



NEWS



News Headlines 08/19/2016

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Blue Cut Fire In Cajon Pass – 37,002 Acres – 26% Contained – (UPDATE 51)

Michael P. Neufeld, Rim of the World News

August 16, 2016, 9:59 AM



The Blue Cut Fire from the Mormon Rocks area off Highway 138. (Photo by San Bernardino County Fire)

UPDATE 51: Friday, August 19 – 8:02 a.m.

Cajon Pass – The latest from the Blue Cut Fire on the Cajon Pass is that 2,644 personnel are on the fire line and have established 26 percent containment. The fire is shown as having burned 37,002 acres.

UPDATE 50: Friday, August 19 – 5:12 a.m.

Cajon Pass – The Historic Clyde’s Ranch near Wrightwood is among about 34,500 structures that remain threatened in the communities of Wrightwood, Oak Hills, Phelan, Lytle Creek, Baldy Mesa, West Cajon Valley, South Hesperia, and Summit Valley.

The Clyde Ranch was once billed as “Wyatt Earp’s Mountain Camp.”

The fire is now reported as 22 percent contained. I-15 is open in both directions.

Structures are known to have been damaged or destroyed but cannot currently be assessed due to the extreme fire behavior and growth.

A Damage Assessment Team (DAT) is now assisting with the Blue Cut Fire.

SENATOR MIKE MORRELL’S COMMENTS

State Senator Mike Morrell (R-Rancho Cucamonga/23) — who represents the mountain communities — issued the following comment about the Blue Cut Fire.

“Our office is monitoring the situation closely. A State of Emergency has been declared, which will make state resources available in the response efforts.

“I’m grateful to those working to contain the fire. To all who are impacted, please stay safe.”

UPDATE 49: Thursday, August 18 – 7:53 p.m.

Cajon Pass – The latest information from the Blue Cut Fire is that it is now 35,969 acres and 22 percent contained.

There are currently 1,584 firefighters working on the fire with one of the goals this evening of strengthening containment lines.

UPDATE 48: Thursday, August 18 – 3:35 p.m.

Cajon Pass – Three looting suspects are in custody after San Bernardino County Sheriff’s deputies responded to the 8600 block of Swarthout Canyon Road to a call of suspicious activity about 7 a.m. Thursday, August 18. The home is located in an unincorporated area of San Bernardino.

The property owner was contacted by deputies and denied he had given permission to anyone to take his property.

THE ARREST

The three suspects were taken into custody without incident and will be booked for looting and grand theft auto.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Persons with information related to the suspects or the case are urged to contact Sheriff’s Central Station at (909) 387-3545.

Callers may also remain anonymous by calling the We-Tip Hotline at 1-800-78-CRIME or visit WE-TIP online.

UPDATE 47: Thursday, August 18 – 2:17 p.m.

Cajon Pass – The San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department has announced the mandatory evacuation orders and advisories for residents in the areas east of I-15 to Santa Fe/Summit Valley Road, south of Rancho Road to Highway 138, affected by the Blue Cut Fire will be “lifted.”

Santa Fe/Summit Valley Road and Arrowhead Lake Road/Highway 173 will be opened.

Highway 138 will continue to be closed at I-15 east to Summit Valley Road.

UPDATE 46: Thursday, August 18 – 9:51 a.m.

Cajon Pass – The California Highway Patrol is reporting the southbound lanes of I-15 in the Cajon Pass are now open joining the northbound lanes that reopened Wednesday night. All off ramps remain closed.

Motorists should expect traffic delays.

UPDATE 45: Thursday, August 18 – 9:17 a.m.

Cajon Pass – The California Interagency Incident Management Team 3 reports that the Blue Cut Fire in the Cajon Pass stands at 31,689 acres and remains at 4 percent containment.

The resources on the Blue Cut Fire includes 1,584 firefighters, 23 hand crews, 178 engines, 24 dozers, 17 water tenders and 17 helicopters.

The fire continues to exhibit extreme fire behavior as well as rapid rates of spread and continues to threaten Wrightwood, Oak Hills, Phelan, Lytle Creek, Baldy Mesa, Summit Valley, West Cajon and South Hesperia.

EVACUEES

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's latest report shows there are 83,000 evacuees and 34,900 homes under the evacuation order.

An unknown number of animals have also been evacuated.

UPDATE 44: Thursday, August 18 – 3:35 a.m.

Cajon Pass – Caltrans and the California Highway Patrol have re-opened northbound I-215 and the northbound I-15 through the Cajon Pass.

The #4 lane will remain closed from Cleghorn Road to Highway 138. All ramps will remain closed at Kenwood Avenue, Cleghorn Road, Highway 138 and Oak Hill Road.

Work will continue on southbound I-15 to complete guardrail and other repairs. Southbound I-15 will remain closed until further notice.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Traffic control will be in place at various locations through the Cajon Pass in addition to lane closures and CHP escorts. Motorists are advised to follow all traffic commands from work crews, law enforcement, and emergency personnel.

Caltrans expects traffic delays to be significant on I-15, I-215, and other routes leading to the Cajon Pass. The use of alternate routes is strongly advised to avoid delays.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER JAY OBERNOLTE

Assemblymember Jay Obernolte (R-Big Bear Lake/33) has issued the following statement related to the Blue Cut Fire:

“In response to the rapid spread and destructive potential of the Blue Cut Fire, the Governor has declared a State of Emergency. We will continue to work to ensure that all available resources are used to contain this devastating fire as quickly as possible. Our firefighters and public safety officers are working around the clock to make sure that our communities stay safe. I ask that we all stand together to support and pray for our fire crews who are on the front lines risking their lives to protect our homes, neighbors and loved ones. My thoughts and prayers are with everyone who has been affected by this tragedy.”

UPDATE 43: Wednesday, August 17 – 7:20 p.m.

Cajon Pass – InciWeb is reporting that the remapped Blue Cut Fire is now at 25,626 acres and 4 percent contained.

The Blue Cut Fire is now being fought by 1,584 personnel who are dealing with very erratic fire activities and windy conditions that temporarily grounded some of the aircraft assigned to the fire.

The Blue Cut Incident Command Center is located at Glen Helen Regional Park. (Contributed Photo)

EVACUATION INFORMATION

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department continues to urge residents that are in a mandatory evacuation area to adhere to the order.

At this time, roughly 70 deputies, in two man units, are assigned to patrol the evacuation areas throughout the night. Deputies will be looking for anyone acting suspiciously, in efforts to prevent theft or vandalism to any of the affected homes.

“We thank you for your cooperation and your patience during this very difficult time,” the Sheriff's Department stated in a media release.

UPDATE 42: Wednesday, August 17 – 4 p.m.

Cajon Pass – **San Bernardino County Fire** is now saying the acreage remains at 30,000 not the figure they released a few minutes earlier.

The U.S. Forest Service has also confirmed the 30,000 acreage.

In addition, the official name of the fire has been changed to Blue Cut Fire...not the previously released Bluecut Fire.

UPDATE 41: Wednesday, August 17 – 3:42 p.m.

Cajon Pass – Strong winds in the Cajon Pass have now pushed the total Blue Cut Fire acreage to over 65,000 acres.

The Incident Commander is still showing zero containment.

UPDATE 40: Wednesday, August 17 – 2:14 p.m.

Cajon Pass – Strong winds are propelling the Blue Cut Fire as it moves towards Lytle Creek and Wrightwood leaving a trail of destruction along the way. Structure protection teams are moving into new areas to help save homes and businesses.

Earlier, the California Highway Patrol Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Weigh Station on southbound I-15 was destroyed by the fast moving fire.

UPDATE 39: Wednesday, August 17 – 10:33 a.m.

Lytle Creek – ROTWNEWS.com transcribers are monitoring several scanner sites and are now reporting fire lines at Lytle Creek Fire Station 20 at 497 Lytle Creek Road have been jumped.

The Bluecut Fire Incident Command Post has advised all firefighters and San Bernardino County Sheriff's deputies north of San Bernardino County Station 20 to leave the area immediately.

Deputies had been notifying residents to evacuate.

UPDATE 38: Wednesday, August 17 – 9:44 a.m.

Silverwood Lake – Silverwood Lake State Recreation Area is closed until further notice, according to the facility's website and social media posts.

UPDATE 37: Wednesday, August 17 – 8:55 a.m.

Phelan, CA – “We are safe from the Bluecut Fire for now and we are all ok,” according to a post on the website for Forever Wild Animal Sanctuary in Phelan. Forever Wild houses over 100 animals including 20 large cats along with birds, alligators and turtles.

Firefighters stationed a water tender at the sanctuary last night and the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department had to turn people away from the area who wanted to help “rescue” the animals.

“We appreciate the community's concern and want to assure you all that we are doing absolutely everything we can to protect the lives of our animals,” the website post emphasized.

UPDATE 36: Wednesday, August 17 – 8:27 a.m.

Cajon Pass – The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department has expanded the mandatory evacuation area of the Bluecut Fire in the Cajon Pass area.

The latest mandatory evacuations now include Phelan/Piñon Hills south of Phelan Road from Sheep Creek Road west to Green Road, including the Desert Front Road area

UPDATE 35: Wednesday, August 17 – 7:50 a.m.

Cajon Pass – Strong winds — with gusts to 70 miles per hour — may hamper aerial firefighting today on the Bluecut Fire, according to information received by ROTWNEWS.com transcribers monitoring scanner transmissions.

“I wouldn't count on having air attack past noon,” one transmission stated.

There are two VLAT's (very large air tankers) assigned to the fire.

UPDATE 34: Wednesday, August 17 – 7:30 a.m.

Cajon Pass – The National Weather Service is reporting red flag conditions remain in effect for San Bernardino County until 9 p.m. Thursday.

UPDATE 33: Wednesday, August 17 – 7:11 a.m.

Cajon Pass – The latest information is that the Bluecut Fire grew to 30,000 acres overnight and that 1,309 firefighters are involved in battling the fire.

UPDATE 32: Wednesday, August 17 – 4:38 a.m.

Cajon Pass – Caltrans has announced that I-15 through the Cajon Pass will be closed most of Wednesday, August 17.

Currently, a long line of trucks is awaiting the eventual opening of I-15. KABC 7 is estimating the back-up is about three (3) miles long.

Caltrans is going to make a visual inspection of I-15 at 6 a.m. this morning to determine if the roadway was damaged by the fire.

UPDATE 31: Wednesday, August 17 – 3:50 a.m.

Cajon Pass – A State of Emergency has been declared by Governor Jerry Brown, over 82,000 people have been evacuated, countless homes and businesses burned and the Bluecut Fire continues its growth.

ROTWNEWS.com is awaiting the morning briefing, but at last report the fire was in excess of 18,000 acres.

I-15 through the Cajon Pass was still closed at last report.

PRESS CONFERENCE

A press conference is set for 9 a.m. at the Glen Helen Regional Park located at 2555 Glen Helen Parkway in San Bernardino.

POWER OUTAGE

A power outage — unrelated to the Bluecut Fire — was reported in the Twin Peaks area and a small section of Crestline

EDITOR'S NOTE: ROTWNEWS.com extends appreciation to its team of transcribers — Ty, Vicki, Phyllis, Peg, Jo, Jim and Susan — for a great job of passing along information about the Bluecut Fire. Special thanks also to U.S. Forest Service Public Information Officer Bob Poole, Caltrans Public Affairs Manager Terri Kasinga and other information resources for providing timely updates. And a shout out is in order for the folks at socialmountains.com for their continued service to the mountain communities.

A special thanks also to our ROTWNEWS.com readers who have visited our site 116,479 times since the fire began.

UPDATE 30: Tuesday, August 16 -10:22 p.m.

Cajon Pass – The latest information on the Bluecut Fire is that it continues to grow and is now reported at 18,000 acres.

Forest Service spokesperson Bob Poole told ROTWNEWS.com the fire is moving in a northerly direction and away from the Crestline area.

Night-flying helicopters are assisting ground crews.

UPDATE 29: Tuesday, August 16 – 9:57 p.m.

Cajon Pass – The U.S. Forest Service has asked ROTWNEWS.com to pass along information about the status of the Bluecut Fire.

“At this time,” spokesperson Bob Poole told ROTWNEWS.com, “the fire is not considered a threat to the mountain communities and Crestline in particular.”

THREATENED AREAS

However, authorities are stressing that there is imminent threat to public safety, rail traffic and structures in the Cajon Pass, Lytle Creek, Wrightwood, Oak Hills, and surrounding areas.

Residents are encouraged to please follow the evacuation instructions, as this is a very quickly growing wildfire. An estimated 34,500 homes and 82,640 people are being affected by the evacuation warnings.

UPDATE 28: Tuesday, August 16 – 9:41 p.m.

Cajon Pass = Forest Service spokesperson Bob Poole told ROTWNEWS.com the Incident Command Post has relocated to Glen Helen Regional Park.

A night-flying helicopter from Los Angeles County is now providing aerial support.

The chopper will be refilled on the ground by water tenders staffed by fire personnel and immediately return to duty.

UPDATE 27: Tuesday, August 16 – 8:41 p.m.

Cajon Pass – CalFire Public Information Officer Daniel Berlant is reporting the Bluecut Fire has now consumed 15,000 acres.

UPDATE 26: Tuesday, August 16 – 8:14 p.m.

Cajon Pass – The California Highway Patrol is reporting that I-15 remains closed in both directions through the Cajon Pass and Highway 138 is closed from Highway 2 to Interstate 15 and to Highway 173 near Silverwood Lake.

The CHP suggests utilizing alternate routes or delaying travel plans.

UPDATE 25: Tuesday, August 16 – 7:56 p.m.

Cajon Pass – Scanner transmissions from the Bluecut Fire indicate the Chevron gas station is now on fire on the frontage road off Highway 138 — Wagon Trail Road.

The McDonald’s restaurant sustained some exterior damage earlier. There is no indication of further damage to the fast food restaurant.

The southbound truck scales have also burned, according to scanner information.

UPDATE 24: Tuesday, August 16 – 6:50 p.m.

Cajon Pass – The Bluecut Fire in the Cajon Pass is now in excess of 9,000 acres with zero percent containment.

The San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department reports some 82,000 residents have been evacuated.

UPDATE 23: Tuesday, August 16 – 6:35 p.m.

Cajon Pass – The historic Summit Inn/Cafe has been destroyed by the Summit Fire in the Cajon Pass.

The original Summit Inn was in operation in 1928 and took its name from its original location at the summit of the Cajon Pass between the westbound and eastbound lanes of Route 66.

The present location in unincorporated Oak Hills, had been in operation since 1952

UPDATE 22: Tuesday, August 16 – 6:05 p.m.

Sacramento, CA – Governor Jerry Brown has declared a State of Emergency for San Bernardino County due to the Bluecut Fire in the Cajon Pass.

The South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) has issued a Smoke Advisory for portions of San Bernardino Country.

Meanwhile, a vehicle fire in the Cedarpines Park area of Crestline ignited a small vegetation fire on Devil’s Canyon Road. Resources were dispatched to that incident about 5:30 p.m.

UPDATE 21: Tuesday, August 16 – 5:25 p.m.

Cajon Pass – There is imminent threat to public safety, rail traffic and structures in the Cajon Pass, Lytle Creek, Wrightwood and surrounding areas, according to scanner information.

The Bluecut Fire has burned in excess of 6,500 acres and is being fought by 102 engines, 15 crews (30 firefighters each), 8 choppers, 8 air tankers and w\2 VLAT’s (very large air tankers).

A total of 750 personnel were working the fire at last report as it is now threatening Oak Hills.

UPDATE 20: Tuesday, August 16 – 5:09 p.m.

Cajon Pass – Mountain highways are being impacted due to the closure of I-15 in the Cajon Pass.

Mountain residents are advised not to venture out due to the heavy traffic on Highways 18, 138, 330 and 38.

Caltrans has personnel stationed at Highway 138 and Crest Forest Drive on Crestline to try and improve traffic flow.

Highway 138 is currently open past Silverwood Lake with the closure at Highway 173.

UPDATE 19: Tuesday, August 16 – 4:42 p.m.

Here is the updated list of evacuation areas:

- * The entire community of Wrightwood
- * Lone Pine Canyon
- * Swarthout Canyon
- * West Cajon Valley
- * Lytle Creek Canyon
- * Baldy Mesa north of Phelan Road
- * All of Summit Valley to 173
- * Areas north of 138
- * Interstate 15 east to Summit Valley Road
- * Interstate 15 east to Highway 173 and Highway 138 interchange in Summit Valley
- * Everything south of Rancho
- * Areas west of Summit Valley Road
- * Areas east of Sheep Creek
- * Areas south of Phelan Road
- * Areas west of Caliente Street

UPDATE 18: Tuesday, August 16 – 4:25 p.m.

Cajon Pass – The San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department has an urgent message to residents in the mandatory evacuation zones.

“If you are under mandatory evacuation please adhere to the evacuation orders as the fire is spreading quickly,” the advisory stated.

UPDATE 18: Tuesday, August 16 – 4:19 p.m.

Devore, CA – Second District Supervisor Janice Rutherford has announced that Glen Helen Regional Park is closing to the public for use as a fire camp

UPDATE 17: Tuesday, August 16 – 4:05 p.m.

Cajon Pass – Over 700 firefighters, 57 engines, 8 air tankers and two VLAT’s (very large air tankers) are fighting the Bluecut Fire. It has now burned 6,500 acres.

An unknown number of structures are damaged and destroyed.

UPDATE 16: Tuesday, August 16 – 3:52 p.m.

Mountain Communities – Mountain roads are gridlocked as desert residents search for alternative routes to return home.

The Sheriff's Department suggests an alternate route from the west end of county by utilizing Highway 210 westbound to the I-5, to Highway into the desert communities.

UPDATE 15: Tuesday, August 16 – 3:38 p.m.

Wrightwood, CA – The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department is reporting Wrightwood is now under mandatory evacuation orders.

UPDATE 14: Tuesday, August 16 – 3:33 p.m.

Cajon Pass – The Red Cross has added a Reception and Care Center at Sultana High School at 17311 Sultana Street in Hesperia.

The first center was established for evacuees at the Jessie Turner Community Center at 15556 Summit Avenue in Fontana.

ANIMAL EVACUATION CENTERS

Here are the evacuation centers for animals:

Devore Animal Shelter

19777 Shelter Way – San Bernardino
(909) 386-9820

San Bernardino County Fairgrounds
14800 7th Street – Victorville
(760) 951-2200

Apple Valley Shelter (dogs and cats)
22131 Powhatan Road – Apple Valley
(760) 240-7000

UPDATE 13: Tuesday, August 16 – 3:08 p.m.

Cajon Pass – The Bluecut Fire is now on both sides of I-15 and has grown to 5,500 acres with a rapid rate of spread and several spot fires.

UPDATE 12: Tuesday, August 16 – 2:38 p.m.

Cajon Pass – Air Attack has advised the Bluecut Incident Commander that Highway 138 between I-15 and Silverwood Lake needs to be closed immediately.

The scanner transmission stated “get those folks off that highway.”

Meanwhile, Highway 18 traffic coming uphill is congested as desert residents seek ways to get home.

UPDATE 11: Tuesday, August 16 – 2:33 p.m.

Cajon Pass – Mandatory evacuations are now in place east of I-15 and south of Rancho Road to the area of Summit Valley.

Air support is working a 50 by 50 foot spot fire off Highway 138 at Forest Service Road 3N22.

UPDATE 10: Tuesday, August 16 – 2:14 p.m.

Mountain Communities – Increased traffic on Highway 138 in the Crestline area due to the Bluecut Fire may impact bus schedules within the Rim of the World Unified School District, according to a district advisory.

Mandatory evacuations are now in place in Baldy Mesa and Wrightwood is now under a voluntary evacuation notice.

The U.S. Forest Service is reporting the fire is now 2,500 acres.

UPDATE 9: Tuesday, August 16 – 2:04 p.m.

Cajon Pass – Here are the newest mandatory evacuations: Everything north of 138; everything South of Phelan Road; everything east of Sheep Creek Road; everything west of Caliente.

The fire is now moving towards Mormon Rocks and a lot of structures.

The acreage is still listed between 1,500 and 2,000.

UPDATE 8: Tuesday, August 16 – 1:40 p.m.

Cajon Pass – The latest information from the Bluecut Fire is that some mobile homes have burned.

The Snowline Joint Unified School District has requested that parents of students at Wrightwood Elementary School should pick up their students immediately.

UPDATE 7: Tuesday, August 16 – 1:22 p.m.

Cajon Pass – The latest information about the firefighters involved in the burnover of their engine is that two received minor burns and suffered from smoke inhalation.

One of the firefighters has been transported to Loma Linda University Medical Center.

There are trains stopped a short distance from the Bluecut Fire and the Incident Commander has been informed there are no hazardous materials on the trains.

UPDATE 6: Tuesday, August 16 – 1:11 p.m.

Cajon Pass -Evacuation orders are not in place for the Lytle Creek area.

As the Bluecut Fire continues to expand, students at Kimbark Elementary School have been evacuated to Chavez Middle School for the balance of the day.

UPDATE 5: Tuesday, August 16 – 12:58 p.m.

Cajon Pass – At least four structures have been lost in Swarthout Canyon, according to scanner reports.

UPDATE 4: Tuesday, August 16 – 12:53 p.m.

Cajon Pass – Scanner traffic indicates that two (1) engines have reportedly been run over by fire and are deploying shelters/seeking refuge inside a structure. Medical assistance has been dispatched to the area of the Bluecut Fire but the number of possible injuries is unknown.

UPDATE 3: Tuesday, August 16 – 12:44 p.m.

Cajon Pass – The San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department has issued a mandatory evacuation order for all of Cajon Valley due to the rapidly expanding Bluecut Fire. The order covers the area between I-15 and Highway 2.

A Red Cross Reception and Care Center has been established for evacuees at the Jessie Turner Community Center at 15556 Summit Avenue in Fontana.

UPDATE 2: Tuesday, August 16 – 12:34 p.m.

Cajon Pass – The Bluecut Fire in the Cajon Pass has surpassed 2,000 acres with a rapid rate of spread.

Six additional dozers and 10 additional water tenders have been ordered along with fixed wing aircraft with no diversions allowed.

UPDATE: Tuesday, August 16 – 12:13 p.m.

Cajon Pass – The Bluecut Fire has forced the closure of I-15 between Devore and Oak Hills.

In addition, Highway 138 has been closed between Highway 2 and Summit Valley Road.

ORIGINAL STORY

Cajon Pass – The Bluecut Fire — burning in the Cajon Pass — is making a run up Swarthout Canyon and up towards Lone Pine Canyon and Wrightwood.

Bob Poole from the U.S. Forest Service told ROTWNEWS.com the fire has consumed 1,000 acres and firefighters from the Pilot and Basin Fires are being diverted to the fire reported just before 11 a.m. Tuesday.

LIFE THREATENING

Several people are trapped in cars in the fire area and evacuations are underway ahead of the fire as structure protection units converge on the area.

Six air tankers have been ordered for the fire and the Incident Commander is requesting additional resources.

<http://rotwnews.com/2016/08/16/breaking-news-bluecut-fire-in-cajon-pass-making-run-towards-wrightwood/>

'It hit with an intensity we haven't seen before,' San Bernardino County fire chief says

Sarah Parvini and Matt Stevens, LA Times

Posted: August 17, 2016, 10:25AM

In a word, **San Bernardino County Fire** Chief Mark Hartwig said, damage from the Blue Cut fire has been devastating.

"A lot of homes lost yesterday," Hartwig said at a news conference Wednesday morning. "There will be a lot of families that will come home to nothing. If there's a bright side, a silver lining, there are some homes that were saved."

Hartwig told reporters defensive firefighting remains a priority for firefighters. The 30,000-acre fire remains 0% contained.

"Yesterday, it hit hard, it hit fast, it hit with an intensity that we haven't seen before," Hartwig said.

Mike Wakoski, incident commander of the Southern California Incident Management Team 3, said fuels in the area are extremely dry and very explosive.

"In my 40 years of fighting fire I've never seen a fire behavior so extreme as it was yesterday," Wakoski said. "Yesterday's actions were totally defensive."

U.S. Forest Service officials said they "hit the fire pretty hard" and asked residents to evacuate -- not stick around to see what happens when authorities give the order.

"If we ask you to leave, you have to leave," John Miller, spokesman for the U.S. Forest Service, told reporters. "The worst thing that can happen is for people to wait to the last minute, dial 911 and firefighters and law enforcement are unable to get people out of their homes."

The fire in the Cajon Pass is the latest struggle in a challenging year filled with wildfires, officials said.

"We're going to continue to hit this thing hard," Miller said.

<http://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-updates-wildfire-season-it-hit-with-an-intensity-we-haven-t-1471454480-htmllstory.html>

Blue Cut Fire Explodes To 30,000 Acres In Socal

ABC7 News

Posted: August 17, 2016, 3:12PM



DEVORE, Calif. --

The Blue Cut Fire raging in San Bernardino County in Southern California has now scorched 30,000 acres, a big jump from 18,000 acres Tuesday night.

By Wednesday morning, the fast-moving fire had 0 percent containment.

Firefighters were most concerned about the area between Lytle Creek and Lone Pine Canyon. A mandatory evacuation was ordered for all of Wrightwood, but officials said that only half of the community's 4,500 residents had complied.

Officials estimated that more than 34,000 homes and some 82,000 people were under evacuation orders. Authorities could not say how many homes were destroyed in the fire, but they prepared communities for bad news.

"There will be a lot of families that come home to nothing," San Bernardino County Fire Chief Mark Hartwig during a news conference.

After taking a morning flight over the fire zone, he described the fire scene as "devastating."
"It hit hard. It hit fast. It hit with an intensity that we hadn't seen before," he said.

Some 1,300 firefighters were battling the blaze, which began Tuesday morning as a small brush fire above Devore and quickly exploded in size. Driven by dry brush and gusty conditions, the blaze led Gov. Jerry Brown to issue a state of emergency in the county.

The proclamation provides more state resources to firefighting efforts and grants certain benefits to affected residents, such as waiver of fees for destroyed documents and faster unemployment benefits.

In addition to Wrightwood, other areas under mandatory evacuation orders include Lone Pine Canyon, Phelan, Lytle Creek Canyon and West Oak Hills.

Early Wednesday morning, the California Highway Patrol announced the closure of eastbound California 138 at California 18, and eastbound California 2 at Big Pines Highway.

Those shutdowns came amid the several ongoing closures, including two sections of Interstate 15: northbound from Interstate 215 at Kenwood Avenue, as well as the southbound 15 from Rancho Road to the 215. Vehicles were backed up on the 15 for about 3 miles near the closure. It was unknown when that freeway, a major thoroughfare between Los Angeles and Las Vegas, would reopen.

Crews in the fire zone on Wednesday are expected to face temperatures in the 90s, winds of 30-40 mph and humidity of 3-10 percent.

"We know we have the wind coming," said Eric Sherwin of the **San Bernardino County Fire Department**. "We have red flag warnings that are posted for the mountain areas. We're going to hit triple-digit temperatures up in the deserts, so it's going to be a very aggressive attack from both sides of the fire from the firefighters."

Cadaver dogs will be brought into the burn area Wednesday to search for the possible remains of people who may not have been able to escape the fast-moving blaze, according to the Fire Department.

Speaking at the news conference, county Sheriff John McMahon urged residents to heed evacuations orders for their own safety.

"When those officers ask you to leave, we would ask that you do leave and not shelter in place," McMahon said. "We would hate for the fire to overrun your neighborhood and you be stuck inside and not have a way out."

The cause of the fire was under investigation.

<http://abc7news.com/news/wildfire-scorches-30000-acres-in-san-bernardino-county----watch-live/1472950/>

Blue Cut Fire has big effect in Yucca Valley

Leah Sanson, Hi-Desert Star

Posted: August 17, 2016, 9:14 PM



Trucks, campers and cars have a long wait to turn left from Twentynine Palms Highway onto Old Woman Springs Road Tuesday. The two roads are a detour for traffic diverted by the Blue Cut Fire. Stacy Moore, Hi-Desert Star

YUCCA VALLEY — The Blue Cut Fire that started Tuesday morning in the Cajon Pass has snarled traffic on both of Yucca Valley's highways.

Since its start at 10:36 a.m. Tuesday, the fire has burned more than 30,000 acres and has 1,309 personnel on scene fighting the flames.

County fire stations in Yucca Valley have sent two utility units to the blaze, one from station 41 in downtown Yucca Valley and one from station 42 in Yucca Mesa.

The units are part of a task force that sprays a gel coating over houses in threatened areas to help prevent severe damage.

Major roads have been closed by the fire, including parts of Interstate 15, Highway 138 and southbound Highway 395, causing major detours throughout San Bernardino County.

One detour travelers can take is Highway 62, Twentynine Palms Highway, to Highway 247, Old Woman Springs Road. This is causing major delays in the Yucca Valley area.

The CHP has called for as many as three more patrol vehicles than normal in the area because of the high volume of traffic, an officer said Tuesday.

Businesses on Twentynine Palms Highway are benefiting from the unusually high number of travellers in the area.

Denny's employee Hailey Correll said Tuesday felt like a busy Saturday or Sunday morning.

Del Taco employee Jenna Harper said the business is making a few hundred more dollars an hour because of the traffic.

The fire may cause delays in county courts, too.

The county district attorney took to Twitter to state, “Due to the Blue Cut Fire some inmates are not being transported to court today depending on where they are housed.”

The Yucca Mesa Improvement Association is opening its corrals for horses displaced by the fire. The facility is at 3133 Balsa Ave. For information, call (760) 221-6769.

http://www.hidesertstar.com/news/article_38195864-64fa-11e6-85c0-c7c14feba464.html

Blue Cut Fire, California

NASA

Posted: August 19, 2016



The Blue Cut fire was first reported just after 10:30 a.m. PDT on Aug. 16, 2016, north of San Bernadino, Calif. Smoke and the heat from the fire was detected just three hours later by NASA's Aqua satellite.

Inciweb, an interagency all-risk incident information management system that coordinates with federal, state and local agencies to manage wildfires reported on August 17 that the fire had covered 18,000 acres.

Inciweb reported that the Bluecut Fire started in the Cajon Pass near Kenwood Ave. west of Interstate 15. The Forest Service is in Unified Command with CAL FIRE, **San Bernardino County Fire**, San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department, and the California Highway Patrol. More than 80,000 people have been evacuated.

This natural-color satellite image was collected by the Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) aboard the Aqua satellite on Aug. 16, 2016 at 1:30 p.m. PDT. Actively burning areas, detected by MODIS's thermal bands, are outlined in red. At the time of the image a large plume of smoke from the fire was blowing to the northwest, toward Victorville.

For more information on the Blue Cut Fire, call 909-383-5688 or visit <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/4962/>. Visit sbcfire.org/ReadySetGo.aspx for fire preparedness and safety information.

NASA image courtesy Jeff Schmaltz, MODIS Rapid Response Team. Caption: NASA/Goddard, Rob Gutro with information from Inciweb.

<http://www.nasa.gov/image-feature/goddard/2016/blue-cut-fire-california>

UPDATE: Bluecut Fire now at 35,969 acres, 22% contained

Mandatory evacuations lifted east of I-15, southbound lanes of freeway reopened

Victor Valley Daily Press

Posted: August 18, 2016, 6:53 AM



A San Bernardino County Fire Department firefighter watches a Helitanker make a water drop on the Bluecut Fire from Cajon Boulevard in Devore Thursday. After battling the 35,000-plus-acre blaze for a third day, officials announced that containment had grown to 22 percent. David Pardo, Daily Press

CAJON PASS — The Bluecut Fire grew to nearly 36,000 acres Thursday, but officials reported that they gained some ground on the massive blaze and had 22 percent containment.

Mandatory evacuations for the west Oak Hills area were lifted at 6 p.m., according to the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department, as residents in the areas west of Interstate 15 to Baldy Mesa Road and south of Phelan Road to Whitehaven Street and Praire Trail are being allowed to return to their homes. This followed evacuations being lifted in the area east of Interstate 15, south of Rancho Road and all the way to Santa Fe Avenue, Summit Valley Road and Highway 138 earlier in the day.

Flareups were reported in the Cajon Pass late Thursday afternoon and into the evening, but despite them firefighters continued to remain optimistic that they finally were making progress on fast-spreading fire that started Tuesday.

A Daily Press reporter in Wrightwood said firefighters had been holding the line at Highway 2 all day and the Phelan area had seen very little fire activity.

A Cal Fire spokeswoman acknowledged Thursday was a big day for suppression efforts as firefighters battled the 35,969-acre blaze.

"You can tell by the smoke in the air that things are really working in our favor today with our fire suppression efforts," said Cal Fire spokeswoman Debbie Chapman. "But the day is not over. We still have relative low humidity and the fuels are dry. When they burn they are explosive and we saw that behavior on Wednesday.

"We really suppressed the fire in this area with the helicopter drops and with the bulldozer lines. We have engines doing structure protection and mopping up the fire. This is an important area to secure because yesterday the fire was heading in this direction. That is why we concentrated efforts in securing these lines along Highway 2 and also in the Lytle Creek area. Of course we can't just ignore the other perimeters of the fire that's why we have other resources deployed in those areas."

Traffic also resumed flowing in both directions on Interstate 15 after authorities reopened southbound lanes of the freeway around 11 a.m., according to CHP Inland Division's Twitter account.

CHP announced that there will be intermittent lane closures and all off-ramps in the Cajon Pass will remain closed. Officials urged people to drive with caution. Northbound lanes were reopened shortly after 10 p.m. Wednesday.

Fire officials said that close to 1,600 firefighters are battling the menacing Bluecut Fire, which grew to 31,600 acres overnight and remained at only 4 percent contained as of Thursday morning.

Firefighters continued attacking the fire Thursday morning, battling hot, dry and windy conditions, as red flag conditions were expected to persist throughout the day. Ridgetop winds are expected to blow at 20 mph, with gusts up to 30 mph.

Fire crews and air operations seemed to be zeroing in on the now charred hills just east of Highway 2, just before Wright Mountain Road, early Thursday afternoon. A row of bulldozers was lined along Highway 2, just north of the hot spot, awaiting orders.

Strike Team 1138 Battalion Chief Michael Brown told the Daily Press that firefighters would focus on containing the line along Highway 2 from Highway 138 to Wrightwood.

"We have hand crews on the ground, smothering hot spots trying to catch anything before it gets hotter in the day," he said. "We are expecting the winds to pick up. This area is a real cause for concern, that's why we are trying to stop the fire from getting to the fuels on the other side of the highway.

"What happens later in the day is all depending on the wind. This is one of the worst fires I've seen because the fire activity has been unreal. The way the fire has been burning it is very easy for embers to be picked up, leading the fire to burn 20 to 30 yards ahead of itself."

A trip down Highway 138 between Interstate 15 and Highway 2 gave a glimpse of just how massive the Bluecut Fire was as it raged through the Cajon Pass and into the mountain communities.

Off in the distance you can see just a handful of homes, on both sides of Highway 138, that were burned. It appears a majority of the homes were saved, while surrounding properties were blackened and charred. Several areas along Highway 138 billowed smoke as just a few fire engines were scattered along the area Thursday.

A couple fire crews were working along the area of Lone Pine Road and up to Wrightwood Thursday afternoon.

San Bernardino County Fire Department Chief Mark Hartwig took to Twitter and said firefighters on Wednesday were able to protect the communities of Wrightwood, Lytle Creek and West Cajon Valley in “tough conditions.”

The Interagency Incident Management Team 4 (Opliger) spokesman Eric Sherwin told the Daily Press that fire crews were worried about those communities “being hit hard.” Sherwin said Wrightwood was being threatened by multiple points of the blaze.

Numerous fire engines were seen heading west on Highway 2 from Highway 138, a little after 5 p.m. on Wednesday as flames burned through hills and eventually caressed Highway 2.

Erica Nicolai, who lives just off Highway 2, was watching the flames starting to climb over the hills behind the homes in the area, roughly a mile west of Highway 138. Nicolai told the Daily Press on Thursday morning that she stayed put at her house because the fire had not exactly burned close to her home.

“The ridge is still burning pretty good, but it looks like my home will be safe,” she said a little after 7:30 a.m. “I was told the fire is being blown north of the town and the town is not in imminent danger. As far as I know, no houses have burned in Wrightwood.”

Nicolai said some of her neighbors opted to stay put as well, and alternated shifts sitting on top of a roof keeping a watchful eye on the fire. She said the neighbor would warn the rest of the eight households just off Highway 2 if the blaze was approaching too close for comfort.

Nicolai said this is the first time she has been ordered to evacuate since moving just outside of Wrightwood four years ago.

“This all happened so fast,” she said as she stood outside of her van jam-packed with belongings and her three dogs. “We weren't ready for it. We thought we were. I'm just waiting here to see what happens and how close it will get to my house because if I leave right now and the fire doesn't end up threatening my home, they won't let me back in. Word around here is that they may have the roads closed off until Monday. I have a place to go, but I don't want to figure out a way to get down the hill.

“As an American homeowner, leaving when you're told to evacuate is not a law. People online are criticizing those that aren't leaving. But I really have no choice. I'm here but I'm not in the way of the firefighters. If the fire comes up to my home, my van is ready, I'm grabbing my five-year-old and the dogs and we are leaving. But it doesn't look like we will have to do so.”

Reagan Irwin shared Nicolai's concern about leaving and not being able to return home. Irwin said it would take flames in her backyard to finally leave the area.

Being told to evacuate was a scary feeling, she said. Especially not knowing what exactly to pack.

“Everything I own is inside my home. Trying to pick certain thing to take with you is difficult,” she said. “I grabbed clothes, then grabbed a Buddah that I love, my grandmother's ashes and her picture, something my

daughter made me for Valentine's Day and a candlestick from my ex-husband's grandmother. I didn't know what else to get."

Incident Command confirmed a number of homes had burned, but was unable to determine if anyone had been killed in the blaze, which grew to 18,000 acres in less than 10 hours on Tuesday.

Early Wednesday, fire officials said the fire had ballooned to 30,000 acres, but those figures were revised downward to 25,626 at 6 p.m. An afternoon update from Incident Command erroneously said the Bluecut Fire had doubled in size. But Sherwin told the Daily Press that the error was due to a "glitch" in mapping software.

The raging blaze in the Cajon Pass erupted Tuesday morning, just three hours after fire officials announced 100 percent containment of the Pilot Fire, which scorched 12.6 square miles in the San Bernardino Mountains and Summit Valley.

Mandatory evacuations remain in place for the area north of Highway 138, east of Sheep Creek Road, south of Phelan Road and west of Caliente Road. Residents in Baldy Mesa north of Phelan Road, the area east of Caughlin Road, south of Bear Valley Road and west of Highway 395 also remain under mandatory evacuation orders. Residents south of Phelan Road, east of Sheep Creek Road and west to Green Road are also under mandatory evacuations.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/article/20160818/NEWS/160819763/0/SEARCH>

Blue Cut fire at 22 percent containment on Day 4

Beatriz Valenzuela, San Bernardino Sun

Posted: August 19, 2016, 6:25 AM



A helicopter makes a water drop on a burning hillside in the Cajon Pass as a northbound train heads into the Cajon Pass as the Blue Cut Fire continues to burn near Cajon Blvd. Thursday August 18, 2016.. (Will Lester/Scng-Inland Valley Daily Bulletin)



The Blue Cut Fire flares up Thursday afternoon, Aug. 18, 2016, near Cajon Boulevard, threatening a pair of freight trains passing through the area. An aggressive air attack was launched in the area. (Will Lester/Scng-Inland Valley Daily Bulletin)

Firefighters are again on the firelines Friday morning, bringing the Blue Cut fire containment up to 26 percent.

More than 2,600 fire personnel are still battling the wildfire, which as of Friday morning consumed about 37,000 acres -- that's about 57 square miles. The city of Ontario takes up 50 square miles.

Lytle Creek, West Cajon Valley and Wrightwood areas will remain shut down until it's safe, said Sheriff John McMahan.

"We want to make sure it's safe before those areas reopen," McMahan said.

McMahan said he hopes to continue lifting evacuation orders around Phelan throughout the day.

During a Friday morning briefing, firefighters repeated their plea for people to follow evacuation orders -- something 50 percent refused to do during the Blue Cut fire, according to fire officials.

“One of the biggest risks to firefighters and first responders is people waiting to evacuate,” said Rocky Oplinger, of California Federal National Team 4.

“We saw what happened in Australia in 2009 -- Black Sunday -- where 179 people died because they waited too long,” he said.

U.S. Forest Service spokesman Bob Poole credited the success extending the containment lines around the fire to finally having enough resources to keep up.

“Now that we have the resources, we are on the offensive to stop the fire,” Poole said. “Before we were on the defensive -- we were behind it. Now we can get ahead of it.”

Dangers remain, supervisor Jody Noiron of the U.S. Forest Service warned firefighters at Friday morning’s briefing.

“Just because you don’t see a lot of smoke out there, the hazards are all still there,” Noiron said.

Firefighters also need to beware of increased traffic to Las Vegas that’s expected to hit the Cajon Pass today, Noiron said.

Officials should also keep their eyes peeled, Sheriff’s Capt. Stephen Dorsey said, referring to the arrest of three alleged looters in an evacuation area Thursday.

The existing containment line runs along the fire’s southeast flank between Hesperia and Cajon.

“Lytle Creek and Wrightwood are still our highest priority,” Oplinger said.

They will also focus on the west side of Hesperia and Baldy Mesa, he said.

Officials are working to get people back in their homes, but Highway 138 will remain closed, according to Oplinger.

Firefighting efforts have been hampered by low humidity, gusty winds and vegetation made bone dry by drought. A red-flag warning set to expire Thursday evening was extended to Friday evening, Poole said.

On Wednesday, crews stopped flames from jumping fire breaks dug by bulldozers.

“They definitely saved the communities of Wrightwood and Lytle Creek,” said Tracey Martinez, a **San Bernardino County Fire Department** spokeswoman.

The fire, first spotted around 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, grew at a frightening pace to 18,000 acres the first night.

<http://www.dailybulletin.com/general-news/20160819/blue-cut-fire-at-22-percent-containment-on-day-4>

Firefighters Gain Ground On Blaze

Press Enterprise

Posted: August 19, 2016



A helicopter makes a water drop onto the southern edge of the Blue Cut fire as it burns Thursday off Cajon Boulevard near Kenwood Avenue. Will Lester, Staff Photographer



Los Angeles Fire Department firefighter Cody Haas of Orange takes a breather as his engine company keeps watch for flare-ups near a burned area in Lytle Creek on Thursday. Leonard Ortiz, Staff Photographer

Blue Cut Fire At A Glance

Information as of 8:30 p.m. Acres: 35,969 Containment: 22 percent Cause: Unknown Buildings destroyed: Unknown Fire personnel: 1,584

The Blue Cut fire continued to menace communities north of the Cajon Pass on Thursday, but the lifting of some mandatory evacuation orders and the reopening of Interstate 15 signaled progress against a fast-moving wildfire that shocked even seasoned firefighters with its behavior and ferocity.

The fire had consumed almost 36,000 acres in the San Bernardino Mountains as of Thursday evening, but containment rose to 22 percent, up from 4 percent that morning.

U.S. Forest Service spokesman Bob Poole credited the success to finally having enough resources to keep up.

“Now that we have the resources, we are on the offensive to stop the fire,” Poole said. “Before, we were on the defensive, we were behind it. Now we can get ahead of it.”

The existing containment line runs along the fire’s southeast flank between Hesperia and Cajon.

As the battle continued into the night, firefighters focused on protecting structures in the Lytle Creek and Wrightwood areas and bolstering containment lines along Highway 2.

Firefighting efforts have been hampered by low humidity, gusty winds and vegetation made bone dry by drought. A red-flag warning set to expire Thursday evening was extended to tonight, Poole said.

Almost 1,600 firefighters are taking on the fire. On Wednesday, crews stopped flames from jumping fire breaks dug by bulldozers.

“They definitely saved the communities of Wrightwood and Lytle Creek,” said Tracey Martinez, a **San Bernardino County Fire Department** spokeswoman.

The fire, first spotted around 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, grew to 18,000 acres the first night. The cause has not been announced.

Returning Home

Mandatory evacuation orders were lifted Thursday afternoon for residents in south Hesperia and East Oak Hills, and Thursday evening for West Oak Hills.

Other evacuation orders remained in place. It was unclear how many of the 82,600 people initially told to leave were covered by the remaining orders.

Daniel Martinez, 48, returned to his Oak Hills home to find it unscathed.

“When we heard the Summit Inn burned to the ground, we were worried this fire would become far worse than what it is,” he said. “My wife is already inside crying tears of joy.”

Construction contractor Raymond Adkins, 34, was not as lucky.

“We had some minor damage on the south-side wall after some debris caught fire,” Adkins said. “Thankfully it’s repairable.”

Fire officials still have not been able to say how many homes and other structures have burned, other than “dozens.” Some are known to have burned along Highway 138. Conditions have been too dangerous for the damage to be assessed. But a team has started that work.

No structures burned Thursday, and no injuries were reported, Poole said.

Still Evacuated

Mary and John Gress of West Cajon Valley had to evacuate and said “it was nerve-racking not knowing” their home’s fate.

On Wednesday afternoon, someone texted them a picture of their house.

“We’ve been blessed,” Mary Gress said Thursday as she sat at the Mountain Top Cafe near Wrightwood.

In the 700 block of Lytle Creek Road on Thursday, a cluster of what appeared to be former Forest Service structures turned into residences were still standing, though the fire had come down a hill behind them. Not far away, the community and senior centers still stood as well.

Evacuees hanging out at the Valero gas station just outside the roadblock had heard conflicting stories on whether the centers had survived.

In fact, everything still stood. Nothing had burned, and the nearest active fire was north of town, in the hills beyond where Lytle Creek Road gives up asphalt for gravel.

Nonetheless, as darkness descended, numerous fire engines and other vehicles convoyed up Lytle Creek Road, a reminder that the Blue Cut fire was still very active.

The Valero station, a block or so from the roadblock where Lytle Creek Road meets Glen Helen Parkway, became “like a truck stop” for evacuated residents, said owner Kal Maqatish.

After the fire started, he said, his parking lot filled with upward of 100 cars.

“People were pretty much confused,” he said, especially about where to go and how to get there. “I must have mentioned directions at least 200 times” on Tuesday.

About 35 to 40 cars stayed overnight in the parking lot Tuesday night, but Maqatish said things calmed down Wednesday.

Even with the uptick in business, he said they’re well-stocked.

“We definitely make sure the community has enough supplies,” he said.

Roads Reopening

Southbound I-15 through the Cajon Pass reopened about 10:45 a.m. Thursday, just over 12 hours after the northbound lanes reopened.

Authorities closed the freeway Tuesday as the fire spread, shutting off the main vehicular link between Los Angeles and Las Vegas.

Traffic is now allowed to flow through the Cajon Pass, but not to exit: Off-ramps remained closed, much to the dismay of some motorists. The CHP set up signs to warn drivers and stationed officers to monitor the roadblocks.

Highway 138 from I-15 to Highway 2, and Highway 2 from the Los Angeles County line to Highway 173, remained closed as of Thursday evening.

An afternoon flare-up along the 15 prompted a two-hour attack and the closure of three BNSF Railway lines that go through the Cajon Pass. Two were later reopened.

A fourth line, operated by Union Pacific Railway, remained closed Thursday because of a bridge that sustained significant damage.

Thursday's Plan Of Attack

As firefighters started their day Thursday, winds were expected to push flames up through the Lytle Creek and Lone Pine canyons, according to the incident commander's fire behavior forecast. Ridgetop winds blew from the southsouthwest and threatened to spread flames into the Wrightwood area through Slover Canyon at the top of Lone Pine Canyon.

Flames could also spread to the west, north of Highway 138.

Crews sprayed fire-resistant gel on homes that are potentially in danger, as they did during the 2015 Lake fire in the Big Bear area.

Thursday also allowed for an assessment of property damage. San Bernardino County officials had to decide which services, such as assessors and tax collectors, were needed for fire-ravaged areas.

San Bernardino County officials on Thursday activated their mass care and shelter plan, spokesman David Wert said in a news release.

Cots, food, showers and restrooms are available in the shelter at 14800 Seventh St. in Victorville, Wert said. An animal shelter and counseling services are available, he added.

Intense Firefight

Veteran firefighters described the Blue Cut fire as the most intense and erratic they've ever seen in terms of speed, heat and length.

"People are saying – these guys that have been out here for 40 years – that they've never seen fire behavior as explosive as this," Poole said. "It's because of the high heat, low relative humidity, conditions due to the drought and the condition of the vegetation."

Brett Minor, a Cal Fire engineer who works in Lake Elsinore, was part of a team of four engine crews – the fifth dropped out because of mechanical problems – sent Wednesday to Old Cajon Boulevard, where southerly winds rapidly pushed flames into the valley.

Crews split up for different assignments, putting out spot fires along the way. Then, about 5 p.m., "There was a dramatic wind shift," Minor said, and flames took off into a building.

As other crews called for helicopter water drops, Minor's crew was sent to a drainage set ablaze by embers.

"By the time we drove up to it, it was already freight-training up the drainage," Minor said.

As winds blew, flames that once were behind Minor's crew jumped ahead of them as well. Heat began to melt paint on their fire engine. With the battle unwinnable, the crew dropped their hoses.

“Now we had fire coming right at us. With the speed of the fire, there was no time to do anything other than get in the engine and go,” Minor said.

Hector Sanchez, a Forest Service engineer based in the Angeles National Forest, knows the good guys don’t always win in his business.

“It’s kind of disheartening if you can’t do anything, you can’t help, you can’t put an effort toward stopping the fire, and hopefully nothing’s in front of it,” he said.

Upon arriving Tuesday, Sanchez and his crew were sent to Old Cajon and Blue Cut, near the fire’s origin. “The fire behavior was very intense,” he said.

He described large flames born from thick, dry vegetation pre-heated by advancing flames. Sanchez’s crew watched its surroundings.

“That’s something I try to tell the young guys, is that we’re always paying attention. Even if you are brand new, that doesn’t mean you can’t tell me, ‘Hey are we doing this safely?’ We’ve seen too many of our coworkers get hurt in this job,” he said.

[\(Print Edition Only\)](#)

Gratitude To Firefighters

Christina Zimmerman, Letter to the Editor, Mountain News

Posted: August 18, 2016 6:00 AM

I would like to thank the brave retired fireman and his friend who wrestled to the ground the transient who started the fire off Highway 18 on July 31, 2016, and put out the fire he started. This heroic incident is filled with amazing events: They noticed plume of smoke, they just so happened to have a fire extinguisher, a Good Samaritan had left gallon jugs filled with water on the turnout for people having overheated cars—which they used—and most importantly they cared enough to do something brave.

Thank you on behalf of our community!

I’d also like to thank the incredibly courageous and amazing firefighters who worked so valiantly to contain the Pilot Fire. The first day they gave up their lunch to battle the flames so it would not spread. We owe them our debt of gratitude for so quickly and remarkably containing this fire that could have devastated our mountains.

It does not just take a village to raise our children; it takes an entire community to watch out for each other.
Christina Zimmerman, Lake Arrowhead

http://www.mountain-news.com/opinion/letters_to_editor/article_708647f2-64d2-11e6-9d8f-0b0e4ea0c154.html