

Firefighters quickly set up structure defense and kept the fire away from homes. Two Sheriff Helicopters arrived on scene shortly after and began water drop operations, slowing the fire spread down significantly and giving firefighters a fighting chance to protect homes.

About an hour later, 10-15 MPH winds started gusting upward to 25 MPH and shifted direction, causing the fire to split and burn in two different directions.

A mandatory evacuation was issued for residents along Riverside Dr. between Riverside Way and Nokomis in Apple Valley. Over 50 Sheriff deputies were on scene evacuating homes, closing roads and patrolling and protecting evacuated residences. Overall, 25 homes were evacuated. The American Red Cross activated an evacuation shelter at the Sitting Bull Middle School, located at 19455 Sitting Bull, Apple Valley. By 7 p.m., all evacuation orders were lifted.

The Mojave River flows underground in this area and has not burned in several years. The riverbed is thick with heavy fuels and very sandy conditions, making it extremely difficult and dangerous for firefighters.

By the end of the day, the fire burned 70 acres, consumed 3 sheds, a vehicle, and a chicken coup. Firefighters were instrumental in saving dozens of homes and keeping the blaze from damaging homes. At one point, the fire burned through vacant lots and around homes, reaching Riverside Drive.

There were no injuries to civilians or firefighters. San Bernardino County Fire and Apple Valley FPD are in unified command.

In all over 220 firefighters were on scene battling the blaze.

Resources:

2 Type 1 Strike Teams (structure defense) (1 SBCoFire ST, 1 local Fire Resource ST, including units from Apple Valley FPD)
3 Type 3 Strike Teams (1 SBCoFire ST, 1 local Fire Resource ST, 1 CalFire ST)
6 Hand Crews (2 SBCoFire firefighter hand crew, 2 SBCoFire Inmate hand crew, 2 CalFire hand crews)
2 Dozers (SBCoFire)
4 Sheriff Helicopters

The fire began when County Regional Parks was conducting a fully-permitted burn at Pelican Lake at the Mojave Narrows Regional Park in Victorville when the wind suddenly and unexpectedly shifted, pushing the fire into the Mojave Riverbed. Regional Parks was burning cattails to create more shoreline for fishing. This is the time of year when cattails are brown and dormant, and it is common practice to conduct this type of clearance.

San Bernardino County Fire encourages residents to be prepared for wildland fire and know what to do when asked to evacuate. The READY! SET! GO! Program provides important preparation information. Visit www.sbcfire.org to learn how to make your home defensible against fires.

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