

NEWS

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Biane commends arrest of arson suspect in Hesperia

Board of Supervisors Chairman Paul Biane this morning hailed the arrest of a suspected arsonist in the Hesperia area and commended the alert witnesses who notified the authorities.

"It's inconceivable that someone would try to start a fire in the midst of all the destruction we are witnessing in our communities," Chairman Biane said, noting that ongoing wildfires have destroyed more than 300 homes and displaced thousands of county residents.

"However, we know arsonists are among us. Therefore, it is important for everyone to keep their eyes open and immediately report suspicious activity to 911 operators," Chairman Biane said.

At approximately 8:50 p.m. Tuesday, a citizen approached two California Highway Patrol officers assigned to wildfire traffic control to advise them of a small brush fire. CHP Officer Chris Denkers responded to the scene and saw four people trying to put out the fire with shovels and dirt. They told Officer Denkers that a suspicious individual was seen squatting down near where the fire started at SR-173 and Arrowhead Lake Road near Mojave River Forks Regional Park and left the scene on a motorcycle.

A CHP helicopter piloted by Officer Rowland Barry and Flight Officer Mike Adams immediately responded to the scene and began an aerial search using infrared equipment. A San Bernardino County Fire Engine advised that the motorcycle was heading towards the road closure on SR-173 at SR-138. Officer Barry spotted the motorcycle and followed it into an address on SR-173. The helicopter crew then directed CHP and San Bernardino County Sheriff's personnel to the location where they made contact with the suspect.

After further investigation, John Alfred Rund, 48, of Hesperia, was arrested on suspicion of arson.

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The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Bomb/Arson Detail, along with San Bernardino County Fire Department will be conducting an arson investigation. The investigation is ongoing and it is unknown if the suspect is connected to any of the major fires currently burning in San Bernardino County. The cause of those fires has not been determined.

The arrest was made possible by the combined efforts of alert citizens working with the multi-agency law enforcement presence in the San Bernardino mountains.

"We are working very hard, and have dedicated a lot of resources to maintaining safety in the communities where residents have been forced to leave their homes," said San Bernardino County Sheriff Gary Penrod. "The California Highway Patrol and our agency both have an extremely large presence in our local mountains."

"Over the past several years we have made tremendous strides in improving communications between law enforcement and fire agencies and this is a case where improved communications really paid off," Sheriff Penrod said.

Said Third District County Supervisor Dennis Hansberger: "I am heartened to hear of the arrest and pleased that we are remaining diligent to bring about safety in our county."