



NEWS



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Fireworks Are Illegal in the Morongo Basin

Z107.7 News

Posted: June 26, 2016

County Fire has stepped up enforcement of fireworks laws. Reporter Mike Lipsitz has more... Possession of fireworks is illegal throughout Morongo Basin. This includes so called “safe and sane” fireworks, and any fireworks that explode, shoot in the air or move along the ground. With the threat of wildfire nearing peak season, County Fire has stepped up enforcement of state and county fireworks laws. Fire officials will be issuing citations for the illegal use of fireworks, with possibility of arrest and fines of more than \$1,200 for the first offense. Property owners may be cited if they allow fireworks to be possessed, stored or used on their property. According to the National Fire Protection Association, on a typical July 4th, fireworks cause more fires in the U.S. than all other causes combined. Basin residents are encouraged to watch fireworks at community celebrations rather than risking the death, blindness, and maiming injuries that children and adults suffer every year. For Z107.7 News, this is assignment reporter Mike Lipsitz.

<http://z1077fm.com/fireworks-are-illegal-in-the-morongo-basin/>

Firework sales begin in Adelanto Tuesday

Rene Ray De La Cruz, Daily Press

Posted: June 27, 2016, 4:37 PM

Updated: June 27, 2016, 4:58 PM



Jim Burns of Christ the Good Shepherd Church's Knights of Columbus club in Adelanto sets up the club's fireworks sales booth on Bartlett Avenue on Monday afternoon. Sales begin Tuesday. James Quigg, Daily Press

ADELANTO — With firework sales beginning Tuesday in one High Desert city, a dozen nonprofits are ready to help shoppers light up the night sky as they capitalize on the event.

The annual tradition of selling fireworks from vendor stands across Adelanto begins Tuesday through July 4, with groups like the Knights of Columbus, City of the Lord Church and High Desert Devils selling the safe-and-sane fireworks.

Greater Hope Executive Director Helena Lopez told the Daily Press her group is partnering with the Adelanto Youth Sports Foundation to man the booth at the corner of Seneca Road and Highway 395.

“This will be our fifth time doing this and we’re looking forward to networking with people, meeting new and old friends, selling fireworks and spreading the message of the Greater Hope Foundation,” Lopez said. “Every year has been a profitable one and we’re hoping for another big year.”

Fireworks are illegal all over the Victor Valley, except in Adelanto from noon Tuesday to July 4 midnight. The stands are open 7 a.m. to midnight.

Possession of any type of fireworks, including safe and sane, is illegal in unincorporated areas of the county and carries a minimum \$1,250 fine, according to the **San Bernardino County Fire Department**.

Nonprofit firework stands in Adelanto:

- Adelanto Youth Sports Foundation, Seneca Road and Highway 395
- American Legion, Adelanto Road and Air Expressway
- High Desert Devils, Bellflower Street and Palmdale Road
- Desert Streams Baptist Church, Rancho Road and Highway 395
- Adelanto Little League, Adelanto Market Place, Palmdale Road and Highway 395
- Greater Life CDC, Chamberlaine Way and Highway 395
- Christ the Good Shepherd, Cactus Road and Highway 395
- High Desert Bingo, Aster Road and Palmdale Road
- Adelanto Airport Property Owners Association, Jonathan St. and Air Expressway
- Knights of Columbus, Bartlett Avenue and Highway 395
- City of the Lord Church, location unavailable
- Down-2-Earth Christian Fellowship, Mojave Drive and Highway 395

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/article/20160627/NEWS/160629735>

Fireworks Alert from San Bernardino County Fire

Staff Reports, High Desert Daily

Posted: June 28, 2016



(Victor Valley)– Possession of any type of fireworks, including “safe and sane” fireworks, is against the law in any unincorporated area of San Bernardino County. In the event a fire occurs due to the unsafe use of fireworks, the responsible persons are likely to face criminal charges and be held liable for damages.

“Safe and Sane” fireworks are only allowed in the following cities: Adelanto, Barstow, Chino, Colton, and Rialto, as well as specific locations in Fontana, Grand Terrace, and San Bernardino. Please call the fire department in these cities for more information. All fireworks are illegal elsewhere in the county. All fireworks that explode, shoot into the air or move along the ground are termed dangerous and are illegal anywhere in California.

With San Bernardino County facing a dangerous wildland fire season, the San Bernardino County Fire Department (SBCoFD) has increased its vigilance in enforcing state and county firework laws to protect public health and safety. Fire officials will be issuing citations for the illegal use of fireworks, with fines up to \$1,250 for the first offense with the possibility of arrest. Property owners may be cited if they allow fireworks to be possessed, stored or used on their property.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, on a typical 4th of July, fireworks cause more fires in the U.S. than all other causes combined. While “Safe and Sane” fireworks are allowed in some San Bernardino County communities, the County Board of Supervisors and SBCoFD encourage residents to watch fireworks at community celebrations rather than use their own. Visit sbcfire.org for a schedule of local firework displays.

When using fireworks where allowed, SBCoFD offers some safety tips:

- Always use fireworks (“Safe and Sane” only) with an adult present. Even a “Safe and Sane” sparkler burns at a temperature that ignites clothing easily
- Always read and follow label directions
- Always have water (garden hose/bucket) and a fire extinguisher within reach
- Always place fireworks on a firm, non-combustible surface, like a sidewalk or pavement
- Never alter fireworks
- Never re-light “dud” fireworks
- Homemade fireworks are often deadly; leave the making of fireworks to the experts
- Never point, throw or mishandle fireworks

In addition to fires, fireworks cause deaths, blindness, and maiming injuries to children and adults every year. For more information on fireworks safety, contact your local fire station.

Have a SAFE celebration!

<http://highdesertdaily.com/2016/06/fireworks-alert-san-bernardino-county-fire/>

'End of an era' as San Bernardino prepares to hand over control of fire department

Ryan Hagen, The Sun

Posted: June 24, 2016, 8:31 PM

Updated: June 26, 2016



San Bernardino County firefighter Dale Sandoval, peels off a new decal Wednesday at Fire Station 221 in San Bernardino in preparation for county fire's takeover of the 137-year-old city fire department. The city's fire services are being annexed into the county effective July 1 to save the bankrupt city money. John Valenzuela — Staff Photographer



Adrian Gonzales, of Xgraphix, removes a San Bernardino City Fire decal on truck 221 Wednesday at Fire Station 221 in San Bernardino in preparation for county fire's takeover of the 137-year-old city fire department. The city's fire services are being annexed into the county effective July 1 to save the bankrupt city money. John Valenzuela — Staff Photographer

SAN BERNARDINO >> Changes to the city's 137-year-old Fire Department are underway, a week before the county takes over.

San Bernardino County Fire officially takes responsibility for the city's fire, rescue and emergency medical services July 1, after a series of votes by officials who said the move would both save money and improve services.

Because of county schedules, the personnel swap will take place July 3, according to San Bernardino City Fire Chief Tom Hannemann.

That swap will involve about two-thirds of city staff taking jobs elsewhere in the county — including Hannemann himself, who will become an engine company captain in Fontana — and an equal number of county firefighters transferring into the city, he said.

But other switches are already happening, according to Hannemann.

“We’ve had quite a bit of logistical items being taken care of,” Hannemann said.

Technical support changes have been ongoing for months, fire rigs have been reconfigured to communicate with the county communication center, and officials have met regularly to ensure a smooth transition, he said.

“So far, we’ve been having weekly conference calls and everything seems to be moving along in a very direct and productive manner,” Hannemann said.

And in a visible sign of the new boss, the process of replacing city fire labels on fire trucks with county fire began Wednesday — although the new design still prominently features the city seal.

“It’s the end of an era,” Hannemann said. “It’s a sad day to see the city of San Bernardino transition, but the positive outcome is we are going to a very capable organization that’s welcoming all of us with open arms.”

Officials from both fire departments, as well as city and county officials, say the new fire service will be at least as good.

But it will also bring in an additional \$7 million to \$8 million for the bankrupt city, according to city projections. That includes savings from the economies of scale offered by a larger organization and a new parcel tax, which will be \$148 per parcel in fiscal year 2016-17 and increasing by up to 3 percent each year.

That tax did not require a vote because the city was annexed into an existing fire protection district that already had the tax. Forms to protest the move were mailed to parcel owners, but the number of protests received by the April 21 deadline fell far short of the 25 percent needed to trigger an election.

<http://www.sbsun.com/government-and-politics/20160624/end-of-an-era-as-san-bernardino-prepares-to-hand-over-control-of-fire-department>

San Bernardino County welcomes city firefighters in ceremony

Ryan Hagen, The Sun

Posted: June 27, 2016, 5:46 PM

Updated: June 28, 2016, 1:35 AM



San Bernardino County Fire Chief Mark Hartwig, presents San Bernardino Mayor Carey Davis with a plaque during the transfer of authority ceremony at Indian Springs High School in San Bernardino Monday. Effective July 1, the San Bernardino City Fire Department will transition into the San Bernardino County Fire Protection District. John Valenzuela/Staff Photographer



The U.S. flag hangs between a San Bernardino County Fire engine and a San Bernardino City fire truck during the transfer of authority ceremony at Indian Springs High School in San Bernardino Monday. Effective July 1, the San Bernardino City Fire Department will transition into the San Bernardino County Fire Protection District. John Valenzuela/Staff Photographer

SAN BERNARDINO >> The tone at Monday’s ceremony to transfer authority from the city Fire Department to the county was careful and diplomatic.

Putting **county fire** in charge of fire and emergency medical responses was a good move for residents and employees, the officials holding the ceremony believe, but they were well aware of the delicateness of dissolving the 138-year-old city department.

“There’s a lot of excitement, but there’s a lot of apprehension as well,” County Fire Chief Mark Hartwig told a room of officials before they went on stage. “We want to make them comfortable. They have a home and they have a family.”

Mayor Carey Davis had a similar message in his two-minute statement to the employees.

“Our city’s been well-served by our Fire Department, and this tugs at my heart to have to make the decision,” Davis said. “Our council, our Board of Supervisors, recognize that in order to strengthen our community we needed to make that change. As difficult as it is. ... I’m truly looking forward to the time when we might enjoy a better delivery of service for our community and also better working conditions for our firefighters.”

The management of the city department and the union representing city firefighters approved the transfer, which officially goes into effect Friday.

Two-thirds of the city’s firefighters will transfer to other jobs in the county, 5 Comments City Fire Chief Tom Hannemann. An equal number of county employees will transfer to the city, where they will join the one-third of firefighters remaining in San Bernardino.

Residents shouldn’t notice any change, said county Supervisor Josie Gonzales, whose district includes the city.

“When someone calls 911 and they need help, it is important that they feel no difference,” Gonzales said.

In fact, officials expect service levels to increase, in addition to the city saving an estimated \$7 million to \$8 million per year — part of that coming through a parcel tax of \$148 per year.

After city and county officials spoke and gave commendations to city fire officials, firefighters lined up for barbecue provided by the county fire union.

Above them, two fire trucks — one with City of San Bernardino labels, the other labeled San Bernardino County Fire — had their ladders extended, working together to support a giant American flag.

Then the new engines, bearing both city and county branding, were unveiled.

<http://www.sbsun.com/government-and-politics/20160627/san-bernardino-county-welcomes-city-firefighters-in-ceremony>

New County-Run Twentynine Palms Fire Responds To First Structure Fire Sunday

Z107.7 News

Posted: June 27, 2016

The county take-over of the Twentynine Palms Fire Department got off to a running start Sunday afternoon when a fire broke out at a garage in Twentynine Palms. County Battalion Chief Rick Denison was at the fire stations’ temporary home (the fire station is under renovation) briefing Twentynine Palms firefighters on county procedures when a structure fire in the 74200 block of El Paseo was called in at 4:16 p.m. Sunday. Heavy black smoke from the blaze could be seen for miles. Firefighters arrived on scene just a few minutes later, and immediately called for assistance from the Combat Center, Wonder Valley, and Joshua Tree fire stations. Denison said the garage and a debris pile behind the garage were fully involved when they arrived and firefighters went into a defensive attack to ensure the fire did not spread to nearby homes that were threatened by the flames. Residents heard explosions from compressed air cylinders in the garage. Firefighters had the blaze knocked down in about half an hour. The cause of the fire is under investigation. The county officially takes over the Twentynine Palms Fire Department Friday, July 1, but the turn-over started Sunday.

<http://z1077fm.com/new-county-run-twentynine-palms-fire-responds-to-first-structure-fire-sunday/>

County Fire now serves city of San Bernardino

Hector Hernandez Jr, Highland Community News

Posted: June 28, 2016, 10:20 AM



San Bernardino firefighters line up for a barbecue lunch following a ceremony formally transferring firefighting authority from San Bernardino City Fire Department to San Bernardino County Fire Department, on their first day of orientation into the new department, June 27.

Monday, June 27, was bittersweet day as the city of San Bernardino completed the six-month transition from having its own fire department to contracting fire service from **San Bernardino County Fire Department**, ending the 138-year-old San Bernardino City Fire Department.

The ceremony formally transferring firefighting authority to the county department took place at Indian Springs High School just before lunch at what was the first day of a week of orientation for about 120 San Bernardino City firefighters and staff who now work with the county department. County Fire will begin serving the city of San Bernardino, as part of its sixth district, on July 3.

San Bernardino City Council members Fred Shorett, Virginia Marquez took the stage with Mayor R. Carey Davis and City Attorney Gary Saenz to thank the city fire department for its years of dedicated service and turn fire fighting authority over to the county represented by County Supervisor Josie Gonzalez and County Fire Chief Mark Hartwig.

Mayor Davis called the change a difficult yet necessary one for the city.

"The city has been well served by our fire department and this tugs at me, to make this decision," Davis said. "Our council the county board of supervisors recognize that in order to be able to strengthen our community it's important to form this partnership. We're grateful to the brave men and women of our fire department who through 138 years have served our community with dignity, commitment, caring about each call they go on providing service."

"As difficult as this is it is a decision that will hopefully serve our firefighters. We want you to be well and to know the transition has been long in coming and a lot of hard work from both parties to make this work," he added. "We need to also look at this as an opportunity to accept change and make things better as a result of that change. I'm truly happy to look to the future where our citizens will enjoy a high level of service and our firefighters better work conditions."

The City Council and San Bernardino County Board of Directors have spent the last six months preparing for the transition and applying to LAFCO for the change in authority.

According to Hartwig, the city department firefighters and staff were offered jobs with County Fire on the condition of passing medical and background checks, and while some will remain stationed within the city of San Bernardino others are being transferred throughout the county.

The city of San Bernardino will now be part of the department's District 6 which includes Grand Terrace and county areas of Mentone, Devore, Muscoy and Yuciapa. Area Chief John Chamberlain will head the district's leadership.

"It's a 138-year-old department that will now continue as part of the county department. We will honor the tradition but it will be a different department," Hartwig said. "As much as there's opportunity for the firefighters and a benefit to the city and county it's the end of a longstanding tradition of services. There's excitement along with some apprehension."

After the ceremony the newly city/county branded fire engines were unveiled and the firefighters and staff enjoyed a barbecue lunch sponsored by San Bernardino County Professional Firefighters Local 935. The city firefighters and staff also received their new county department uniforms.

http://www.highlandnews.net/news/public_safety/county-fire-now-serves-city-of-san-bernardino/article_acf8d60a-3d54-11e6-8757-67cc91dbbcd3.html

Authorities hold training sessions in Fontana to prepare in case of mass shooting

Alejandro Cano, Fontana Herald News

Posted: June 23, 2016 3:41 PM

Updated: June 25, 2016, 12:37 PM



First responders treat "injured victims" during the training drill. (Herald News photo by Alejandro Cano)

Concerned about the mass shootings which have plagued the nation, local authorities are holding training sessions for emergency preparedness on the campus of a Fontana church.

Authorities understand that it is not a matter of if it happens but when it will happen -- the threat of another Dec. 2 shooting in San Bernardino or the recent tragedy in Orlando, Florida -- and thus they need to be ready to respond and save as many lives as possible.

The **San Bernardino County Fire Department**, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department and the Fontana Police Department trained for 10 days starting on June 13 at Water of Life Community Church.

“The idea is to send paramedics/firefighters in as soon as possible to increase the survival rate; of course they have to be protected,” said Jeremy Kern, San Bernardino County Fire Department spokesperson, during a session on June 22.

Wearing ballistic helmets and vests, local paramedics/firefighters participated in an escalated threat drill in which the main objective was to implement an aggressive team-based approach as it applies to victim identification, treatment and extraction in hostile situations.

First aid responders were protected by dozens of SWAT members and police while they treated the dozens of “victims” (volunteers who acted to make the scenario as real as possible) as “shooters” went on a rampage.

Participants also trained with a recently-acquired mannequin called MATT, which stands for Multiple Amputation Trauma Trainer. The \$98,000 mannequin "breathes and bleeds" and is a perfect tool to train paramedics, said Spencer Brumbaugh, paramedic/firefighter.

http://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/news/authorities-hold-training-sessions-in-fontana-to-prepare-in-case/article_a0e47ece-3993-11e6-838d-7b85bbfe6010.html

Senate panel hears concerns about wildfire funding

Agencies and conservation groups have concerns about bill

Hilary Corrigan, The Bend Bulletin

Posted: June 24, 2016, 12:03 AM

Updated: June 24, 2016, 7:22 AM



A helicopter drops water on a wildfire by a trailer park near Needles, California, earlier this month. A bill now in Congress would fund fire suppression at 100 percent of the average annual cost of firefighting over the past 10 years and allow adjustments to budget caps so that more money would be available during catastrophic years. (San Bernardino County Fire Department via The New York Times)

The way to structure federal funding for fighting fires and for forest-related work that helps prevent fires remains a work in progress, following discussion on related legislation at a U.S. Senate committee hearing Thursday in Washington, D.C.

One point of agreement: a need to end fire-borrowing, the current practice of shifting funds from work on forest restoration and fire prevention toward fighting wildfires.

“I am ready to declare fire-borrowing the great debate,” Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., said at the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources hearing, calling for dedicated funds for both suppression and prevention work.

“Ending the plague of fire-borrowing is now the longest-running battle since the Trojan War,” said Ron Wyden, D-Ore. “Now is clearly the time.”

Western senators from both political parties — including Cantwell, Wyden, Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, and Mike Crapo, R-Idaho — proposed the Wildfire Budgeting, Response and Forest Management Act in May. The legislation would fund fire suppression at 100 percent of the average annual cost of firefighting over the past 10 years and allow adjustments to budget caps so that more money would be available during catastrophic years when those firefighting funds have already been used up. Any excess firefighting funds in milder fire years would go toward fire-prevention projects.

Western legislators have long argued that firefighting has grown more costly as fires have gotten more intense and “fire season” has stretched longer than it used to. Wyden and Crapo have complained about the current “broken wildfire funding system” and have pointed to the impact that fires have on timber sales, stream restoration, trail maintenance and recreation — including in states outside of the West — when money gets diverted to fighting wildfires in the West.

At the hearing, federal agencies called for comprehensive solutions on fire-related budgeting but voiced concerns about the proposed legislation.

In testimony for the hearing, the U.S. Department of Agriculture argued the legislation “falls short” of fixing the fire budget problem because it does not address funding for restoration and work that would reduce the risk of fires. Less funding would be available in the agency’s budget for such work, the department said.

Robert Bonnie, undersecretary for natural resources and environment at the department, noted an erosion of the U.S. Forest Service’s budget as the agency must set aside more money every year to fight fires, and argued that funds get permanently shifted from other work. Firefighting costs now take up more than 50 percent of the Forest Service’s budget, compared with 20 years ago when the agency spent about one-sixth of its budget on fire, Bonnie said at the hearing.

The Department of the Interior’s Office of Wildland Fire raised similar concerns, saying that requiring departments to fully fund 100 percent of the increasing 10-year average for fire suppression would result in less funding for the work that would create more fire-resilient landscapes. Bryan Rice, the office’s director, also noted that climate change, drought and invasive species combine to make landscapes more susceptible to wildfire.

“This is not the comprehensive fire budget fix we need,” the office said in hearing testimony, calling for an approach that would also ensure efforts meant to create a more resilient landscape.

Wyden asked the federal agencies to submit within two weeks the specific reforms they want to see.

The Defenders of Wildlife said the legislation may alleviate short-term fire-borrowing but fails to solve the larger problems of escalating costs.

“More than half of the Forest Service budget is now spent to fund fire suppression and as that percentage grows, ever more resources will be siphoned from nonfire programs,” the conservation nonprofit said. The group also called for addressing the increasing 10-year average cost of the wildfire program; allowing access to disaster funding to respond to costly fires; and reducing the need to transfer funds from other programs.

In a letter, more than two dozen conservation groups argued that the legislation would address only the fire-borrowing issue and not the “dramatic erosion of the remaining Forest Service budget over time.”

“It ignores the fact that over half of the Forest Service budget is already expended on fire suppression and that unless Congress addresses this budget erosion problem, soon only 30 percent of the agency’s budget will be available for all other agency functions,” said the groups that include Defenders of Wildlife, Sierra Club and Center for Biological Diversity.

Trout Unlimited also expressed concerns in a statement, arguing that the legislation does not fully account for rising firefighting costs that the group warned would continue to be covered by raiding other forest management projects like projects meant to restore fish habitat.

Bill in Congress — Wildfire Budgeting, Response and Forest Management Act of 2016 would fund fire suppression at 100 percent of the average annual cost of firefighting over the past 10 years and allow adjustments to budget caps so that more money would be available during catastrophic years. Any excess suppression funds in years with less need for firefighting would go toward fire prevention projects.

Sponsors: U.S. Sens. Ron Wyden, D-Ore.; Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska; Maria Cantwell, D-Wash.; and Mike Crapo, R-Idaho.

History: Western legislators have long complained of “fire-borrowing” that moves money from forest restoration and other work to instead fight fires that have grown more intense and more frequent over recent years. Challenges to changing the funding structure at the federal level have included difficulty in budgeting for disasters like fires; concerns over whether the cost is considered new spending; and regional differences over fires that occur in the West, but are not familiar to people in other parts of the country

What’s next: U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources still needs to vote it out to the full Senate

Online: Read the bill at <http://1.usa.gov/1VkJtstE>

<http://www.bendbulletin.com/localstate/4454144-151/senate-panel-hears-concerns-about-funding-for-fighting>

Family of seven displaced after blaze tears through home

Monica Solano, Daily Press

Posted: June 24, 2016, 3:43 PM



Firefighters battled a blaze that burned through a home Thursday night that left a family of seven displaced. Photo courtesy of San Bernardino County Fire Department

VICTORVILLE — Firefighters battled a blaze that burned through a home Thursday night and left a family of seven displaced, officials said.

Just after 10 p.m., **San Bernardino County Fire Department** officials received reports of a residential structure fire in the 13000 block of Glengarry Drive in Victorville, according to County Fire Engineer Ryan Vaccaro.

Upon arrival, firefighters discovered a two-story home having caught fire on the second floor in one of the bedrooms. The crew went into attack mode and the fire was knocked down in a matter of minutes, Vaccaro said.

Vaccaro said the American Red Cross was requested for three adults and four children who were displaced from their home as a result of the blaze.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/article/20160624/NEWS/160629834/0/SEARCH>

CHAR MILLER: Fire inevitable, despite attempts to tame chaparral

Press Enterprise Letter to the Editor

Char Miller, Contributing writer

Published: June 24, 2016

You didn't need to fly into Ontario International Airport this past week to know that Southern California's fire season had begun. But the view from 10,000 feet offered a unique perspective on how wildfires impact the region.

Descending through the Cajon Pass, my flight cut through a slipstream of smoke riding the strong westerly winds that sweep along the front face of the San Gabriel Mountains. The connection between the Southland's prevailing air currents and topography means that any fire burning in the Angeles National Forest will extend far beyond that fire's precise location.

That's true for the Reservoir and Fish fires that erupted on June 20 and have consumed more than 6,000 acres. Their reach far exceeds their physical size. Those living within the basin that extends from the San Gabriel Valley east to Riverside and San Bernardino could not miss the smaze hanging overhead, white ash drifting down like snow or an acrid burning in our throats.

This bitter aftertaste even penetrated the jet that brought me home the day the recent fires ignited. As it made its final approach, the pressurized cabin filled with the stench of burnt wood. A flight attendant had to calm out-of-state passengers by assuring them they weren't smelling engine failure but forest fires nearly 30 miles away.

Locals may have smiled knowingly at our seatmates' initial distress, but we are not any more discerning about another consistent aspect of fire season – how we talk (and argue) about wildland conflagrations.

For the U.S. Forest Service, CalFire and county firefighting agencies, these blazes seem to have a single cause: the density of what they call “fuel.” Since the majority of our forests in the San Gabriel, San Bernardino and San Jacinto mountains are composed of chaparral, that “fuel” consists of such shrubs as ceanothus, sage, chamise, manzanita and related species. It is an indigenous ecosystem that when healthy grows thick, forming an impenetrable, clothes-tearing habitat that naturalist John Muir once praised as “thornily savage.”

Fire agencies have never shared Muir's love for the prickly chaparral. Since the early 20th century, they have tried to get rid of it. Yet every attempt has failed to supplant the endemic biota; every effort to convert it to grassland has proved just as unsuccessful.

Its competitiveness has not stopped public lands managers from fighting back. Their latest strategy is arguing that chaparral poses an extreme fire danger, so much so that it must be cleared away by mechanical and/or chemical means. Huge machines called masticators chew up acres at a time; various herbicides are then sprayed to keep it from re-sprouting. For those who finger chaparral as Southern California's fire problem, shredding and poisoning it within the wildland-urban interface and deep in backcountry are the only ways to save life, limb and landscape.

Not so. The historical record indicates that chaparral wildfires can be large but are also infrequent; and ecologists affirm that neither the age of the forest nor its density determines when these fires will erupt or how they burn. Rather, chaparral fires are weather-driven phenomena: high heat, low humidity, Santa Ana winds and deep drought are the necessary preconditions for such fast-moving burns as the Fish and Reservoir – and every other significant fire in the region over time.

Fire, in short, is inevitable: that's the big picture, whether looking down from 10,000 feet or studying this region's fire history. Yet that is not what we tell ourselves whenever flames sweep up canyon and over ridgeline. Instead the agencies speak of battling enemy fire, and the media offer eye-catching images of soot-stained firefighters and orange-red fire retardant raining down.

To challenge this frenzied narration is itself a signal that a new fire season has arrived. Another is captured in the haunting words an acquaintance uttered while peering through a window at the smoke-filled sky: “It's like death outside.”

<http://www.pe.com/articles/fire-806690-san-chaparral.html>

ENVIRONMENT: Visitors ignoring Upper Big Falls closure

Forest officials must decide whether to extend closure that's reduced the number of rescues and injuries, while graffiti and trash have become a problem.

Suzanne Hurt, Press Enterprise

Published: June 24, 2016

Updated: June 27, 2016



Children make their way up the stream to the falls at Forest Falls on Saturday, June 18, 2016. Visitors seeking an escape from summertime heat are finding upper Big Falls, Southern California's tallest year-round waterfall, still closed in an effort to reduce injuries, but some are ignoring the closure and entering the area anyway, leading to recent injuries. Kurt Miller, Staff Photographer

Part of Southern California's tallest year-round waterfall remains off-limits to visitors in an effort to reduce injuries and will likely remain so throughout the summer, U.S. Forest Service and fire officials say.

But you wouldn't know that from the crowds ignoring the temporary closure of Upper Big Falls and the graffiti and broken beer bottles they're leaving behind while seeking escape as the region heats up.

Or from the five people who've gotten hurt this year hiking in the forbidden area, some hitting a notorious granite boulder known as Blood Rock, and the rescues mounted by San Bernardino County firefighters and sheriff's helicopter crews.

Townfolk in nearby Forest Falls support the closure because they believe it's saving lives and putting fewer rescuers at risk. But many are avoiding the still-open parts of the popular destination, which saw more than 1,500 visitors last weekend.

"If I'm going to go, it's during the week when nobody's there. I wait 'til there's no crowd," said 26-year-old Forest Falls resident Kelli McKibben, standing outside the Elkhorn General Store where she worked one recent morning.

Over the next few months, San Bernardino National Forest officials must decide whether to extend the closure.

That may happen if they determine there's a continued public safety threat or a threat to the natural resources, said forest service spokesman John Miller.

"At that point, the ranger district basically has two options: to reopen the area or reissue another temporary closure," he said.

Closure signs and orange plastic fencing went up at Big Falls, a 500-foot-long series of cascades on Falls Creek, on Oct. 8, 2015. Access to the top three ice-white falls was banned for a year after firefighters and deputies rescued at least 57 people who were hurt climbing around the falls.

Most of them fell while scrambling up “the chute,” a drought-exposed section of rock on the left side of the third falls, and got hurt at the base of the falls after hitting Blood Rock, named after so many people hit their heads there.

‘VIEW IS AWESOME’

On a recent Tuesday, at least 14 people ventured past wooden “No Trespassing” and “USFS Area Closed” signs and torn orange fencing into the upper falls area over a 90-minute period. A heavy wooden closure sign had recently been heaved into the lower creek.

A couple watched their young son play at the base of the third falls where so many have fallen, while others walked across the top. Several people said they disagree with the closure.

“I think it’s wrong. Everybody should be able to go up here because it’s nature,” said 23-year-old Pasadena resident Kenneth Carmona, adding people should be cautious because hiking in that area carries risks.

“When you go up there, the view is awesome. The waterfall’s right there,” said his friend, 22-year-old Gina Gomez of Rialto, before holding a girlfriend’s hand to help her with a creek crossing.

Flowers and ferns grew in rugged canyon walls, but visitors have left their mark on the place.

Plastic bottles and metal beer bottle caps with serrated edges sat in the glittering creek.

Jagged glass shards from broken Corona and Miller Lite bottles lay at the base of spray-painted boulders, along the shining creek, sometimes disappearing into the small loose rock on the ground.

A stream of graffiti had been left on rocks, the side of the creek and a fallen, sun-silvered giant tree trunk by 2016 grads, “Lesly y Daniel” and somebody with a lot of pink paint. That person left a heart on a rock slab already painted gray over earlier graffiti, like some kind of high school chalkboard.

A smiling, child-sized stick figure had been painted in blue on a canyon wall above the creek. Someone painted “Enjoy the NATURE” in dripping red paint on a beautiful granite boulder.

A man who brought his two young daughters to see the falls described the graffiti as disgusting. He didn’t want to give his name because they were violating the closure. The people leaving the graffiti come from outside the area, he said.

“They’re not here to have fun. They’re just up here to see how much they can destroy,” he said.

Others stayed in the lower falls area, where small waterfalls cascaded into shimmering pools that eventually empty into Mill Creek. A trail to an overlook offers a view of the upper falls, but visitors can explore the lower creek and don’t have to stay on the trail, Miller said.

INJURIES MORE SERIOUS

The number of injuries has dropped since the closure. Six people have been rescued, most since March, and all but one in the upper falls area. Four have required helicopter rescues, fire officials said.

The most recent came on June 17, when a 21-year-old woman who got hurt in the closed section had to be airlifted out, San Bernardino County Fire Department spokeswoman Tracey Martinez said.

Helicopter rescues cost \$1,500 to \$2,200 an hour. The closure order allows rescue agencies to pursue reimbursement, said Miller, who didn't know if any had.

In 2015, many people suffered mild to moderate injuries after falling 10 to 15 feet while climbing the slick, moss-covered "chute" to get to the top of the third falls, said **San Bernardino County Fire Department** Capt. Tom McIntosh, a longtime Forest Falls resident who oversees the community's fire station.

People thought it was safe to climb.

But with water once more flowing down that section, people are hiking up around the formation to cross smooth granite rocks at the top of the third falls and reach the base of the second falls. While crossing, some are falling 25 to 30 feet and getting more seriously hurt, he said.

"What happens on occasion is people walk too close to the edge and slip on those polished rocks, and have no opportunity to save themselves," said McIntosh, sitting inside his Gillmore Real Estate office with a view of the San Bernardino Mountains.

McIntosh said he has mixed views over whether the upper falls should stay closed if water continues covering the chute. But the decision, which must be made by Oct. 7, is up to forest officials.

Public safety agencies had one meeting on the issue last fall. While a permanent closure could be considered down the road, community meetings would have to be held beforehand, Miller said.

Visitors' violation of the closure irritates locals, who hear every ambulance and helicopter arriving for rescues, said McKibben as she leaned on a store railing along quiet Valley of the Falls Drive. Above, Steller's jays squawked from trees.

On his way into the store, customer Bruce Serafin said visitors don't respect the danger and beauty of the natural area. They act like Big Falls is Disneyland, said Serafin, who said he agrees with the closure.

"I hate it. But I think it's great," he said. "I think it's saving a lot of lives right now."

BIG FALLS RESCUES

2013: 13 or 14 injuries/rescues

2014: 16 injuries/rescues

2015: At least 57 injuries, 45 rescues including 32 helicopter-assisted search and rescues and 19 helicopter hoists.

2016: Six injuries, four helicopter hoists.

Helicopter rescue costs: \$1,500 to \$2,200 an hour.

BIG FALLS CLOSURE

Location: Falls Picnic Area in Forest Falls

Closed: Upper Big Falls, beyond Big Falls Trail

Effective: Oct. 8, 2015 - Oct. 7, 2016

Open: Falls Picnic Area, lower falls and trailheads for Vivian Creek and Momyer trails.

<http://www.pe.com/articles/falls-806672-closure-people.html>

Fire Quickly Knocked Down at Former Gentlemens Club

Victor Valley News

Posted: June 25, 2016



Hugo C. Valdez, Victor Valley News

HESPERIA:(VVNG.com)- **San Bernardino County Fire** responded to a commercial structure fire at the former Roxy Gentlemen's Club on the 14800 block of Bear Valley Road.

The fire was reported at about 8:30 a.m. on Saturday, June 25th.

When firefighters arrived they located smoke and flames coming from the rear of the building.

Firefighters managed to knock down the fire in under 10 minutes and confined the fire to a small section of the building.

The cause of the fire remains under investigation. More information will be updated as it becomes available.

<http://www.vvng.com/fire-quickly-knocked-down-at-former-gentlemens-club/>

'Balanced budget' approved

Rene Ray De La Cruz, DIALY Press

Posted: June 26, 2016, 10:09 AM

Updated: June 27, 2016, 4:16 PM

HESPERIA — The City Council recently approved its “balanced budget” as it moves into the beginning of its fiscal year on Friday.

The Council, minus councilmen Mike Leonard and Eric Schmidt who were absent during Tuesday's meeting, approved the 422-page document after discussing the budget over several meetings.

The Council remarked that the \$78 million balanced budget in all revenue departments for 2016-17 came in with “no raised taxes or increase in fees.”

The budget had an increase of 15 percent, or \$7.9 million, over the previous year, mainly due to the Eagle Hesperia 55 Senior Housing Loan Agreement payment and the replacement of equipment and vehicles.

“We chose not to raise fees for any part of this budget,” Mayor Pro Tem Paul Russ told the Daily Press. “Revenue is up because we had 60 newbusiness licenses and 27 grand openings.”

The increase also includes reimbursement to the Community Development Block Grant fund for the land upon which the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Station was built and for off-site improvements.

Both the City’s General Fund and Water District are balanced, with a surplus above the 10 percent reserve level. The Fire District shows estimated cash reserves as not applicable, which is due to having negative cash on June 2015. The report noted that as of April 2015, the cash deficit was \$156,897, with the Fire District capital fund covering the negative cash.

The budget for the General Fund is projecting an increase in revenues of 5 percent, or \$1.2 million over last year, with four major General Fund revenues increases including sales and use tax revenue projecting a 3-percent decrease to \$8.3 million.

Vehicle License Fee revenue is expecting an increase of over \$500,000, pushing it to \$7.5 million.

Development-related revenues, including building permit fees, are anticipating a 12-percent increase to \$1.6 million, and leased water rights revenue of \$1.9 million, which primarily pays for the debt service on the 2012 bonds issued forthe purchase of water rights. This revenue is projected to increase roughly 18 percent over last year’s budget of \$1.6 million.

Revenue is anticipated to increase by 8 percent overall, with the General Fund increasing by 5 percent, which is due to increased sales and use tax, vehicle license fees, and development- related revenue, as 150 building permits are planned to be received during June 2017 The Water District, which comprises 32 percent of the overall revenue budget, is increasing by 29 percent, or \$5.8 million, primarily due to receiving \$1.5 million from the Proposition 84 Drought Relief Grant and \$4.7 million from the Proposition 1 Grant that must be used on the Reclaimed Water Distribution System project.

Water sales are also expected to decrease from budget to budget by 7 percent because of water conservation. The report anticipates water consumption will increase by 5 percent over last year.

The report states the budget contains reserves totaling nearly \$12.8 million, which includes the Hesperia Housing Authority total of \$4.4 million, General Fund of \$3.7 and Streets Capital Improvement Projects at \$2.3 million.

Revenue for the Fire District is projected to be \$10.5 million, which is 6 percent, over last year’s \$10 million, primarily due to increases in property taxes, redevelopment pass-through revenue and ground emergency medical transportation.

Property tax revenue of \$4.4 million is expected to increase by 6 percent over the \$4.1 million last year, due to an anticipated 6 percent assessed valuation increase over the FY 201516 assessed valuation based on a study prepared for the Mojave Water Agency.

Paramedic Ambulance Fee revenue is anticipated to remain unchanged. This revenue represents the cash collections of the ambulance billing activity, with the FY 2016-17 budget projected to be \$2.5 million.

The new budget can be viewed online at www.cityofhesperia.us or by calling 760-947-1000.

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/article/20160626/NEWS/160629783/0/SEARCH>

Crews battle fully engulfed garage fire Saturday night

Blaze knocked down in 20 minutes, no injuries reported

Shea Johnson, Daily Press

Posted: June 26, 2016, 10:45 AM



A fire was reported at midnight Saturday in the 9400 block of Cottonwood Avenue as a fully involved detached garage with fire exposure to vegetation and a nearby motor home. Photo courtesy of San Bernardino County Fire

HESPERIA — Upon responding to a fully engulfed garage late Saturday night, County Fire officials quickly knocked down the blaze, a spokesman said Sunday. No injuries were reported and the cause is under investigation.

The fire was reported at midnight Saturday in the 9400 block of Cottonwood Avenue as a fully involved detached garage with fire exposure to vegetation and a nearby motor home, **San Bernardino County Fire** spokesman Jeff Allen told the Daily Press.

The first engine was on scene within 10 minutes, and fire crews worked to contain the blaze within 20 minutes after arrival, Allen said.

A total of 14 County Fire personnel, including three paramedic engines, a paramedic truck company, a battalion chief and fire investigator responded to the incident.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/article/20160626/NEWS/160629782>

Seven sent to hospital, no major injury, in crash Saturday night

Minor extrication necessary, County Fire spokesman says

Staff Reports, Daily Press

Posted Jun. 26, 2016 at 1:29 PM

Updated Jun 26, 2016 at 1:35 PM

VICTORVILLE — Seven people were sent to a local hospital Saturday night following a two-vehicle crash, yet no one suffered any major injury, **San Bernardino County Fire** spokesman Jeff Allen said.

The incident was reported at 10:10 p.m. at Hesperia Road and Ottawa Street.

Allen said minor extrication was necessary following the crash. Two vehicles were involved, but Allen didn't immediately know the types.

The circumstances surrounding the crash weren't known Sunday.

All parties involved were treated locally.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/article/20160626/NEWS/160629779>

Exploding Vape Blamed For Victorville Car Fire

Victor Valley News

Posted: June 26, 2016

VICTORVILLE:(VVNG.com)- A local woman said her car caught fire after a mod box exploded late Sunday morning.

Danielle Poole parked her 2014 Chrysler in the street and under a tree while she visited a friend in Victorville near Silica and Fifth Avenue.

By noon-time temperatures in the Victor Valley had already reached triple digits.

“I went inside for 15 minutes and heard my car alarm going off,” said Poole. “I went outside to my car and it was completely filled with smoke!”

Poole said she panicked and worried her car was going to explode. “The driver side door, seat, and visor were completely engulfed in flames”.

San Bernardino County Fire arrived on scene and helped extinguish the vehicle fire.

Poole was shocked when she learned what may have caused the fire. Prior to walking into her friend's house, Danielle left her Ohmega Box Mod with Emerson batteries on the driver side door panel.

Danielle Poole said she realized it was the box mod when she noticed the mod on fire and embedded in the driver side door. Firefighters were contacted by Victor Valley News but they have not been able to confirm the cause of the fire at this time.

Danielle tells Victor Valley News she's been vaping for years and the experience will not keep her from vaping. "I've left my vape in the car many times but never had this happen. It has me spooked but I will definitely be a lot more cautious."

Danielle just wants others to know what happened to her and warn them about keeping vapes/mods in cars or hot areas because it can happen at any time"

<http://www.vvng.com/exploding-vape-blamed-for-victorville-car-fire/>

Man found dead near Pacific Crest Trail Sunday

Staff Reports, Daily Press

Posted Jun. 27, 2016 at 3:56 PM

Updated Jun 27, 2016 at 4:23 PM

HESPERIA — Authorities said the body of a dead man was found by a hiker Sunday afternoon.

San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department dispatch received a 911 call from a hiker who had been walking on the Pacific Crest Trail on Sunday afternoon. The hiker stated he came upon an unresponsive man on the side of the trail, according to the Sheriff-Coroner.

San Bernardino County Fire Department personnel arrived at the location just before 4 p.m. and found the man with no obvious injuries and "obvious signs of death." He was pronounced dead at 4:30 p.m. Sunday, the Sheriff-Coroner said. The manner of death has not yet been released.

The name of the man is being withheld pending identification and notification of next of kin.

The incident remains under investigation by the Sheriff's Department.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20160627/man-found-dead-near-pacific-crest-trail-sunday>

Wildfire ‘most destructive’ in county history

Rich Pedroncelli, The Associated Press

Posted: June 27, 2016, 7:23 PM



Genoveva Gibson turns away from the burned out ruins of her home on Monday in South Lake. Gipson return to her home to search for her missing dogs that were at the house when fire swept through her neighborhood near Lake Isabella. More than 200 homes and other structures were destroyed by the fire. Rich Pedroncelli, The Associated Press

LAKE ISABELLA — A California wildfire that killed two people and destroyed 200 homes in the southern Sierra Nevada burned away from neighborhoods Monday, clearing the way for some residents to return to homes that survived the savage flames.

The fire grew to more than 70 square miles, but was it 40 percent contained as it burned in steep terrain south of Lake Isabella. Houses could be vulnerable if winds blow the fire back toward some of the communities in the popular recreation area, Fire Chief Brian Marshall said.

“There’s still more threats out there,” Marshall said. “This is going to go down as the most destructive wildfire in Kern County history.”

Cadaver dogs searched through the rubble of devastated neighborhoods for more possible casualties, though remains found over the weekend were identified as an animal, Kern County sheriff’s spokesman Ray Pruitt said.

The cause of the fire remains under investigation. A man with two guns was arrested Sunday in a mandatory evacuation area, though further details weren’t available, Pruitt said.

The fire began Thursday and quickly exploded in dry brush and bore down on small communities of houses and mobile homes that surround Lake Isabella, a dammed section of the scenic Kern River popular for fishing, whitewater rafting and other outdoor activities.

Terrifying flames arrived with little warning and residents, many elderly, had to flee amid heavy smoke. “People were escaping barely within an inch of their lives,” Marshall said.

The bodies of an elderly couple, apparently overcome by smoke, were found Friday. Their names have not been released.

In addition to the destroyed homes, another 75 were damaged. Evacuations were still in place Monday, but residents who lived in areas with limited fire damage were being allowed to return at noon.

“Most people here, this is all they had,” said Daniel O’Brien, 53, who lost two rental mobile homes. “You have these moments where you just want to break down crying and fall apart.”

The fire was the most damaging blaze in California, but it is just one of many that have burned large swaths of the arid West during hot weather.

Gov. Jerry Brown declared a state of emergency to free up funds for firefighting and eventual cleanup. The Federal Emergency Management Agency also authorized funds for firefighting efforts.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/article/ZZ/20160627/NEWS/306279974/0/SEARCH>

ENVIRONMENT: Smog grips Southern California region

The season most associated with poor air quality gets a head start with hot stagnant weather.

David Danelski, Press Enterprise

Published: June 27, 2016

Updated: June 28, 2016



Consider it a different kind of June gloom.

This month, instead of mostly cool, cloudy starts to our Southern California days, we’ve gotten a lot of sunny, hot and stagnant conditions – ideal for cooking up unhealthy air pollution.

And wildfires last week in Angeles National Forest near Duarte just made it worse.

This early start to smog season 2016 has given us only four days this month when ozone pollution didn’t exceed the federal health standard somewhere in our ocean-to-mountains air basin, according to pollution data from the California Air Resources Board.

And that makes life difficult for people like Karen Jakpor of Riverside, whose chronic asthma took a turn for the worse starting about a week ago.

“With a string of the bad air days, I had to avoid outdoor activity and stay indoors,” said Jakpor. “I also had to increase dosage of my steroid medication.”

Despite her asthma flare-up, she flew to Boston on Friday to attend a wedding. But she never made it to the celebration. A sinus infection landed her in a hospital for a brief stay. Now she is worried about returning to the bad air in Southern California.

The short-term air pollution forecast doesn't look good.

The South Coast Air Quality Management District expects the air today to be unhealthful for all people in the Riverside, Perris Valley and San Bernardino areas.

And it is expected to be unhealthful today for more medically sensitive people in western San Bernardino County, the San Gabriel Valley, Lake Elsinore and Big Bear Lake areas.

The problem is that ozone pollution rises during hot, stagnant weather as it cooks up urban pollutants. Specifically, volatile organic compounds, such as industrial solvents, react with nitrogen dioxides from burning fuel to create the unstable gas.

Ozone irritates moist tissues, such as eyes and respiratory tracts. It causes nausea, headaches and burning eyes and triggers asthma attacks, among other health problems. It also has been linked in studies to early deaths.

But the news isn't all bad.

Ozone generally hits unhealthful levels in the later morning and afternoon hours.

That means air can be OK for running and other physical activity during the early morning and nighttime hours.

Michael John Stanley of Riverside is a competitive masters long-distance runner, who produces a weekly show on YouTube for runners 35 and older called "Masters Running Revelations."

"I am not much for the morning, so I try to run at night, between 7 and 8," he said. "The only problem is it is a lot hotter then than it is the morning."

<http://www.pe.com/articles/air-806892-pollution-morning.html>

5-Year-Old Dies After Being Ejected From Vehicle

Victor Valley News

Posted: June 27, 2016

BAKER:(VVNG.com)- Authorities say a child was killed on Sunday night following a rollover collision on the northbound 15 freeway.

The single vehicle crash was reported at 11:15 p.m. on June 26th, 2016, approximately two miles south of Baker Blvd.

San Bernardino County Fire responded and located a 2004 Honda off the roadway with major damage. The vehicle was occupied by two adults and two children.

According to authorities, 24-year-old Miguel Amador, a resident of Las Vegas was driving in the no.1 lane traveling at 70 mph. For unknown reasons, Amador failed to maintain proper lane positioning and allowed the vehicle to drift to the left. The driver attempted to re-enter the no.1 lane by quickly turning the wheel to the right.

Authorities said the unsafe turning movement caused the driver to lose control of the vehicle. As the vehicle began to re-enter the no.1 lane the vehicle began to rotate in a clockwise motion as it skid out-of-control across the northbound lanes towards the right shoulder.

The Honda went down a dirt embankment where it overturned. As the vehicle overturned onto its roof a 5-year-old female passenger was fully ejected. The child identified as Leah Amador, from Las Vegas, was pronounced dead at the scene.

No other injuries were reported as a result of the crash.

The collision is under investigation by the Barstow California Highway Patrol.

<http://www.vvng.com/5-year-old-dies-after-being-ejected-from-vehicle/>