



NEWS



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Person found dead, officer overcome by smoke after house fire in Fontana

Alex Groves, The Press-Enterprise

Posted: January 7, 2017, 1:46 PM



Fontana police investigate the scene of a fatal house fire in the 11400 block of Teak Lane in Fontana. A person was found dead on the second floor of the home. Jennifer Cappuccio Maher/Staff Photographer

FONTANA >> One person was found dead and a police officer was injured after a fire broke out in a two-story Fontana home on Saturday, according to officials.

The fire was reported 12:15 p.m. at a 2,000-square-foot home in the 11000 block of Teak Lane, according to **San Bernardino County fire** officials.

Firefighters were finishing up work on the blaze around 1:20 p.m., Capt. Dan Nelson said.

He said a Fontana police officer was the first person to arrive and was overwhelmed by smoke and heat when he tried to enter the home to rescue a person reported trapped inside.

The officer was treated at the scene for smoke inhalation before being taken to a nearby hospital. His injuries are not life-threatening, according to a Fire Department news release.

Firefighters soon found a deceased person on the second story of the home, Nelson said. He said the person's age and gender were not known.

The cause of the fire was under investigation.

<http://www.sbsun.com/general-news/20170107/person-found-dead-officer-overcome-by-smoke-after-house-fire-in-fontana>

Person dies in house fire in Fontana; officer is injured while trying to rescue victim

Fontana Herald News

Posted: January 7, 2017, 7:04 PM



The **San Bernardino County Fire Department** reported that a person died in a house fire in Fontana on Jan. 7.

A person died in a house fire in Fontana on Jan. 7, and a Fontana Police Department officer was injured while trying to rescue the victim, according to the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department.

The two-story residential structure fire was reported at 12:15 p.m. in the 11000 block of Teak Lane.

While fire crews were en route to the location, they were notified that the police officer was on scene reporting that there was a victim trapped in the home. The officer entered the house to try to rescue the resident. Unfortunately, the officer was turned backed by heavy smoke and heat.

The officer was treated on scene for smoke inhalation and later transported to an area hospital by AMR for treatment. The officer's injuries are not life threatening.

First arriving crews found heavy smoke coming from the second story of the structure. Fire crews made entry and were able to locate the victim, who had suffered fatal injuries. No other victims were found in the home.

Additional crews attacked the fire and had it extinguished about 25 minutes after arrival. Investigators were on scene trying to determine the cause of the fire as well as the identity of the victim.

Four medic engines, two truck companies, one medic squad, one battalion chief, and two fire investigators responded to the incident.

Damage estimates to the structure were not immediately available.

http://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/news/person-dies-in-house-fire-in-fontana-officer-is-injured/article_2e0e0278-d54f-11e6-b473-2f825bc14c5e.html

Man's death in burning Fontana home believed to be accidental, police say

Ali Tadayon, The Press-Enterprise

Posted: January 8, 2017, 11:22 AM



Fontana police investigate a house fire in the 11000 block of Teak Lane where a body was found on the second floor on Saturday, Jan. 7. Jennifer Cappuccio Maher/Staff Photographer

FONTANA >> Authorities believe a man who was found dead Saturday in a burning house in Fontana died of accidental causes.

The man's exact cause of death has not yet been determined, said Fontana Police Department Lt. Gary Aulis during a phone interview Sunday. Though Aulis did not release the man's name Sunday -- pending notification of the victim's next-of-kin -- he confirmed that the man lived at the house in the 11000 block of Teak Lane.

The cause of the fire remains under investigation. Arson investigators believe the fire was started accidentally, Aulis said.

Police and **San Bernardino County Fire Department** firefighters responded to the two-story home around 12:15 p.m. Saturday to find it ablaze. A police officer was the first person to arrive and was overwhelmed by smoke and heat when he tried to enter the home to rescue the man, who was upstairs, Fire Department Capt. Dan Nelson said Saturday.

The officer was treated at the scene for smoke inhalation prior to being taken to a hospital.

<http://www.sbsun.com/general-news/20170108/mans-death-in-burning-fontana-home-believed-to-be-accidental-police-say>

Building the future

Rene Ray De La Cruz, Hesperia Star

Posted: January 4, 2017, 2:34 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/20170104/building-future>

Here are tips for avoiding dangerous driving hazards on roads and highways

Louis Penna, Fontana Herald News

Posted: January 5, 2017, 8:54 AM

The period at the start of the New Year typically marks some of the coldest winter weather months for Southern California. While the scenery can be beautiful, this time of year can also bring a variety of dangerous driving hazards on roads and highways.

San Bernardino County Fire urges county residents to stay alert and take precaution en route to your destinations this winter season in order to help keep everyone safe.

The following are some winter weather driving tips to help keep residents and visitors safe on the road ahead:

- Drive slowly -- Most winter accidents are a result of driving too fast for the current conditions. Remember to slow down on the roads and give yourself extra time to get to your destination.
- Don't tailgate -- Be sure to leave at least three car lengths in between you and the driver ahead of you during icy or snowy weather conditions. It takes a longer distance to stop your vehicle on winter roads.
- Turn on your headlights -- Visibility is greatly hindered in rain, fog, ice, or snow storms so remember to turn on your low beams when in these conditions so other drivers can see you, even during daylight.
- Avoid distracted or drowsy driving -- Limit your distractions while driving in poor weather conditions. Keep your awareness on the road. Never drive when tired and leave the cell phone alone.
- Keep up with your car maintenance -- Check your windshield wipers, tires, brakes, etc. on a regular basis to avoid a mishap while driving.
- Make sure you can see out of all windows -- Give yourself extra time before you drive to make sure your windows are defrosted and scraped clean of any ice that is obstructing your vision and ability to be an alert driver.
- Check the roadways and traffic ahead of time -- Winter conditions can be somewhat unpredictable so it's important to check the roadways and traffic before you head out in order to give yourself enough time to safely arrive at your destination. Speeding in poor weather conditions puts other drivers and emergency responders at risk. Check highway conditions at www.dot.ca.gov/cgi-bin/roads.cgi
- Always carry snow chains -- Invest in a set of snow chains for each of your vehicles and carry them in your vehicle, even if it's not snowing. Practice installing your snow chains away from busy roads and be aware of weather conditions and snow chain speed limits.
- Turn around, don't drown -- Never cross a flooded road that you can't see because it's covered by water. It can take as little as six inches of moving water to turn a car ride into a life-threatening emergency.

Be a safe driver advocate this winter. Help keep everyone safe on the road by following and sharing these tips. (Louis Penna is a media specialist with the San Bernardino County Fire Department.)

http://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/opinion/here-are-tips-for-avoiding-dangerous-driving-hazards-on-roads/article_a0ae8cce-d367-11e6-8e94-3761ff796df7.html

Community Invited to Help Save Lives

Victor Valley News

Posted: January 5, 2017



VICTORVILLE, Calif. – Did you know that seven times a day in the U.S. someone dies in a home fire? You can help promote home fire safety in our community by volunteering for the Home Fire Campaign organized by the American Red Cross of San Bernardino County and supported by the City of Victorville and **San Bernardino County Fire**.

The Home Fire Campaign is a national initiative designed to reduce the number of fire-related deaths and injuries in the U.S. by 25 percent by the year 2020.

The American Red Cross needs your help to install FREE smoke alarms and provide home fire safety education to residents in our local community on Feb. 18 and throughout the year. As a Home Fire Campaign Volunteer, you will go door-to-door in teams of three to five people in a targeted neighborhood to inform people that free smoke alarm installation is available to them.

All volunteers will receive training. You will be provided with talking points and information sheets to give residents. Volunteers who can speak Spanish are welcome.

If you would like to participate you can sign up via <http://tinyurl.com/2017HomeFireFeb18>. If you have questions, please send an email to Christine.Villafuerte@redcross.org.

<http://www.vvng.com/community-invited-to-help-save-lives/>

City of Upland adapting to new reality: Debbie Stone

Debbie Stone, Daily Bulletin

Posted: January 6, 2017, 1:50 PM



Victor Cruz of Xgraphix applies a San Bernardino County Fire decal on what had been a San Bernardino City Fire Department truck in preparation for county fire's takeover of the 137-year-old city fire department in this June 23, 2016 file photo. The same thing would happen to Upland Fire Department trucks if that city annexes to the county fire district. (File photo by John Valenzuela/The Sun)

For some, the new year brings great promise. For others, it's another turn of the calendar. For those of us in elected office, it's a little of both — a chance to hit the reset button, while recognizing that the challenges that confront us haven't gone away.

When Upland voters elected me mayor in November, it was no secret how difficult the road ahead had become for our city. Declining revenues, the loss of redevelopment financing and spiraling pension obligations had hit us particularly hard, to the point where by 2018 — if not sooner — we face the very real possibility of operating at a deficit. Layer in problems related to homelessness, housing affordability and a downtown with an uncertain future, and it's clear that the City of Gracious Living needs to do business very differently than it has in the past.

Fortunately, we have the pieces in place to accomplish that — beginning with a city staff dedicated to serving our community the best it possibly can, and a City Council committed to a shared vision.

Recently the Council, in a unanimous vote, authorized our city manager to pursue annexation into the **San Bernardino County Fire Protection District** — a move that will improve the city's bottom line by more than \$50 million over the next 10 years.

It's a move that makes sense on so many levels, ensuring that Upland receives the highest level of fire protection while relieving us of the cost — and liability — of maintaining buildings and equipment and eliminating future pension obligations. The cost of providing fire service under annexation would be paid for through a parcel tax amounting to \$12.33 per month.

Some have asked why the city itself wouldn't charge a parcel tax and keep its own fire department. Unfortunately, doing so would not relieve us of maintenance and upgrade costs or any new pension obligations, nor would it allow us to leverage the assets and resources of the San Bernardino County Fire Department.

For residents, the shift in service will be seamless. All current full-time city fire employees will transfer to County Fire, and any facilities and equipment now designated for city Fire Department use will be transferred as well. In addition, because of County Fire's economies of scale, more stations nearby can provide faster response times and assist city units during high call volume.

Admittedly, this is a lot to process, and represents a significant departure from how Upland has conducted business in the past. Staff has put together answers to frequently asked questions regarding annexation on the city's website, and will update information as it becomes available.

In the meantime, we'll be looking at other options for restoring long-term financial stability. Our traditional approach of simply cutting expenses has left us as much as \$12 million a year below where we need to be in order to provide essential services such as public safety and street maintenance. We need to adapt our business model to the new reality, and the shift to County Fire is a step in that direction.

None of this is possible, of course, without the support of the community. I would like to thank everyone who took part in our recent city elections, and look forward to serving as your mayor.

We've got a lot of work ahead of us, but I firmly believe that the future of our community has never been more promising.

Debbie Stone is mayor of Upland.

<http://www.dailybulletin.com/opinion/20170106/city-of-upland-adapting-to-new-reality-debbie-stone>

County Fire reminds of flooding dangers

Daily Press

Posted: January 7, 2017, 3:52 PM

With a rash of storms moving through the area recently, the **San Bernardino County Fire Department** reminds residents to take proper precautions in the event of flooding, especially those living in areas affected by fires. Normally, vegetation absorbs rain, but after a wildfire, the charred ground where that vegetation has been burned away cannot easily absorb rainwater, increasing the risk of flooding and mudflows for several years. Properties directly affected by fires and/or located downstream of burn areas are most at risk. The best preparation for possible flooding is to plan ahead. San Bernardino County Fire's Ready! Set! Go! flood preparation webpage shows things that can be done to protect your home, property and family, including how to prepare for wet weather, emergency alerts, sandbag location, and what to include in an emergency kit. Visit County Fire's Ready! Set! Go! Flood webpage at www.sbcfire.org/ReadySetGoFlood.aspx.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20170107/county-fire-reminds-of-flooding-dangers>

Trees Fall, Vehicle Collides with Plow

Heidi Fron, Mountain News

Posted: January 9, 2017 6:00 AM



A California black oak fell down, blocking both lanes of Grass Valley Road, at 9 a.m. on New Year's Day. Crews from the San Bernardino County Public Works Department kept busy clearing a lot of trees and plowing tons of snow all weekend. David Ficke

New Year's Day in the mountains began with a concatenation of familiar elements: winter rain, snow and ice; dangerous road conditions; celebrating New Year's Eve with alcohol; the ever-present effects of the drought now entering its sixth year; trees falling in the forest; and more that goes unreported.

As the National Weather Service predicted, a "significant winter storm" did blow through the mountains during the holiday weekend, with rain turning to snow and snow turning to ice. Employees of Caltrans, San Bernardino County Public Works Department and local community service districts rang in the new year in their respective snow-plowing vehicles, driving continuously to clear the roads during the midnight hours and well into the early morning.

Andrew D. Duchateau of Blue Jay was operating equipment owned by San Bernardino County at 2:30 a.m. on Jan. 1. He had finished plowing one side of Daley Canyon Road and was turning around to plow the other side. Suddenly a maroon 1990 Jeep Cherokee struck his yellow Caterpillar from behind.

According to the California Highway Patrol, Alex Janis Opmanis, 24, of Cedar Glen, was traveling northbound on SR-18 at a speed estimated to be 20 to 25 miles per hour, while the Caterpillar was moving at 5 mph. California Highway Patrol Officer Juan Quintero said an investigation concluded that Opmanis's alleged level of intoxication, combined with his driving at a speed deemed unsafe for conditions, resulted in his inability to bring the vehicle to a stop in a safe manner.

The front of the Jeep collided with the rear of the Caterpillar in such a way that the Jeep became caught under the grader. Opmanis was trapped in the driver's seat, Quintero said.

Paramedics from **San Bernardino County Fire** carefully extracted Opmanis, who reportedly suffered lacerations to his upper lip and left hand. He also complained of pain to his head, hips and legs, and was transported to St. Bernardine's Hospital.

The three female passengers in the Jeep, ages 18, 20 and 25, were not injured. All three passengers were from Utah, including a resident of Riverton, one from Layton, and another from Sandy. Duchateau also was uninjured.

The Jeep sustained moderate damage to the left front side. The Caterpillar, a motor grader equipped with chains and a snow plow, had minor damage to the left rear.

Records from the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department show that Opmanis is being charged with violating California Vehicle Code §23152(A), driving under the influence of alcohol, and VC §23152(B), driving with an alcohol level exceeding 0.08 percent. Opmanis was cited and released at 3:39 p.m. on Jan. 1, with no court appearance scheduled yet.

Meanwhile, county crews also kept busy clearing a lot of fallen trees from roadways. A large tree blocked both lanes of Grass Valley Road on Jan. 1. Unable to get over, under, around or through the tree, vehicle drivers had to turn around and find other routes to reach their New Year's Day destinations.

Roni Edis, public information officer for San Bernardino County Public Works Department, said the tree on Grass Valley Road did not present any particular problem. "The crews were able to handle it, and there were no accidents from fallen trees," she said.

Edis reported that an even larger tree fell at North Bay Drive. "A lot of trees fell," she said. "The crews just push them off to the side and trim any branches that are in the way. But they wait for the snow to melt before they cut them up and remove them completely."

According to Edis, the priority is to clear the road as soon as possible, to push the tree to the shoulder and get it out of traffic lanes. "Nothing came to our attention that was extra large. The crews did not have to get special equipment or fix power lines. That would be a different story," she explained.

Because the crews were busy clearing trees and plowing snow, they don't get into examining the reasons for falling trees until they cut and remove the trees. "It could be from the drought followed by a lot of saturation," Edis said. "But there's no way to determine that with all the snow."

More rain was expected later this week as a series of Pacific storm systems will bring a prolonged period of heavy precipitation to parts of the West on Friday. On Monday a trough is expected to move inland bringing rain. According to the National Weather Service, this will allow the atmospheric river to cross into Southern California, but model consensus shows it moving south quickly so it will be over the San Bernardino Mountains for very short duration.

http://www.mountain-news.com/news/article_056c3774-d2e1-11e6-b00b-2f25c560d376.html

Adelanto men 'believe to be connected' to rash of fires at local apartment complex arrested

Jose Quintero, Daily Press

Posted: January 9, 2017, 10:47 AM



San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department deputies arrested Cody Michael McGee, 25, and Jerry Paul Fontaine, 50, believed to be connected to a recent rash of fires, early Saturday morning at the Mountain Vista Apartments. James Quigg, Daily Press

VICTORVILLE - Two Adelanto men authorities believe to be connected with fires at a local apartment complex that has seen a rash of fires over the past couple months were behind bars and expected to be arraigned in a Victorville courtroom Tuesday afternoon if criminally charged by prosecutors.

San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department deputies arrested Cody Michael McGee, 25, and Jerry Paul Fontaine, 50, early Saturday morning at the Mountain Vista Apartments, located at 15450 Nisqualli Road, booking records show.

Victorville Sheriff's Station spokeswoman Mara Rodriguez said information regarding the arrests was not immediately available Monday morning. However, Rodriguez said Fontaine and McGee are "believed to be connected with other fires at the apartment complex, as well as several others."

Booking records show McGee and Fontaine both live at a home in Adelanto, in the 14400 block of Cambridge Street.

The Daily Press previously reported that residents of the complex were concerned that a serial arsonist was in their midst, with some claiming the property's management company was not doing enough to combat the issue.

San Bernardino County Fire Department spokeswoman Tracey Martinez told that Daily Press in December that firefighters had responded to a total of 30 fires at the property since the beginning of August. The majority of these blazes were dumpster and vegetation fires.

Martinez said the investigations into the blazes indicated most of the fires were "incendiary caused," which is defined as a fire that is deliberately ignited.

"According to our fire investigators, they have been following up on leads, mainly anonymous callers," Martinez previously said. "At this point in the investigations, it is undetermined if the fires are all connected or if there is a serial arsonist."

The Daily Press was previously referred by Mountain Vista's local leasing office to E & S Ring Management Corporation, which manages the property. Portfolio manager Scott Seymour said the company was just as concerned as Mountain Vista's residents about the fires and was doing what it can to ensure residents' safety by maintaining contact with the Sheriff's Department and County Fire, added extra patrols on the property, with additional security guards at night to try to find the culprit or culprits responsible for the blazes.

Fontaine and McGee were being held at High Desert Detention Center in Adelanto each in lieu of \$50,000 bail, booking records show.

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

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20170109/adelanto-men-believe-to-be-connected-to-rash-of-fires-at-local-apartment-complex-arrested>