



# NEWS



## News Headlines 12/22/2016

- Fire district 'broken and bankrupt'
- Morongo Valley CSD Meets Tonight, Interim Fire Chief Named
- UPDATE: Multi-vehicle crash causes closure on southbound I-15 in Cajon Pass
- Flames consume Rimrock farm; neighbors reach out to help
- Arson Suspected at Mountain Vista Apartments, \$2,500 Reward Offered
- Fire Destroys Crestline House

## **Fire district 'broken and bankrupt'**

**Mike Lamb, Desert Dispatch**

Posted: December 20, 2016, 5:05 PM

BARSTOW - Firefighter Bobby Clemmer stood at the podium inside the City Council chambers Monday evening and quickly read off a list of former colleagues who left the ranks of the Barstow Fire Protection District within the past 18 months.

He said two were born and raised in Barstow. One left for the Corona Fire Department, another to the Los Angeles City Fire Department and another to CalFire in Anaheim. And then he revealed he almost left as well.

"I just turned down a job with the Orange County Fire Authority because I want to believe that things are going to get better around here," Clemmer said. "I went up all the way to the very last moment to turn it down because I wanted to believe (the Fire District and city officials) are going to do the right thing. I love this place. I put my heart and soul into everything I do around here."

Clemmer spoke in front of members of the City Council who also act as directors on the Barstow Fire Protection District Board. His fellow firefighters sat in the audience. It was all part of a Barstow Fire Protection District board workshop called by its chairwoman, Carmen Hernandez

"Basically, this is a workshop. We are going to look at all the options. I wanted the public to know the current situation in the fire district. It's been a big issue in this community about local control," Hernandez said.

The workshop revealed many issues with no real easy solutions. Acting Fire Chief Jamie Williams and Assistant City Manager Cindy Prothro presented an in depth report that included a PowerPoint presentation.

The report showed that revenues are still lagging behind expenses that includes a mounting pension problem. The 2016-17 budget showed 4,363,000 in revenues and 4,535,000 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.

"In the eyes of the firefighters, this district is broken and bankrupt," Firefighter John Wymore said during his public comment. He is the president of the Barstow Professional Firefighters Association.

"The finances of the district are in dire straits. We are constantly subsidized by the city's general fund and the district cannot stand on its own at this time. If it weren't for the city, the district would have drastically reduced its services. This is at a time we are running more calls for service than ever in our 90-year history." Wymore said the firefighters have three requests for the district board:

"No. 1 we need relief from our pension costs. This will help stabilize the loss of experienced firefighters. No. 2, we ask you consider a special tax assessment to shore up the long-term sustainability of the fire district. And No. 3, we ask you bring serious annexation talks with the county fire district, so any concerns can be answered in a timely fashion. The board must find a way to shore up the fire district, the safety of this community depends on it," Wymore said.

The report addressed all three requests, showing three options that are under review by the city.

An appeal to transition into the California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPers) will be heard on Feb. 2. If successful, legislation is required to proceed and the minimum cost to transition is estimated at \$12.6 million in unfunded liability. The transition to SBCERA County Safety Pool is estimated to cost \$8 million.

The report also listed three fire service options:

- The district continues with providing services with no change in funding and does not address the unfunded liability determined by SBCERA.
- Annex into **San Bernardino County** to provide fire services responsibility to the district. There would be an annual parcel tax levied on property owners of \$148 per year with a 3 percent increase annually.
- Explore affordable revenue enhancement alternatives which ensure long-term sustainability of the fire district.

Possible revenue enhancement options to address the unfunded liability include:

- Proposition 218 Parcel Assessment with an estimated annual revenue of \$1.2 million and estimated parcel tax of \$100 per residential parcel.
- 1/4 cent sales tax with estimated annual revenue of \$1.9 million and estimated average impact per resident at \$28 per year. It assumes 2/3 of sales tax revenue paid by non-residents.
- Parcel tax with estimated annual revenue of \$1.2 million and estimated parcel tax of \$100 per residential parcel.
- 2 percent increase to the transient occupancy tax with an estimated annual revenue of half million dollars and would be paid by hotel occupants.

"I think this has been very informative for both sides. I would like to have a followup in February," Hernandez said. "The reason I wanted this workshop was so the public is aware of what the facts are. Not that there are rumors of this and that. I thought the directors asked excellent questions. I think this created more questions, which I think is great."

<http://www.desertdispatch.com/news/20161220/fire-district-broken-and-bankrupt>

---

## Morongo Valley Csd Meets Tonight, Interim Fire Chief Named

Z107.7 News

Posted: December 20, 2016

The Morongo Valley Community Services District meets at 7 p.m. tonight in the Covington Park Community Building. Among the items on tonight's agenda is the announcement of Andrew Arthen as Interim Fire Chief, an ad-hoc Committee report on staffing and budget, a recommendation for the Chuck Osborne Volunteer of the Year Award, discussions on upcoming CERT classes and on moving board reorganization to January. Other highlights include announcements from General Manager Donna Munoz and post-meeting holiday refreshments.

<http://z1077fm.com/morongo-valley-csd-meets-tonight-interim-fire-chief-named/>

---

## UPDATE: Multi-vehicle crash causes closure on southbound I-15 in Cajon Pass

Paola Baker, Daily Press

Posted: December 21, 2016, 5:01 PM



CAJON PASS - Traffic was heavily snarled on southbound Interstate 15 in the Cajon Pass following a crash involving multiple vehicles Wednesday afternoon.

The crash occurred at southbound I-15 north of the escape ramp and was first reported at 4:17 p.m. **San Bernardino County Fire Department** officials arrived on scene and found approximately 15 vehicles were involved.

California Highway Patrol Officer Tom Ramos said the incident actually consisted of four collisions. The first crash involved four vehicles and occurred when traffic began to slow. The last car didn't slow in time and collided with the rear side of another vehicle, Ramos said.

As traffic slowed further due to the first crash, a second crash occurred involving three vehicles, followed by a third involving four vehicles and a fourth involving another four vehicles.

"The first crash basically caused a chain reaction," Ramos said. "The first individuals saw traffic slowing and stopped, but the others didn't have time to stop and collided with each other."

County Fire officials said "numerous patients" had complaints of pain but medical aid was not needed for anyone involved. Ramos reiterated the statement and said no one required medical transport.

While CHP traffic logs reported that all southbound lanes of I-15 were temporarily blocked, Ramos said only the No. 1 and No. 2 lanes were blocked for about 15 minutes as officials moved the vehicles off the roadway.

The temporary closure was enough to cause heavy traffic delays on southbound I-15. Traffic was backed up past Rancho Road until around 6 p.m. Wednesday, and motorists were advised to use caution and expect delays.

Ramos said there were no suspicious factors behind the collisions. No injuries were reported due to the incident.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20161221/update-multi-vehicle-crash-causes-closure-on-southbound-i-15-in-cajon-pass>

---

## **Flames consume Rimrock farm; neighbors reach out to help**

Leah Sanson, Hi-Desert Star

Posted: December 21, 2016, 8:14 PM

PIONEERTOWN — A raging fire destroyed a house and killed at least one goat on the 300 block of Gilrock Lane Saturday.

**County firefighters** were called to the property, near Gamma Gulch Road and Parson Ranch Road in Rimrock, around 8:30 p.m.

“The fire was well involved when we got there,” Capt. Dave Faller said.

“We had a limited water supply, so it took a little longer than usual, but we had the fire under control within a matter of minutes,” Faller said.

It took an hour and a half for crews to completely put out the flames, he added.

Faller said there was at least one death, a goat.

The house was a total loss, he added.

The owner’s goats, chickens, ducks and geese, as well as dogs and cats, are also without shelter.

Her neighbor, Ronda Mueller, has set up a GoFund Me account that has raised over \$10,800 in just two days.

On the page, Mueller describes the homeowner as a 77-year-old pioneer.

To donate, visit [www.gofundme.com/judysfirerescue](http://www.gofundme.com/judysfirerescue).

The cause of the fire is still under investigation.

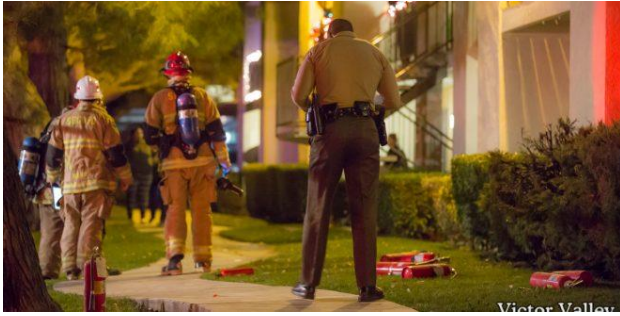
[http://www.hidesertstar.com/news/article\\_300fb6ac-c7fd-11e6-b206-8300f53a2001.html](http://www.hidesertstar.com/news/article_300fb6ac-c7fd-11e6-b206-8300f53a2001.html)

---

## Arson Suspected at Mountain Vista Apartments, \$2,500 Reward Offered

Gabriel D. Espinoza, Victor Valley News Group

Posted: December 21, 2016



Authorities responded to 30 fires since August and are investigation any tips received. (Hugo C. Valdez, Victor Valley News)



The bushes outside Nicky Davan's unit were set on fire, causing damage to the exterior. (Hugo C. Valdez, Victor Valley News)

VICTORVILLE, Calif. (VVNG.com) Management is getting a scolding from the residents at the Mountain Vista Apartments who say enough isn't being done regarding a rash of recent fires.

"We just got back from Vegas and I was scared to leave in the first place thinking there was going to be a fire when we got back," said resident Nicky Davan.

Davan's apartment windows and shutters were scorched by a fire this past weekend, and her fear worsened as she exited her car to find firefighters there again tonight.

Eric Sherwin of the **San Bernardino County Fire Department** said they responded to another fire this evening that was put out by locals before firefighters arrived on scene.

Officials say they've responded to 30 fire incidents in the past six months at the complex, mostly being dumpster fires, and recently bush fires.

"The proximity of the bushes to the buildings and the safety issues it causes for our residents is very concerning to us," Management wrote in an email to residents on Wednesday. "During this time we have been in contact with the Victorville Police Department for assistance and they have increased patrols to the community and are investigating any information they are provided."

Despite the fact that Management announced a \$2500 reward for the identification and arrest of the person(s) involved, Davan still says enough isn't being done.

"They said they installed more cameras and boosted security, but they haven't," said Davan.

Davan doesn't believe the fires are random but isn't sure if it's someone who resides there now or is a previous tenant.

"So many people were evicted from here, I'm wondering if they are retaliating against management," said Davan, "I think I will have to move soon, especially when everyone starts dumping their Christmas trees, that's scary."

The Victorville Planning Commission also announced last week plans to move forward with "upscale" marketplace and gas station directly adjacent to the complex.

Portfolio Manager Scott Seymour with E&S Ring Management Corporation who operates the complex said to the locals, "we will continue to take whatever steps we can to stop the fires and identify the person or persons involved. Any comments and or suggestions you have would be greatly appreciated."

Comments and suggestions from complex residents were asked to be referred to Seymour at [scotts@esring.com](mailto:scotts@esring.com).

Anyone with information is urged to call the Arson We-Tip hotline at 1-800-472-7766 or San Bernardino County Fire's dispatch center at 909-386-8408 or the Victorville Sheriff's Station at 760-241-2911.

<http://www.vvng.com/arson-suspected-at-mountain-vista-apartments-2500-reward-offered/>

---

Posted: December 22, 2016



An unoccupied house on the 600 block of Arbula Drive in Crestline was destroyed in the early morning hours on Dec. 21.

The first caller to 9-1-1 at 1:08 a.m. reported that the roof was on fire. A second caller said that pine trees were on fire as well.

Four engines from Crestline County Fire stations 25 and 26 responded according to Eric Sherwin, public information officer for **San Bernardino County Fire** (SBC Fire). Medical support arrived to stand by, and Cal Fire also responded.

Since the residence was not occupied, firefighters launched a defensive attack from the outside. They also suppressed fire in an area 50 feet by 50 feet adjacent to the structure where vegetation burned. Sherwin said no other houses were affected by the fire.

The fire was under control by 1:49 a.m., with no injuries to civilians or crew. Hand crews were on the scene for another three hours mopping up after the fire was knocked down, Sherwin said. The engines were released by 5 a.m. and all units were clear by 6 a.m.

Shortly after 8:15 a.m., Sherwin told the *Mountain News* that the investigator was still on the scene looking for a possible cause of the fire.

(Online Only)