



NEWS



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Crash kills pedestrian

Desert Trail

Posted: October 23, 2017, 7:46 AM

TWENTYNINE PALMS — A pedestrian was struck and killed by a vehicle on Baseline Road west of Utah Trail at about 7:50 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 22.

The victim's name has been withheld pending notification of next of kin.

Investigating deputies determined a white male adult was walking along Baseline Road, in the westbound lane.

Astrid Johnson, 69, of Twentynine Palms was driving in the westbound lane of Baseline Road. Johnson struck the pedestrian, causing major injuries.

Medical personnel from the **San Bernardino County Fire Department** responded and attempted life-saving measures but the pedestrian succumbed to his injuries.

The Morongo Basin Major Investigation Team responded to the scene. The cause of the collision is still under investigation.

Anyone with information related to the investigation is asked to contact the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department Morongo Basin Station at (760) 366-4175. Anyone wishing to remain anonymous may contact We-Tip at 1-888-78-CRIME.

http://www.hidesertstar.com/the_desert_trail/news/article_f6b58fb8-b800-11e7-abdc-9b92ef3ae385.html

210 Freeway reopens after fire causes partial closure in Rancho Cucamonga

Beatriz E. Valenzuela, Daily Bulletin

Posted: October 23, 2017, 5:55 AM

A fire reported off the 210 Freeway near Day Creek Boulevard forced the closures of all but two westbound lanes of the freeway in Rancho Cucamonga Monday morning.

The fire was first reported around 4:30 a.m. along the westbound lanes of the freeway. The fire may have started as a house fire which then ignited a tree near the freeway, according to California Highway Patrol incident reports.

At one point, authorities were concerned the fire might jump the wall, according to authorities. The fire led to a traffic backup for at least one mile on the westbound lanes of the 210 Freeway, but may also be responsible for heavier-than-usual traffic on the southbound 15 and westbound 10 freeways.

San Bernardino County firefighters were able to extinguish the blaze, but few details were available about the fire itself.

All traffic lanes were reopened by 7:30 a.m.

<http://www.dailybulletin.com/2017/10/23/fire-shuts-down-most-lanes-of-westbound-210-freeway-in-rancho-cucamonga/>

Lessons learned

Davina Fisher, Daily Press

Posted: October 22, 2017, 8:40 PM



Hesperia resident Richard Leak recently recalled the deadly Loop Fire of 1966 in the wake of raging blazes that have ravaged Northern California [Photo courtesy of Richard Leak]

HESPERIA — With the firestorms currently raging in Northern California, Hesperia resident Richard Leak laments that it's a terrible thing that's happened.

Leak would know. He and 23 other men on the El Cariso Hotshots crew battled what would become known as the Loop Fire in 1966 where 10 men died on site and two more, later, from their injuries.

"I don't know why I survived and the guys next to me died," said Leak. "God's blessing."

It's been nearly 51 years since the incident that changed Leak's life — he lost two fingers on each hand and his career as a firefighter.

"He's such a humble guy. When people ask him what happened to you, he says it's just a burn," said brother-in-law Ernie Jimenez.

Leak began his fire career with the US Forest Service in Cleveland National Forest at the age of 18 and spent two seasons with the El Cariso Hotshots in 1965 and 1966. Hotshots is a term used for an elite group of firefighters specially trained in wildfire suppression tactics.

"I was hired back on in 1966 as a crew boss and in the middle of the fire season I was promoted captain of Crew Two," said Leak.

At 5:19 a.m. on Nov. 1, 1966, a faulty electric distribution line started a fire within the Department of the Army's Los Pinetos Nike Missile Site in Angeles National Forest.

"After learning we had been dispatched to the Angeles Forest, I had some real concerns," said Leak. "Very dangerous mountains."

The crew of 18 to 20 year olds were given the assignment to cut down trees, brush or other combustibles using hand tools to stop the progress of a wildfire, down the hilltop. This is commonly known as a fireline.

"After constructing line down the steep slope ... we came to an area where we had to cross over a slide area at the top of the chimney chute. (Superintendent Gordon King) observed rocks falling down from the vertical

cliff at the top of the chimney,” said Leak. “At this time falling rocks were our main safety concern and not the fire.”

There was no noticeable fire or smoke within the chimney chute that connected to a ravine. Around 3:50 p.m. a spot fire started in the ravine below the crew.

“We heard the command, ‘Reverse Tool Order,’” said Leak. “This meant to haul ass out to the safety zone.” Most of the crew were in the safety zone but 10 members were still constructing an indirect line. Leak took about 10 steps and heard a loud boom.

“Sounded like a bomb exploding,” said Leak. “I turned and looked over my shoulder to see what happened and all I could see was a solid wall of orange flames. I had to look straight up to see blue sky.”

Leak says the next thing he heard is what sounded like a jet engine and then a “shock wave” came that was so strong that it knock him to the ground.

At this time the temperature around Leak started to rise. The official investigation report concluded the fire lasted less than a minute but reached 2,500 degrees.

“I remember thinking that I don’t know how much more heat I could stand. I remember thinking to myself that this is it. I am going to die,” said Leak. “Suddenly, I remember I was not hearing any noise, just total silence. I thought maybe I was dead. It was like I was in my own little world. Then all of a sudden, it got real cool. It really felt good.”

Leak says his eyes were blurry but he began to hear noises again. He saw several guys on fire lying on the ground next to him.

“The only thing going through my mind was I needed to help and take care of my crew members,” said Leak. Still in shock he tried to beat fire out on the guy next to him with no gloves on. After putting the fire out, he noticed skin hanging off his arms.

“My sleeves were rolled up past my elbows. I thought to myself, that doesn’t look good,” said Leak. “I don’t think I fully understood what I was seeing. I was not feeling any pain.”

He remembers trying to help several other guys and putting the fire out on them while not realizing at the time they had already perished.

“Wasn’t too much longer we heard a helicopter,” said Leak. “I like to fly in helicopters and that was the best copter ride I have ever had.”

He was able to continue his career in fire service and retired after 30 years with the City of Vista Fire Department as their Senior Fire Inspector.

Leak says out of all tragedies some good comes.

Some of the lessons learned from the Loop fire are the need for specific safe practice directions on downhill fireline operations, training that illustrates the hazards of a “chimney,” even if devoid of fuel, and mandatory use of lightweight fire protective face masks and gloves on the fireline.

Leak says over the past several years, we have seen fires getting larger and lasting longer.

“Right now, we as firefighters must be aware that we are in an era where fire behavior is changing and getting out of the realm of what we have been taught about fire behavior,” said Leak.

He says experienced firefighters are seeing a more intense fire behavior that includes combustibles in large areas igniting at the same time and whole hillsides exploding in fire or igniting all once.

“There is a lot of research being conducted to understand what is really happening with this new extreme fire behavior. There are many theories, but no definitive explanations,” said Leak. “As firefighters today, it is important to learn, understand and remember the fire behavior that has been established and taught over the years, but it is imperative to keep up with the understanding of this new type of fire behavior.”

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20171022/lessons-learned>

Woman found in Crestline collapsed cave identified

Monica Rodriguez, Daily Bulletin

Posted: October 21, 2017, 7:44 PM

CRESTLINE — The body of a woman found buried in a Crestline cave has been identified as that of a resident of Lake Arrowhead, the San Bernardino County Coroner's website reported Saturday.

The woman was identified as Jessica "Jace" Elyce Widner, 32, of Lake Arrowhead, according to the website.

San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department investigators are searching for the woman who discovered Widner's body, according to a statement from the department.

Deputies were called to the area of Highland Drive and Scenic View Drive in Crestline around 7:20 p.m. Thursday to investigate a death, according to the statement.

A woman had contacted the **San Bernardino County Fire Department** and said a human hand was coming out of the ground near a glass bottle dump, the statement read. The woman showed firefighters where the hand was and then left the scene.

Deputies reached the scene and found a small cave had been dug into a hillside and when they looked inside saw what looked like a human hand coming out of the dirt, the statement reads.

Investigators have not determined the exact circumstances surrounding Widner's death but they think part of the cave collapsed and buried her, according to the statement.

A specialized recovery team was called to the scene to assist in removing Widner's body from the cave, which authorities said could collapse further.

About 5 p.m. Friday members of the County Coroner's office recovered Widner's body.

Investigators would like to speak with the woman who led firefighters to the victim in order to obtain additional details on the case. In addition, investigators with the Twin Peaks Station of the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department are asking for the public's help. Anyone with information on this case is asked to call the Twin Peaks Sheriff's Station at 909-336-0600.

Those wishing to remain anonymous can do so by calling the We-tip Hotline at 1-800-78-CRIME or by leaving a tip on the We-Tip Website at www.wetip.com.

<http://www.sbsun.com/2017/10/21/woman-found-in-crestline-collapsed-cave-identified/>

Wildfire funding bill backed by Cook passes House

The Daily Press

Posted: October 20, 2017, 11:37 AM

Rep. Paul Cook recently voted for additional wildfire funding and improved authority for active forest management, not long after he and 31 other Congressional lawmakers implored White House budget officials to re-think the system in place.

House Resolution 2266, which passed Oct. 12 with overwhelming bipartisan support, also included funding for recovery from recent hurricanes and, Cook's office said, "improves accountability of federal agencies by including stronger reporting and oversight requirements."

Earlier this month, Cook, R-Apple Valley, and other lawmakers sent a letter to the White House Office of Management and Budget seeking comprehensive forest management and wildland fire budgeting reforms as part of the next disaster relief request.

"Mismanagement has left our forests vulnerable to insects and disease and ripe for catastrophic wildfires," they wrote. "The system is broken. We need forest management reforms, and we need them now."

The Office of Management and Budget responded by requesting from House Speaker Paul Ryan an allocation of \$567.5 million for improved firefighting efforts, Cook's office had said.

Such funding is "crucial to dealing with the constant deadly threat of wildfires in districts like mine, and I've long been an advocate for reforms and improved funding," Cook said in a statement shortly after lawmakers had submitted the letter.

They noted in that letter how the U.S. Forest Service had spent more than half of its entire 2016 budget of \$7.1 billion to put out wildfires.

And since 2005, the Forest Service had transferred funds from other operating accounts to use for firefighting purposes, a "flawed approach" that had led to spending billions of dollars on the backend to suppress fire and neglecting prevention, lawmakers said.

Lawmakers added they believed the planning process should be simplified and strategies more cost effective.

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/news/20171020/wildfire-funding-bill-backed-by-cook-passes-house>

Several Injured in Head-on Crash in Victorville

Gabriel D. Espinoza, Victor Valley News Group

Posted: October 20, 2017



Two vehicles were involved in a head-on crash that injured three people. (Gabriel D. Espinoza, Victor Valley News)

VICTORVILLE, Calif. (VVNG.com) Several people were injured in a head-on crash that happened here in Victorville Friday afternoon.

The crash was reported at around 12 p.m. near Bear Valley Road and Seventh Avenue between two sedans. When emergency personnel arrived on scene, the occupants of both vehicles were able to exit.

However, three people were taken by ambulance, two to Arrowhead Regional Medical Center and one person to Desert Valley Medical Center, all with non-life-threatening injuries.

As a result of the collision, the northbound lanes of Seventh Ave. was temporarily closed at Bear Valley Road for an investigation.

<http://www.vvng.com/several-injured-head-crash-victorville/>

New \$245,000 Fire Boat

Harry Bradley, Mountain News

Posted: October 19, 2017, 10:08 AM



County Fire's new boat on Lake Arrowhead was specifically designed to be a rescue and fire boat with specialized equipment to enhance its capabilities.

A new state-of-the-art fire boat was launched on Lake Arrowhead Oct. 7. The **San Bernardino County Fire Department** has replaced an older boat with a new one that features high-tech capabilities.

Advanced equipment enables the boat's crew to deal more effectively with situations that involve search and rescue, saving lives and protecting property.

Captain Carlos Corletto at Fire Station 92 along the northeast shore of Lake Arrowhead, described some of the boat's capabilities. For example, firefighters can put out fires on the lake or at lakefront homes by pumping water at a rate of 1,500 gallons per minute. The boat also serves as a floating fire hydrant: Other units can bring their hoses to it and pump water at the same time, Capt. Corletto said.

Powered by twin 300-horsepower Mercury engines, the boat can reach speeds of up to 55 mph. Other equipment includes GPS, underwater mapping, sonar and night-vision capabilities.

For above-water rescue efforts, Corletto explained, the fire boat has a Forward Looking Infra Red (FLIR) heat detection system. It consists of a camera mounted on a pedestal on top of the boat. The camera has a 360-degree view to detect the heat of any boat or structure fires before the fire is visible. FLIR also detects heat from anything warmer than the water and transmits it to a screen where rescuers can see the shape of the heat source, which is helpful when rescuing people, Corletto pointed out.

The boat has three types of underwater sonar to detect objects at the bottom of the lake and around the outskirts of the boat, with down-view and side-scan sonar capabilities for underwater mapping and detection of items below the water line.

The fire boat is designed to be beached, and it has a drop-down bow ramp that allows for quick, efficient loading and off-loading of gear, as well as embarkation or disembarkation of crew members and others. The fire boat will have a crew of three: the captain, an engineer and a firefighter/paramedic.

There's room for more if needed, Corletto commented. The seating is not fixed, so the boat can accommodate more personnel to perform necessary functions, transport injured people to the dock area or ambulance, as well to carry ambulance personnel and divers.

Retrieving divers is much easier using the bow ramp, which has underwater lighting that enables divers to locate the ramp. Then divers can come up to the boat and embark easily while sitting on the ramp.

Injured persons can be transported to an ambulance or to a helicopter more efficiently from a bow ramp.

The bow ramp serves many more functions, including acting as a shore anchor to keep the boat in place.

Capt. Corletto disclosed that the fire boat is not yet in service, because the communications equipment has not been installed. Once it is scheduled to go into service, a date will be announced for an inaugural event on the lake. Arrowhead Lake Association is working with County Fire to plan the event. At that point, county officials will provide the public with more information about the boat's capabilities, and will tell residents what they can expect from the new fire boat.

The Arrowhead Lake Association (ALA) provided "a ton of assistance" and spent a lot of time helping with anything needed for the boat, Corletto noted. "The new boat is bigger than the one we had, so ALA worked with us on the process of deciding where the boat will go." The dock that was selected is close to Fire Station 92 and closer to the marina.

"It would have been difficult to moor the boat in a place where it would be accessible, so ALA helped with everything needed to make room at the dock," Corletto said. "They also provided electricity where there previously was none, and helped with utilities and maintenance."

Lake Assault Boats, based in Wisconsin, custom built the fire boat at a cost of \$245,000

http://www.mountain-news.com/news/article_1b0435e0-b4f0-11e7-81d5-535674cbc81a.html