



## CALIFORNIA

# Runaway train carrying iron ore derails in San Bernardino; hazmat crew responding



A 55-car train — including two locomotives — derailed 3 miles west of Kelso on Monday. A minor fuel leak from one of the locomotives is being addressed by hazmat personnel. (San Bernardino County Fire)

BY NOAH GOLDBERG | STAFF WRITER

MARCH 27, 2023 11:18 AM PT

A runaway train with no passengers derailed in San Bernardino on Monday morning, catching fire, according to authorities.

The train carrying cars of iron ore — the raw material used to make steel — derailed near Kelso, according to the San Bernardino County Fire Protection District and fire department radio transmissions.

Fire engines and a hazardous materials team are responding, according to the government agency. The fire department confirmed around 11:20 a.m. that the fire was out, and that there were no injuries and no active threat to the area.

“It did derail and it is on fire. Carrying 180 cars of iron ore,” said a man on the San Bernardino County fire and rescue radio channel more than an hour earlier. Another fire employee said there was a fire “under the first locomotive.”

The department was sending water tenders to the scene to help battle the blaze caused by the derailment. But soon after the reports of fire, law enforcement at the scene confirmed there was no longer a fire and many of the fire trucks called to the scene were sent to other assignments.

The San Bernardino County Fire Protection District said it was on the scene with representatives from Union Pacific railroad company.

Union Pacific told The Times that the southbound train crashed around 8:30 a.m. Pacific time, with 55 cars and two locomotives derailing. The train was in the Mojave National Preserve, east of Barstow.

“The crew was not injured,” said Kristen South, a spokesperson for Union Pacific. “The derailed rail cars were loaded with iron ore, which spilled. Iron ore is part of the steel-making process and is not a hazardous material. Further, there were no hazardous materials on the train. The incident is under investigation.”

She confirmed no train crew members were in control of the train when it derailed.

“I can confirm the crew was not in the cab at the time of the derailment and there was uncontrolled train movement,” South said. “No one was hurt and the cause is under investigation.”

**KELSO: #SBCoFD enroute to RAILCAR INCIDENT near KelbakerRd and KelsoCimaRd. Reported multi-car derailment, all cargo, NO passengers. Engine and HazMat companies responding. ^eas**

— San Bernardino County Fire (@SBCOUNTYFIRE) March 27, 2023

One Twitter user, who reported the derailment 15 minutes before the fire department did, described a runaway train. San Bernardino authorities could not be reached immediately to confirm if the train was a runaway.

**#BREAKING Runaway train from Baker heading towards Barstow 80mph with no one on it 180 cars.**

**Train has derailed 3 miles west of Kelso. Heard the crew jumped off and it was run away for over an hour.**

## — FirePhotoGirl (@FirePhotoGirl) March 27, 2023

“Heard the crew jumped off and it was run away for over an hour,” the user tweeted.

**OPINION** • Opinion

# Curt Hagman: Invest now to keep logistics and goods movement sectors strong

Cargo is unloaded from trucks at the Port of Long Beach in Long Beach. (AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez, File)

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By **CURT HAGMAN** |

PUBLISHED: March 27, 2023 at 10:10 a.m. | UPDATED: March 27, 2023 at 10:10 a.m.

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Make no mistake: Southern California's logistics industry is a critical economic driver, not just for the region, but for the state, the nation and the world.

Millions of jobs depend on it. In fact, more than one-third of all jobs in the six counties that comprise the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) region are connected — directly or indirectly — to the movement of goods.

It's why SCAG, the nation's largest metropolitan planning organization, should be applauded for taking the lead in advocating for greater investment in infrastructure, technology and systems to support this vital industry. While some are questioning whether we've gone too far, as a region, in expanding logistics and warehouse operations, the reality is that we are more reliant than ever on the trains, trucks, planes and fulfillment centers that enable the safe, efficient movement of goods through our region and across the nation.

When I say “we” I mean everyone — from the consumers who have made e-commerce a trillion-dollar business to the 2.3 million workers who are employed in goods movement-dependent industries to businesses, community organizations and local governments who benefit from the nearly \$350 billion a year in economic contributions that logistics provides our region.

Break it down further, and the enormous economic impact of goods movement becomes even clearer. The South Bay Ports are among the largest container ports of entry in the world. Los Angeles International Airport and Ontario International Airport are two of busiest air freight hubs in North America. In the Inland Empire alone, the network of distribution and fulfillment centers directly employs 200,000 workers, while 40% of the nation's consumer goods pass through the two-county region on any given day.

This creates some significant challenges, as well. Truck traffic across Southern California has grown to 1.2 million vehicles per day, and according to a new analysis by the American Transportation Research Institute, the region is home to three of the 10 worst freight bottlenecks in the country.

There's also the potentially catastrophic economic consequence of a sustained decline in freight volumes at the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles. After 26 consecutive months of exceeding pre-pandemic levels, volumes at both ports began slumping during the second half of the year. One reason is the growing competition from East and Gulf Coast ports, which have invested heavily in their infrastructure and physical operation.

We need to do the same — invest in our infrastructure — not just at the ports, but across the region. We also need to continue investing in the technology and systems that will ensure a safer, more efficient and healthier movement of goods across our region.

There is no reason that Southern California can't become the innovation hub for logistics.

In fact, no other region is better positioned to do so.

We can, and must, continue to develop new-and-improved methods for transporting goods in more efficient, environmentally sustainable ways.

As we do all of this, we will create even better career opportunities for the 37% of Southern California workers whose livelihoods depend on this industry.

SCAG has it right: Invest now, reap the benefits for generations to come.

*Curt Hagman serves on the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors and Second Vice President of the Southern California Association of Governments.*



**Curt Hagman** | Supervisor Curt Hagman is vice chairman of the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors and represents the Fourth District. He is chairman of the Southern California Association of Governments' Transportation Committee.

## LOCAL NEWS

# San Bernardino County grocery store closed amid heavy snowfall reopens

by: [Sara Welch](#)

Posted: Mar 27, 2023 / 12:27 PM PDT

Updated: Mar 27, 2023 / 04:40 PM PDT

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A grocery store in a San Bernardino County mountain community that was forced to close amid a powerful storm that dumped several feet of snow on the Southland reopened Monday.

Jensen's Foods in Blue Jay welcomed back customers a month after the historic blizzard forced the closure of the store, which had served as a lifeline for stranded residents.

Sara Welch reports for the KTLA 5 News at 11 a.m. on March 27, 2023.



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# San Diego County Supervisor to seek treatment for PTSD, trauma, alcohol abuse

By [City News Service](#)

Published March 27, 2023 at 8:29 AM PDT



*Matthew Bowler*

County Board of Supervisors Chair Nathan Fletcher speaks to reporters at the opening of San Diego's Vaccination Super Site in downtown San Diego, in this photo taken Jan. 10, 2021.

San Diego County Supervisor Nathan Fletcher reported Sunday that he will check into a treatment center this week for post traumatic stress, trauma and alcohol abuse.

Fletcher said he has also decided to forgo a run for State Senate to focus on his health.

He released the following statement:

"For many years, I have been suffering from devastating post traumatic stress associated with combat piled on top of intense childhood trauma that has been exacerbated by alcohol abuse. While I have shared some of these challenges publicly, they run much deeper than I have acknowledged. Outwardly, I have projected calm and composure. Internally, I have been waging a struggle that only those closest to me have seen; the detrimental impact on my relationships, mood and inability to sleep," Fletcher said.

"I have to seek help. With the recommendation of my therapist and the insistence of my wife, this week I will be checking into an extended inpatient treatment center for post traumatic stress, trauma and alcohol abuse. I have no doubt I will not only make a full recovery, but will come back stronger, more connected and present. However, it is clear I need to focus on my health and my family and do not have the energy to simultaneously pursue a campaign for the State Senate."

LOCAL NEWS • Analysis

# Pioneer aviator Pinky Brier was a living legend in San Bernardino and beyond



Pinky Brier (Courtesy the late Pinky Brier collection)

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By **NICK CATALDO** | yankeenut15@gmail.com | The Sun

PUBLISHED: March 27, 2023 at 5:19 p.m. | UPDATED: March 27, 2023 at 5:21 p.m.

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During my 40-plus years researching San Bernardino County's past, I've met many interesting people who helped make history come alive.

One of the most unique interviews was in 2001.

I met 92-year-old Evelyn Pinckert Brier, a sparkling conversationalist with a radiating sense of humor. This petite well-dressed woman wearing blue eyeliner and eyebrows and whom everyone called “Pinky,” greeted me with a strong and enthusiastic handshake.

The eighth of 10 children of German immigrants, she was born on April 12, 1909, in Medford, Wisconsin. Well-known astrologer and long-time syndicated columnist Jeanne Dixon was her older sister. Her brother Ernie Pinckert, was a football star at USC.

Pinky Brier seemed destined for something extraordinary.

After moving to California as a young girl, her family settled down in San Bernardino where Pinky graduated from San Bernardino High School and Longmire’s Business College. She went on to work with Southern California Gas Co. in 1934.

While working for the Gas Company, Pinky took flying lessons from her future husband and aviation partner, Lt. Joe Brier, who was stationed at March Air Force Base. The woman loved flying so much she quit her job and trained for a transport pilot’s license. In 1938, Pinky passed the CAA examination and became the first female flight instructor in the country.



Pinky and Joe Brier in 1938. (Courtesy the late Pinky Brier collection)

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The following year Pinky and Joe bought Tri-City Airport, located southeast of San Bernardino, and made it their home. For the next 40 years they ran a flying school and restaurant as well as transporting passengers all over the Southwest.

Eventually, the Briers expanded the airport grounds to 270 acres. Land encompassing today's Hospitality Lane "was part of the runway, more or less," Pinky recalled.

During World War II, the U.S. military ordered no passenger flights would be made within 150 miles inland from the Pacific Coast. So the Briers leased Tri-City Airport to Southwest Airways, a contract airfreight carrier for the Army and moved into the remote Mojave Desert where they lived in tents and could fly airplanes (using Soda Lake as a runway) as they wished.

During this time, Pinky revealed Gen. Henry “Hap” Arnold sent a wire instructing her to report to Wilmington, Delaware. He was establishing the Women’s Air Force Service Pilots, or WASP, operation and that she could become the first female to enlist. However, rather than becoming another “first,” Pinky preferred to stay with Joe. “Besides,” as she recalled, “I never requested to go in the first place.”

Pinky eventually consented when she felt the time was right.

During World War II, she taught American fighter pilots aerobatics to help them survive dogfights. She flew coast to coast and across the Atlantic, piloting the largest American bomber of the time — the B-17 Flying Fortress — to England.

The inseparable couple returned to Tri-City after the war’s conclusion.

While Joe took care of the maintenance operations, Pinky served as a charter pilot. She flew clients day or night, seven days a week, and frequently hustled passengers to LAX to catch eastbound airliner flights. Pinky would fly into Los Angeles three times a day.

Her favorite plane to fly was the Beechcraft Bonanza.

“That was the best plane on the market,” Pinky said. Over the years she flew local businessmen like Milton Sage and Cleo Stater, as well as numerous contractors, gamblers, and others to San Francisco, Phoenix, San Diego and Las Vegas.

Because of her incredible reputation, a number of well-known celebrities and politicians called upon her for flights. People like scientist Jane Goodall, CIA leader John McCone, Gen. James Doolittle, boxer Gene Tunney and famed comedian Joe E. Brown, requested Pinky’s services.

For years she flew mystery writer Erle Stanley Gardner to remote spots in the vast Mojave Desert. His fictional books became the basis for the trial lawyer “Perry Mason” TV series and in many of them such as “The Case of the Careless Cupid,” and “The Case of the Troubled Trustee,” she was Perry Mason’s pilot.

In “The Case of the Troubled Trustee,” Gardner had Pinky picking up Mason in San Diego and flying him to San Bernardino. On page 82, Garner wrote:

“Pinky Brier, the famous aviatrix, brought the twin-motored plane into the Tri-City Airport as gracefully as a bird coming in for a landing.”

Pinky’s beloved Joe, who had been in failing health for some time, died in Loma Linda on May 18, 1976, at age 70. His obituary in the Redlands Daily Facts the following day gave a bit of overdue recognition to the man who seemingly took a backseat to his more outgoing and colorful wife:

“For many years, friends of Joe had never seen him go up in an airplane. He was a master mechanic who could fix anything about an aircraft — electronic or mechanical. It often came as a surprise to people that he was a flier.”

But he was. Joe graduated from the Army Air Corps at Kelley Field, Texas, in 1929. That was in the era when Lindberg’s flight to Paris gave aviation glamour and front-page treatment.

During World War II he served in the Army Air Corps in the China-India-Burma Theater.

Pinky Brier’s lifelong dream was for Tri City to serve San Bernardino as a major international airport and for years tried to sell it the county. Unfortunately, San Bernardino lost out to the city of Ontario, and in 1979 Pinky sold the property to an Irvine-based development company. The property eventually became the site for today’s Hospitality Lane.

In 2004, the Inland Empire’s living legend established the Brier Foundation to provide scholarships to young women interested in aviation or maritime careers.

Pinky maintained an office on Brier Drive in San Bernardino until her passing on Jan. 20, 2008, at age 98.

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