



NEWS



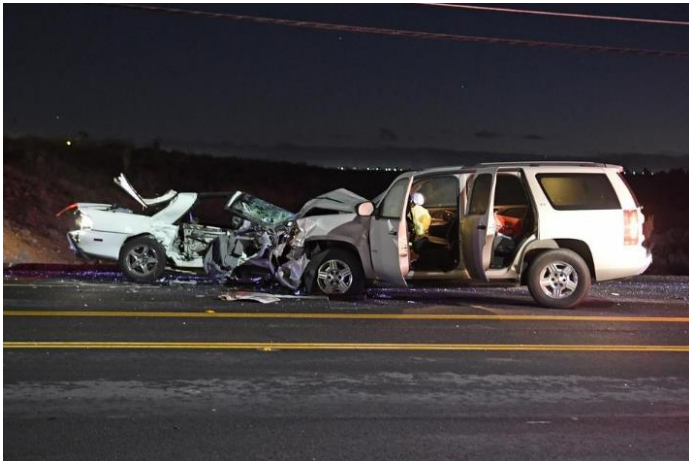
News Headlines 12/23-29/2016

- Man airlifted after crash on Bear Valley Road Thursday
- Major Collision Closes Bear Valley Road at Mall Boulevard
- Couple who died in MV fire identified
- Fatal MV fire ruled to be electrical
- Man airlifted to trauma center after Monday morning stabbing in Pinon Hills
- Pinon Hills stabbing suspect arrested on suspicion of attempted murder
- Firefighters shop for brighter Christmas
- Firefighters go shopping
- Christmas Eve house fire leaves one man dead, another injured
- UPDATE: Two Dead in Christmas Eve House Fire
- Powerful Storm Could Bring Snow to the Cajon Pass
- Relief fund has provided \$72K in assistance to Blue Cut Fire victims
- Sheriff's volunteers provide 'Feasts for Families'
- Coroner Identifies Couple Killed by Fire in Hesperia Home
- Daughter copes with losing parents in Christmas Eve blaze in Hesperia
- Building the future
- Lenwood casino odds remain a mystery
- Pedestrian Injured In Hit-And-Run In Yucca Valley

Man airlifted after crash on Bear Valley Road Thursday

Paola Baker, Daily Press

Posted: December 22, 2016, 6:50 PM



A white Chevy Camaro and a Silver Chevy Tahoe were involved in a traffic collision on Bear Valley Road near Pacoima Road in Victorville on Thursday evening. The cause of the crash is under investigation. David Pardo, Daily Press

VICTORVILLE - One man was airlifted while another man was taken to a local hospital following a crash on Bear Valley Road Thursday evening, authorities said.

Reports of a two-vehicle crash near the intersection of Bear Valley and Dunia roads were received at 5:09 p.m. According to scanner traffic, a Chevy Camaro and Chevrolet Tahoe SUV were involved in the collision. The driver of the Camaro was reported to be trapped inside the vehicle.

San Bernardino County Fire Department Captain Jeremy Kern said an extrication was requested for the trapped driver, as well as an airship and two ground ambulances. The extrication was reported to be complete just before 5:30 p.m.

After the extrication, Kern said both patients were taken to Desert Valley Hospital before the driver of the Camaro was airlifted to a local trauma center by Air Rescue 7. The severity of the injuries suffered is not yet known, but no other injuries have yet been reported.

Bear Valley Road has been closed between Pacoima Road and Mall Boulevard as authorities respond to the scene. Authorities said the closure is expected to last for at least five hours. A Daily Press staffer reported that traffic on Bear Valley Road was being diverted onto Pacoima Road, and traffic was heavily backed up.

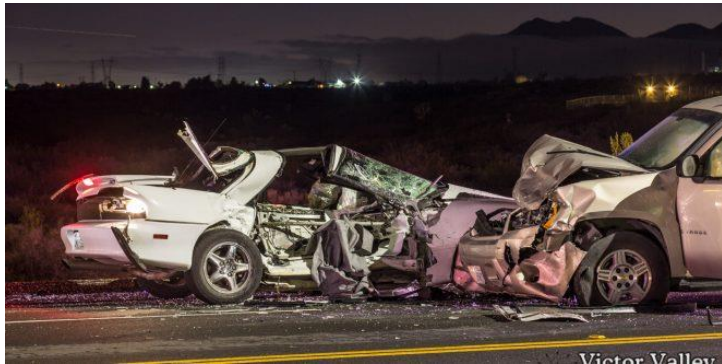
The circumstances of the crash are not yet known. This story is developing and more information will be updated as it is received.

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/news/20161222/man-airlifted-after-crash-on-bear-valley-road-thursday>

Major Collision Closes Bear Valley Road at Mall Boulevard

Gabriel D. Espinoza, Victor Valley News Group

Posted: December 22, 2016



Gabriel D. Espinoza, Victor Valley News

VICTORVILLE, Calif. (VVNG.com) A major traffic collision involving two vehicles forced the closure of Bear Valley Road.

Just after 5:10 p.m. dispatch received reports of a vehicle on fire and a person trapped on Bear Valley Road near Pacoima Road.

San Bernardino County Sheriff's Deputies and Firefighters from SBCFD responded and located two vehicles with significant damage.

The male driver of one vehicle, a silver Chevy Tahoe, was able to exit his SUV. The male driver of the other vehicle, a white Chevy Camaro, required extrication which was completed at 5:28 p.m.

“There was only one person in each vehicle at the time of the accident,” Deputy Jeff Dean said.

The driver of the Tahoe was taken by ground ambulance to a local hospital with complaints of chest pain.

The driver in the Camaro was taken to Desert Valley Hospital and later airlifted to a trauma center. His condition is unknown at this time.

Both vehicles came to rest in the eastbound lanes and based on debris at the scene, it appears the initial impact also occurred in the eastbound lanes.

San Bernardino County Fire Department Captain Jeremy Kern said there was no vehicle fire when they arrived on scene.

Bear Valley Road between Mall Boulevard and Pacoima Avenue will be closed for duration of at least 5-hours allowing for an investigation, according to Deputy Dean.

<http://www.vvng.com/major-collision-closes-bear-valley-road-at-mall-boulevard/>

Couple who died in MV fire identified

Mohave Valley Daily News

Posted: December 23, 2016 10:10 AM

MOHAVE VALLEY — The elderly couple who died in a fire at their Mohave Valley home has been identified as Michael and Dawn Donovan.

Law enforcement officials have not formally identified the couple, but messages on the Mohave Valley Daily News Facebook page confirmed their identity on Thursday.

The couple was trapped inside the single-wide mobile home after the fire began around 12:45 a.m. Wednesday. Two neighbors, whose home was also damaged by the fire, tried unsuccessfully to reach the couple. One of the men, Dillon Maves, 18, suffered injuries in his attempt to get inside the burning home. He was treated at an area hospital. His brother, Patrick Farrell, 21, also tried to reach the Donovans but was unable to because of the intense heat and thick smoke from the flames that consumed the home.

According to Mohave County tax records and Facebook messages, the Donovans moved to the Tri-state from Alabama and bought the mobile home in 2014.

Authorities have not announced a cause but, according to Mohave Valley Fire District Chief Ted Martin, it is believed to have been accidental.

Units from the Mohave Valley, Fort Mojave Mesa, Bullhead City, Golden Shores and San Bernardino County fire departments responded to battle the blaze.

http://www.mohavedailynews.com/news/couple-who-died-in-mv-fire-identified/article_ac8348c6-c932-11e6-80c1-b3da561aba88.html

Fatal MV fire ruled to be electrical

DK McDonald, Mohave Valley Daily News

Posted: December 28, 2016, 12:46 AM

MOHAVE VALLEY — Investigators have determined the cause of a structure fire that killed two people. “It is listed as an electrical fire,” said Fire Marshal Don Gibson, Mohave Valley Fire Department.

The elderly couple who died in the fire were identified to the Mohave Valley Daily News as Michael and Dawn Donovan. Law enforcement officials have not formally released their identity.

Two neighbors, whose home was also damaged by the fire, tried unsuccessfully to reach the couple, driven back by intense heat and thick smoke from the blaze.

Dillion Maves, 18, was treated at an area hospital for injuries received as he and his brother, Patrick Farrell, 21, attempted to reach the Donovans.

Units from Mohave Valley, Fort Mojave Mesa, Bullhead City, Golden Shores and **San Bernardino County fire departments** responded about 12:45 a.m., Dec. 21 to the 10500 block of Fremont Road. Firefighters arrived to find the Donovan’s single-wide mobile home engulfed in flames, officials said. No one else was in the residence at the time of the fire.

http://www.mohavedailynews.com/news/fatal-mv-fire-ruled-to-be-electrical/article_aeb2a75c-ccd1-11e6-a9ad-e362e1cbe1e2.html

Man airlifted to trauma center after Monday morning stabbing in Pinon Hills

Jose Quintero, Daily Press

Posted: December 26, 2016, 10:59 AM

PINON HILLS - Authorities were investigating a Monday morning stabbing in Pinon Hills that resulted in a man being airlifted to a local trauma center.

San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department deputies responded to a report of a stabbing in the 11400 block of Amarillo Road at 6:52 a.m., according to spokeswoman Cindy Bachman.

The suspect was at the location when deputies arrived and was in custody Monday morning. Bachman said it appears the victim and suspect "are known to each other."

The victim was airlifted to Arrowhead Regional Medical Center with undisclosed injuries from the stabbing. His condition was unknown Monday morning, Bachman said.

San Bernardino County Fire Department spokesman Dan Nelson confirmed a helicopter landed at the Stater Bros. shopping center in Phelan to transport the man to the trauma center.

This story is developing and will be update as more information released.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20161226/man-airlifted-to-trauma-center-after-monday-morning-stabbing-in-pinon-hills>

Pinon Hills stabbing suspect arrested on suspicion of attempted murder

Jose Quintero, Daily Press

Posted: December 27, 2016, 9:44 AM

PINON HILLS - A 19-year-old Pinon Hills man arrested after authorities say he stabbed a man early Monday morning was behind bars in lieu of \$1 million bail, booking records show.

If criminally charged by prosecutors, Charles Wesley Home is expected to appear in a Victorville courtroom Wednesday afternoon for arraignment, booking records show.

San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department deputies arrested Home on suspicion of attempted murder at 10 a.m. after responding to a stabbing that occurred a little before 7 a.m. in the 11400 block of Amarillo Road.

The unidentified victim was airlifted to Arrowhead Regional Medical Center with undisclosed injuries from the stabbing. His condition was unknown Tuesday morning. **San Bernardino County Fire Department** personnel landed a helicopter at the Stater Bros. shopping center in Phelan to transport the man to the trauma center.

According to a press release sent out by Sheriff officials, the man is expected to live and was known to Home and the suspect was familiar with the residence as well.

Sheriff's officials did not immediately provide additional details of the stabbing Tuesday morning. Authorities on Monday said it appears the victim and suspect "are known to each other." Booking records show that Home lives in the 1800 block of Maria Road in Pinon Hills, just over three miles south of the stabbing scene.

Home was being held at High Desert Detention Center in Adelanto, booking records show.

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/news/20161227/pinon-hills-stabbing-suspect-arrested-on-suspicion-of-attempted-murder>

Firefighters shop for brighter Christmas

Jessica Gibbs, Hi-Desert Star

Posted: December 23, 2016, 3:48 PM



Paid-call firefighter Jared Pierce and a local fire Explorer stock up on remote control cars during a shopping spree at Wal-Mart Dec. 17.

YUCCA VALLEY — Watching cart after cart of toys being pushed out the door, there is no question that the spirit of Christmas is alive and well or that it wears fire boots.

Firefighters littered the aisles of Wal-Mart Dec. 17 searching high and low for presents on behalf of Tender Loving Christmas. Cash donations totaling over \$6,000 were used to fill shopping carts to overflowing. Each item carefully chosen by pairs of firefighters for a specific gender and age group.

Under the watchful eye of Capt. Dave Faller, the Morongo Basin stations have been placing toy boxes in local businesses, requesting money and braving the chilly weather outside of Wal-Mart to help TLC reach its goal of giving a little Christmas to everyone.

This is the 36th year that the **San Bernardino County Professional Firefighters** have partnered with TLC to collect money, store toys and shop for presents. “I want to make it clear that we are just out here as the hands of the community,” Faller said.

“All the money that we are shopping with comes from the people of the Morongo Basin. Without them this wouldn’t be possible.”

There was not a lack of smiles or giggles from the aisles during the shopping spree — all coming from Santa’s firefighting helpers.

The time taken to painstakingly choose the right toys makes it evident that this is not a task they take lightly.

“We have received calls all week of families saying that they will be there on Christmas Day, some calling to say they have five kids,” said ambulance operator Humberto Ventura.

“This is such a wonderful community and we are in houses every day where they have nothing, not even food, and to see the outpouring of support from this community is really great.”

Stepping into the crisp December air, local shoppers quietly drop presents into the exiting carts from their own bags or humbly press money into the firefighters' palms confirming what we all know, this town is definitely someplace special.

http://www.hidesertstar.com/news/article_4f49db56-c96a-11e6-87c8-63d5ef481249.html

Firefighters go shopping

Big Bear Grizzly

Posted: December 28, 2016



Ryder Prudhomme, 5, takes time to grab a drink of juice after spending the morning shopping courtesy of Big Bear's firefighters. Each child was also provided with juice and doughnuts following their shopping spree, as well as a stocking filled with more goodies. Judi Bowers/Big Bear Grizzly

Big Bear's fire departments made Christmas a little merrier for a number of Valley youngsters.

The annual Firefighters' Shopping Spree treated about 30 Big Bear children to a morning roaming the aisles at Kmart picking whatever they wanted.

Each child had \$100 to spend, and Kmart didn't charge tax, so their dollars went a little further. The youngsters gathered outside the store at 7 a.m. for a photo with the firefighters while they waited for Santa Claus to arrive. Each child was paired with a firefighter from one of the three participating agencies: Big Bear Fire Department, CalFire and **San Bernardino County Fire Department**- Fawnskin.

There was no shortage of smiles as the kids made their way up and down the aisles looking for the perfect toy, new clothes and shoes and even something for a sibling or family member on a couple of occasions.

As they finished, firefighters greeted the families with juice and doughnuts and another stocking filled with more goodies, all part of spreading cheer by all those involved.

http://www.bigbeargrizzly.net/news/firefighters-go-shopping/article_bfc3f51c-cc97-11e6-a1eb-1b1cf9623676.html

Christmas Eve house fire leaves one man dead, another injured

Monica Solano. Daily Press

Posted: December 24, 2016, 9:50 AM



A structure fire left one man dead and a woman in critical condition early Christmas Eve morning. David Pardo, Press Dispatch.

HESPERIA - An early Saturday morning structure fire resulted in the death of one man and a woman in critical condition in Hesperia.

At 3 a.m., **San Bernardino County Fire Department** firefighters and San Bernardino County Sheriff's Hesperia Station deputies received reports from dispatch of an unknown fire, which was later identified as a structure fire at the 11100 block of Redwood Road near Appleton Road in Hesperia.

Upon arrival, firefighters found the single family home heavily involved in flames towards the back of the structure while witnesses on scene reporting to have seen several people trapped inside the home, according to County Fire Capt. Steve Castagnola.

Firefighters and crews quickly engaged in an aggressive fire attack and search and encountered heavy smoke and fire conditions inside the home and located two people, a man and woman, inside the rear bedroom of the structure and removed them from the home.

Castagnola said the man and woman were then transported by ground to a local hospital due to the severity of their injuries. Just after 4 a.m., the man was pronounced dead at the hospital while the woman was listed in critical condition.

County fire responded with four engines , one fire truck, a battalion chief and two medical ambulances on scene.

The cause of the fire is still under investigation.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20161224/christmas-eve-house-fire-leaves-one-man-dead-another-injured>

UPDATE: Two Dead in Christmas Eve House Fire

Gabriel D. Espinoza, Victor Valley Daily News

Posted: December 24, 2016



HESPERIA, Calif. (VVNG.com) San Bernardino County Fire has confirmed that the second person has died as a result of an early morning house fire on Christmas Eve.

At about 3:00 a.m., San Bernardino County Firefighters, along with San Bernardino County Sheriff's Deputies responded to a home on the 11100 block of Redwood Road near Appleton Road in Hesperia.

When firefighters arrived on scene they found the home heavily involved in fire towards the back of the structure and also received reports of several people trapped.

A security door made it difficult for firefighters to immediately gain access to the home. It required a chain saw to cut the front door open.

Within moments an intense fire quickly spread throughout the front corridors of the home and was visible through the front living room windows.

“At that point (Firefighters) aggressively engaged in an interior fire attack and search, they were able to locate two inhabitants in the rear bedroom of the structure and remove them,” said Eric Spies, San Bernardino County Fire Public Information Officer.

The female was the first to be removed from the home, followed by the male moments later. Deputies and Firefighters worked together to perform CPR on the patients as they were brought out to the front yard.

“They were transferred in critical condition by two county ambulances to a local hospital,” said Spies.

The male patient was declared deceased at the hospital just after 4:00 a.m. The female was listed in critical condition but later succumbed to her injuries.

A witness on scene said he was the neighbor that called 911 while desperately trying to get inside the residence to help, but was unable to assist due to heavy smoke. He was treated at the scene for cuts to his hands.

A woman from across the street said, the couple lived alone and appeared to be in their 60's.

An officer that was performing CPR on one of the patients told Victor Valley News, “Behind this face I’m sad. This is somebody’s mother and father. I get to spend Christmas with my family but they won’t. When I go home I will cry myself to sleep and just pray for them.”

Four engines, one truck company, two ambulances, two chief officers and an investigator from County Fire for a total of 22 personnel were assigned to the incident. No injuries to firefighters were reported, and damage estimates are still being compiled.

The cause of the fire remains under joint investigation between County Fire’s Office of the Fire Marshal and San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Bomb/Arson Unit.

<http://www.vvng.com/1-dead-in-christmas-eve-house-fire-another-in-critical-condition-video/>

Powerful Storm Could Bring Snow to the Cajon Pass

Victor Valley News

Posted: December 22, 2016



(Hugo C. Valdez, Victor Valley News)

VICTOR VALLEY, Calif.(VVNG.com)– The past 24 hours have brought along not only freezing temperatures but also plenty of rain. You won’t want to put away your rain coats or umbrellas just yet.

The National Weather Service has forecasted an “energetic storm system” expected to bring heavy rain, strong winds, and snow to the region beginning Friday at 4:00 p.m. until 4:00 a.m. Sunday.

Friday evening snow levels are expected to start at 6,000-7,000 feet. By Saturday morning they will lower to 3,500 feet and down to 3,000 feet by the afternoon.

Snow accumulations above 7,000 feet: 12-18 inches; 6000-7000 feet: 8-12 inches; 5000-6000 feet: 6-10 inches; 4000-5000 feet: 3-6 inches; and 3000-4000 feet: 1-3 inches. “This may bring accumulating snowfall along Interstate 15 through the Cajon Pass,” according to San Bernardino County Fire.

Winds gust of 45-60 mph will reduce visibility to 1/4 mile or less under heavy snow and fog. Drivers should take extra precaution on all roadways; avoid flooded areas, and drive defensively.

A flash flood watch has been issued from 6:00 p.m. Friday to 6:00 a.m. Saturday. Residents are urged to prepare for possible mudslides and strong debris flow in recent burn areas.

Flash flooding is likely in flood-prone low-lying areas with poor drainage. debris flows are possible in the recent burn areas including the “blue cut” and “pilot” burn scars in San Bernardino county. Highway 38 below the “lake” fire burn scar may also experience debris flows.

San Bernardino County Fire would also like to remind the public that sandbags are available at all County Fire stations.

Those traveling to snow elevations should be prepared with snow chains and emergency supplies if needed.

48-hour precipitation storm totals as of 6:30 p.m. Thursday, December 22, 2016 (source NWS).

<http://www.vvng.com/powerful-storm-could-bring-snow-to-the-cajon-pass/>

Relief fund has provided \$72K in assistance to Blue Cut Fire victims

Daily Press

Posted: December 23, 2016, 10:19 AM



SAN BERNARDINO - Through a grant provided by the Inland Empire United Way, the Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino County (CAPSBC) has been diligently working to provide disaster relief for victims of the Blue Cut Fire this holiday season.

The blaze, which began Aug. 16 in the Cajon Pass and burned over 36,200 acres, 105 homes and 216 buildings, left many families in need of assistance. In order for these families to get the help they need, a Blue Cut Fire Relief Fund was established by the Inland Empire United Way and is being administered by CAPSBC.

Since case management began on Nov. 8, \$72,000 has been provided to fire victims for essential services, such as emergency housing, transportation, food and clothing.

"We are conscientiously working to administer support as quickly as possible, especially with the holidays and colder weather approaching," CAPSBC CEO Patricia Nickols-Butler said in a statement.

Families are also being assisted on a case-by-case basis for the replacement of property loss due to the fires, such as appliances, furniture, tools necessary for continued employment and other items that are essential to their livelihood.

The Inland Empire United Way provided an initial \$150,000 in funds to the CAPSBC to administer support to the fire victims. Since then, CAPSBC also established case management services with 68 families who were impacted.

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/news/20161223/relief-fund-has-provided-72k-in-assistance-to-blue-cut-fire-victims>

Sheriff's volunteers provide 'Feasts for Families'

Douglas W. Motley, Alpenhorn News

Posted: December 24, 2016



Crestline's McCraley family – Reagan, Loren, Lilly, PJ (held by Santa) and Aria – was one of 28 families participating in the annual Feasts for Families event on Friday, December 16. (Photo by Douglas W. Motley)

Santa put in an appearance at the Twin Peaks Sheriff's Station as expected last Friday afternoon, just in time to hand out toys to all the boys and girls attending the Sheriff's Department's tenth annual Feasts for Families event.

Sheriff's volunteers, assisted by fire personnel and other community minded volunteers, handed out holiday meal gift boxes and toys to 28 local families in need of some extra holiday cheer. According to Sheriff's Service Specialist Gilbert Flores, participating families had been selected based upon recommendations from local, schools, churches, service organizations and patrol deputies.

Each participating family received a gift box containing gift certificates for ham and turkey, as well as boxes and cans containing side dishes such as mashed potatoes, green beans, butter, cranberry sauce, hot chocolate, pies and other seasonal treats. The turkeys, said Flores, were donated by Stater Brothers and the hams from Jensen's, while toys were provided by the **San Bernardino County Fire Department's** annual 'Spark of Love' toy drive. High Desert and San Bernardino area Wal-Mart stores donated other toys.

In the past, Flores said, deputies had delivered the meals and toys to the homes of selected families, but that all changed several years ago, so that kids could have a chance to meet Santa at the sheriff's station. "It's very heartwarming," Flores told *The Alpenhorn News* as he recalled one little girl who showed up early. "After meeting Santa, she had tears in her eyes. It choked me up. It makes it all worthwhile."

Each child that visited with Santa received one or two toys, while parents were provided with several more toys that they could give to their children on Christmas Day. "It makes me feel happy that families can come together and little kids can get toys," said Aria McCraley of Crestline, as she clutched the plush puppy and teaching triangle toys that Santa had given her.

"This is amazing, we need more stuff like this for our community," said Crestline father Chris Johnson.

<http://alpenhornnews.com/sheriffs-volunteers-provide-feasts-for-families-p7730-155.htm>

Coroner Identifies Couple Killed by Fire in Hesperia Home

Hugo C Valdez, Victor Valley News Group

Posted: December 25, 2016

HESPERIA, Calif.(VVNG.com)- The San Bernardino Coroners office has released the identities of the couple who died in a Christmas Eve house fire.

On Saturday, December 24th at 2:58 a.m., **San Bernardino County Fire** responded to a report of a house on fire in the 11100 block of Redwood Avenue in the city of Hesperia.

911 callers stated the inside of the house was on fire and that people were still inside the residence.

Firefighters forced entry and found Guadalupe Palomo, 74, and her husband Lazaro Palomo Hernandez, 73, unresponsive in a rear bedroom of the home.

In an effort to save their lives, firefighters and officers attempted to perform CPR on the couple. They were both transported to the Desert Valley Hospital emergency room where they were pronounced dead.

It was later discovered the family dog also died as a result of the fire.

The couple's daughter Sandra Palomo commented on a Victor Valley News article thanking all the first responders, officers, and neighbors. "My parents were amazing human beings with generous hearts. This is such a tragic moment for our families and friends. I'm in utter shock, devastated, my world is upside down."

Sandra shared a very heartfelt post via her Facebook along with a photo of her parents in their younger years.

<http://www.vvng.com/coroner-identifies-couple-killed-by-fire-in-hesperia-home/>

Daughter copes with losing parents in Christmas Eve blaze in Hesperia

Daily Press

Posted: December 28, 2016



Lazaro Palomo Hernandez, 73, and Guadalupe Palomo, 74, are shown here with their grandchildren. Photo courtesy of Sandra Palomo

HESPERIA - Sandra Palomo says her world has been turned upside down and she is slowly picking up the pieces while coping with losing both her parents a day before Christmas.

Her parents, Lazaro Palomo Hernandez, 73, and Guadalupe Palomo, 74, were both pronounced dead at a local hospital after being transported with injuries suffered in a structure fire in the 11100 block of Redwood Road.

"The news was devastating," Palomo said. "Family and friends have been real supportive and helpful during this tragic time. We spent Christmas at my parents' house retrieving important documents and digging through their stuff. That was very tough to do."

San Bernardino County Fire Department firefighters and San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department deputies received reports of the blaze at 3 a.m. Dec. 24. Upon arrival, firefighters found the single-family home heavily involved in flames toward the back of the structure, while witnesses reported seeing people trapped inside.

The couple was found unresponsive inside the rear bedroom and was removed by emergency personnel before being transported to a local hospital.

County Fire officials said there is no new information regarding the cause of fire, which remains under a joint investigation with the Sheriff's Bomb-Arson unit.

Palomo said she received a call while at work from sheriff's officials informing her what had happened to her parents. Palomo left work and headed down Interstate 15 to Hesperia.

"I live in Las Vegas, so I have to take care of as much arrangements possible before I head back home," she said. "Thankfully my two children have been my rock while dealing with this. They are both too young to really understand. My son, who is 10, tries to console me and reminds me that they will always be with us."

One of the things Sandra Paloma said she wishes to accomplish is to find her father's brother, Julio Hernandez, whom she believes is in his late 50s to early 60s. She said she believes her father's brother also lives in the Las Vegas area.

I don't have any contact information for any of my dad's relatives," she said. "Growing up I only knew of his younger brother because his family is mostly in Mexico. I just really want to find my uncle so that my father's family knows what happened."

Palomo said her parents left Mexico in the 1960s and settled in the Los Angeles area before moving to the High Desert in the early '90s. The couple also opened and operated a restaurant in Victorville named El Sinaloa for almost a decade, Palomo said.

She described her parents as very caring and never hesitant to help anybody in need.

They had a large "church family" and friends who were near and dear to them, Palomo said.

Before heading back home to Las Vegas, Palomo is hopeful to set a date for a memorial and funeral services. But Palomo said the Sheriff-Coroner's office had not released her parents' bodies as of Tuesday.

A GoFundMe account has been created to help pay for the funeral services and as of Wednesday morning had raised a little over \$6,600.

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/news/20161228/daughter-copes-with-losing-parents-in-christmas-eve-blaze-in-hesperia>

Building the future

Rene Ray De La Cruz, Hesperia Star

Posted: December 27, 2016, 4:14 PM

HESPERIA - The new-look City Council will have its hands full as it charges into 2017 and deals with several key areas.

Here are the top five issues the Council will face in the new year:

ROAD IMPROVEMENT

Over the last few years, Hesperia has witnessed several major road projects, including the Rancho Underpass and Rancho Interchange at Interstate 15. The projects have increased traffic flow on Rancho Road, prompting the city to plan improvements along the nearly 7-mile stretch of road.

Next year, traffic signals will be installed at two intersections along Rancho Road, including the cross streets of Maple and Cottonwood avenues, just west of the California Aqueduct.

Hesperia also will begin the initial process of widening Rancho Road, with the city and county funding the project along with \$10 million pledged by Terra Verde Group, developer of the Tapestry Project. The city also will work to try to obtain funding from San Bernardino Associated Governments.

Hesperia also will seek federal funding for widening the aqueduct bridges on Rancho Road and Main Street.

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Hesperia should see the construction of ALDI grocery store on Main Street in 2017, as well as the opening of a 3,645-square-foot mini-mart, which includes four fuel islands, an automated carwash and two 2,546-square-foot drive-thru restaurants on just under 4 acres southeast of the Rancho Interchange.

With several more commercial projects in the works, including a major developer that is planning 7 million square feet of industrial space, the Council was tight-lipped about several new companies that have chosen to plant roots in Hesperia. The city is poised to begin freeway right-of-way work to establish infrastructure for future development.

Several "undisclosed companies" from Adelanto also are planning to move to Hesperia as they "express desire" not to be around marijuana grows, according to Councilman Russ Blewett.

NEW COUNCIL

After being elected in November, new Councilmembers Larry Bird and Rebekah Swanson have been getting their political feet wet in city government. Bird and Swanson, who are employees of the Hesperia Unified School District, both have leadership experience, with Bird the principal of Sultana High School and Swanson a former board member with the Hesperia Recreation and Park Board.

But the two freshmen Councilmembers will be busy getting up to speed on future development projects, Tapestry, marijuana ordinances, the possible fire annexation to **San Bernardino County Fire** and several other items. Both Mayor Paul Russ and Mayor Pro Tem Blewett told the Daily Press the new Council "is strong" despite each member having varying points of views.

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

After a housing development drought of nearly three years, the city saw a resurgence of homes built after the Council began lowering development impact fees in 2014. The Council said it is encouraged by some 150 building permits that were pulled for infill lots in 2016, with Blewett predicting nearly 200 permits for 2017.

Blewett said property owners are selling their lots, which will eventually equate to new development, with every dollar of construction circulating eight times in the community. He added that 210 homes built will pay \$2.2 million toward the cost of the Rancho Interchange project.

The new year also will see the opening of the Villas 55-plus community, a 96-unit gated community being constructed on about 10 acres just east of Mariposa Road. Each building will consist of 24 units each, with 629-square-foot one-bedroom and 875-square-foot two-bedroom apartments.

TAPESTRY AND FIRE ANNEXATION

Although the Tapestry housing project was approved in January of last year, residents aren't expected to hear much about the 30-year build-out project in the Summit Valley area of southeast Hesperia in 2017, according to Blewett.

After the Council approved Tapestry and its 16,196 units, Terra Verde Group Director of Development John Ohanian told the Daily Press, "It's actually the beginning of a long process before we can start to develop the property."

Before any dirt is moved, the city and Terra Verde must work through several lawsuits. Soon after Tapestry was approved, the Crestline Sanitation District and a coalition of public-interest groups, including the Center for Biological Diversity, the San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society and the Sierra Club, filed lawsuits.

As for the possible annexation of the Hesperia Fire Protection District to county control, the Council agreed that if the city chooses the annexation route, it will come with the understanding that the agreement will come with no parcel tax. Both the county and city believe Hesperia does not have adequate fire service staffing for a city where firefighters responded to 11,577 calls during the fiscal year of 2014-2015, with 81.7 percent medical calls.

Since June 2004, the city has contracted with county fire to provide fire suppression, ambulance and fire prevention services. Both parties agreed on a 10-year contract in 2004. Since the contract expired, the city has been contracting for firefighting services with the department on a one-year basis.

<http://www.hesperia-star.com/news/20161227/building-future>

Lenwood casino odds remain a mystery

Mike Lamb, Desert Dispatch

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BARSTOW - The biggest question in Barstow still remains unanswered: Will the proposed Indian Casino in Lenwood ever get built?

Meanwhile, another major development has already risen from the ground next to the present Wal-Mart. Construction of the Super Wal-Mart has been underway for months and is expected to open next summer.

As 2016 closes, the Desert Dispatch looks into 2017 and beyond with five top developments.

LENWOOD INDIAN CASINO

A renewal of the municipal services agreement in June between the city, Los Coyotes Band of Cahuilla and Cupeno Indians and Barwest, L.L.C. was the last reported development in this project that was first proposed 10 years ago.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs is working on the Los Coyotes Band of Cahuilla and Cupeno Indians fee-to-trust application to build the casino. The Bureau of Indian Affairs recently released the draft Conformity Determination for the project acquisition of 23 acres of land.

The Los Coyotes Band of Cahuilla and Cupeno Indians propose to construct a gaming facility, hotel, parking areas and other facilities in Lenwood. Because this request is for land to be taken into trust for gaming purposes, the tribe has submitted an application under the Indian Reorganization Act and seeks a determination of gaming eligibility under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act.

The project is apparently on the final leg in the two-part determination, which would ensure the project is in the best interest of the tribe and surrounding community. The whole process has lasted more than a decade.

The municipal services agreement requires all tribal development projects occurring on the Trust Lands be used and developed in a manner that is consistent with the Barstow Municipal Code.

"We understand there isn't a set timeline for the Bureau of Indian Affairs to make a two-part determination, but we're certainly hopeful that a decision will be made soon," City spokesman Anthony Riley said. "We continue to work with the Los Coyotes tribe and their representatives to help make this project a reality."

Heather Sibbison with the Denton's Native American Law and Policy practice represents the Los Coyotes Band of Cahuilla and Cupeno Indians. She told the Desert Dispatch in March that a decision could be made by the end of year. But that doesn't look like likely now.

"They are reviewing the application in the BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs) in Sacramento and we think they are going to be pretty close to being done there. Then they will make a recommendation to the central office in Washington," Sibbison said.

SUPER WAL-MART

The construction of the Super Wal-Mart at Montara Road and East Main Street is causing some inconveniences for motorists.

City Consulting City Engineer Brad Merrell reported at the Dec. 19 City Council meeting that traffic will be flowing in one lane with flagging. The road will be open nights and weekends.

Laying of new asphalt is being delayed because of the cold temperatures.

Merrell told the City Planning Commission in October the new building should be ready by May or June. He said that would give Wal-Mart a month to transfer everything from the present store to the new building.

"Once that is done, they will demolish the old building. That will bring us in compliance," Merrell said.

Economic Development and Planning Manager Gaither Loewenstein told the commission eight retail pads are located where the present store stands.

"Although there are letters of intent being signed with retailers now, the actual construction - most of those would occur until after the existing Wal-Mart is demolished. The Super Wal-Mart is opening the summer of 2017 and my suspicion would be the following summer for the additional retailers," Loewenstein said.

BARSTOW FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

It appears the Barstow Fire Protection District Board of Directors may have to make some hard decisions in 2017. The board held a workshop Dec. 19.

Acting Fire Chief Jamie Williams and Assistant City Manager Cindy Prothro presented an in-depth report that included a PowerPoint presentation.

The report showed revenues are still lagging expenses and there is a mounting pension problem. The 2016-17 budget showed \$4.363 million in revenues and \$4.535 million in expenses.

Williams said the level of fire service delivery minimally meets current operational needs. She also said the cost of the current fire service delivery is predicted to increase based on continual rising retirement contribution rates. The district's contribution is capped at 42 percent, but the employee's contribution rate

exceeds 40 percent with future increases predicted by the San Bernardino County Employees' Retirement Association (SBCERA), whose determination of the district's unfunded liability is increasing.

During public comments, firefighter John Wymore said the district is "broken and bankrupt."

Wymore urged the board to enter serious talks with **San Bernardino County Fire District** to take over the Barstow district.

SPANISH TRAILS SPECIFIC PLAN

Joseph Brady with the Bradco Companies and Malcolm Riley joined forces in 2013 to present the Spanish Trail Specific Plan to the City Council. The development of 112 acres will include an 801,100-square-foot shopping center that will be located along Avenue L.

The development may feature as many as 40 to 50 retail tenants.

Approximately 58 acres in the project site is owned by the State Lands Commission and the Bureau of Land Management. BLM is transferring its land to the State Lands Commission. Brady reported earlier this month that negotiations to determine purchasing and/or leasing terms with the State Lands Commission are progressing.

BARSTOW UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Upgrades and repairs to the buildings in the Barstow Unified School District will take place in the near future after a \$39 million bond measure was approved by voters in the Nov. 8 general election.

The school district will begin the process of building a Fine Arts Academy in 2017. Demolition is expected soon of the former Barstow Intermediate School at 500 Avenue G. State budget cuts forced the district to close the intermediate school in 2009. Over the years the school, which opened in 1957, has been a target of vandalism, thefts and even arson.

A \$14 million insurance settlement was reached earlier. Construction of the new school will soon follow the demolition, according to school officials.

<http://www.desertdispatch.com/news/20161227/lenwood-casino-odds-remain-mystery>

Pedestrian Injured In Hit-And-Run In Yucca Valley

Z107.7 News

Posted: December 29, 2016

A pedestrian was injured in a hit-and-run crash Wednesday afternoon in Yucca Valley. According to **County Fire Battalion Chief Scott Tuttle**, the man was hit by an unknown vehicle on Pioneertown Road just south of Sunnyslope Drive shortly before 3:30 p.m. Tuttle said the unidentified victim suffered injuries to his right side, and he was crouching on the side of the road when firefighters arrived. The vehicle that hit him had left the scene. The victim was taken to Desert Hospital in Palm Springs with minor injuries. The Sheriff's Department is investigating.

<http://z1077fm.com/pedestrian-injured-in-hit-and-run-in-yucca-valley/>