

NEWS

From the County of San Bernardino
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County declares local emergency for Butler II fire *Numerous County agencies involved in disaster response*

The County of San Bernardino today proclaimed the existence of a local emergency in response to the Butler II fire, which was posing a serious threat to communities in San Bernardino County.

Board of Supervisors Chairman Paul Biane, acting as the county's Director of Emergency Services, signed the proclamation at 2:30 p.m. today. Besides making the fire a top priority for all county agencies, the proclamation is the essential first step toward securing state and federal disaster assistance. Such assistance may become immediately necessary in the event of damage to residential, commercial, or public property.

Third District Supervisor Dennis Hansberger and First District Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt have been touring the areas in their districts threatened by the fire and are prepared to help lead any county assistance efforts.

The county has successfully used its Telephone Emergency Notification System (TENS), also known as "reverse 911" to convey evacuation information to residents. The county has also activated its Emergency Operations Center in Rialto to coordinate the county's response, which involves numerous county departments. For example, the county Animal Care and Control Division has evacuated animals from Lucerne Valley, Running Springs, and Green Valley Lake, and county Behavioral Health and Children's Services crews stand ready to provide necessary services to fire victims and evacuees.

The wind-driven fire started at about 1:30 p.m. Friday near Butler Peak, which is about halfway between Big Bear Lake and Green Valley Lake, and has burned approximately 18,000 acres. It is the second fire to erupt near this area in the past month, hence the name "Butler II."

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The county's emergency proclamation cites "extreme peril to the safety of persons and property ... currently affecting the areas of Green Valley Lake, Fawnskin, the unincorporated areas of the Big Bear Valley, Lucerne Valley, Mariana Highlands, and Apple Valley." The proclamation noted that precautionary and mandatory evacuations are taking place, and that 14,000 people were being threatened.

Some 6,000 residential structures and 150 businesses were threatened, and the fire was immediately adjacent to Fawnskin with structure protection in place. Authorities cited an immediate threat to homes in Fawnskin.

(NOTE: News media seeking information on the fire should contact the U.S. Forest Service at (909) 383-5688 or visit www.inciweb.org)