



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MUDSLIDES THREATEN FOREST FALLS

An afternoon downpour set loose a series of heavy mud and debris slides through the community of Forest Falls Sunday afternoon, causing an as-yet undetermined amount of damage and temporarily marooning upwards of two thousand residents and visitors.

So far no injuries have been reported, and to this point all community members and known visitors are accounted for.

Late this morning crews were able to clear the final remaining mudslide from the main road through town, meaning residents and visitors still stranded on the uphill side of that slide are finally able to evacuate the town. This included upwards of 100 non-local residents who had sheltered overnight at the Forest Falls Community Center.

At approximately 3pm yesterday San Bernardino County Fire received reports of heavy rain causing flash floods and mudslides, threatening homes, vehicles and pedestrians in the small mountain community in the eastern San Bernardino mountains.

Responding crews arrived on scene to find the debris slides had washed out Valley of the Falls Drive—the only road leading into and out of town—in several places, initially keeping rescuers from reaching the stranded. A “shelter in place” order was placed, meaning those in the way of harm were asked not to evacuate or venture into the flood but instead stay in a sturdy structure or vehicle until the waters subsided enough for rescuers to get to them.

Front end loaders and graders from San Bernardino County Roads department were eventually able clear several of the walls of mud enough for rescuers to fan out and canvass the town and begin accounting for any missing persons.

Crews from County Fire and Sheriff, as well as US Forest Service, American Medical Response and the Forest Falls CERT team responders teamed up to go door to door searching for potential victims. Specialized swift

water rescue teams from County Fire, as well as hand crews normally used for wild land firefighting, were dispatched to assist in the search.

Eventually all community members were accounted for, including over 500 children and teens who had just arrived at Mountain Home Conference Center to begin a week-long church group retreat. This group was the focus of initial rescue operations; it was found that while the conference center sustained some damage, the group was found by rescuers to have sheltered in place successfully and without injury.

Two rescues were effected: one of a motorist stranded in his vehicle by the rising flood; the other of a disabled resident who had hailed rescuers to retrieve him from rising floodwaters entering his home. Both victims were escorted to safety and without injury.

Power remained intact throughout the flooding. This morning, however, electrical utility crews disconnected power to a portion of the town in an effort to repair damaged power lines that had sagged across the main road, which had for a time prevented crews from clearing the final wall of debris and mud isolating the upper portion of the town.

A partial closure of Valley of the Falls Drive at Hwy 38 remains in place; only Forest Falls residents are allowed to pass the CHP barrier for entry into the town.

Media are encouraged to follow updates on our Twitter feed, [@sbcountyfire](#).