



NEWS



News Headlines 6/20/2017

- Firefighters battle fast-moving ‘Holcomb Fire’ Monday
- Holcomb Valley Fire grows to 850 acres, road closures in effect
- Victorville Kohl’s remains closed due to trash compactor fire Sunday evening
- Zermatt Fire in Wrightwood at 90 percent containment Monday
- Fire in front yard of Hesperia home leads to marijuana grow discovery
- Fire burns 5 acres on Perris Hill in San Bernardino; second in a week
- Landers woman dies in off-roading accident
- San Bernardino officially out of bankruptcy
- Firefighters battle Victorville house blaze Monday
- City receives a bid from Baker Ambulance for the old fire station

Firefighters battle fast-moving 'Holcomb Fire' Monday

Paola Baker, Daily Press

Posted: June 19, 2017, 6:58 PM



Firefighters are currently battling a blaze that began in the Holcomb Valley area, northeast of Big Bear, on Monday afternoon. The blaze, dubbed the "Holcomb Fire", quickly spread and is currently at 850 acres as of Monday evening. [Photo courtesy of the Big Bear Fire Department]

BIG BEAR — Firefighters are currently combating a fast-moving blaze that erupted Monday afternoon.

Dubbed the "Holcomb Fire", the blaze was first reported at 3:05 p.m. Monday in the Holcomb Valley area, located northeast of Big Bear.

Flames spread rapidly, with the blaze burning through 200 acres by 4 p.m. Monday, according to a tweet from the San Bernardino National Forest Service.

As of 9 p.m. Monday the fire remains at approximately 850 acres, according to San Bernardino National Forest Service spokeswoman Lyn Sieliet.

No evacuations are currently in place, according to the Big Bear Fire Department, who said just after 7:30 p.m. that earlier evacuations were reported in error.

The Doble Trail and Tanglewood Group campground are currently closed. The Pacific Crest Trail is closed west of Highway 18, to Van Dusen Road, in the fire area.

The threat to Big Bear is moderate at this time, the Big Bear Fire Department said, and there are no structures or life and safety threats at this time.

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department said Holcomb Valley Road is currently closed from Highway 18 northwest to the end of the road.

Van Dusen Road and Highway 18 from Delta Avenue to the Mitsubishi Cement Plant, south of Lucerne Valley, are also closed, according to Sieliet.

The South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) issued a smoke advisory for the High Desert region on Monday evening due to smoke from the blaze moving towards the region.

Air quality may reach “unhealthy levels” due to the smoke, the SCAQMD said, and residents are urged to avoid any vigorous outdoor or indoor exertion and take other precautions. The advisory will remain in effect until Tuesday morning.

Firefighters from the Big Bear Fire Department, the Big Bear Fire Authority, Cal Fire San Bernardino, San Bernardino National Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the **San Bernardino County Fire Department** are currently responding to the blaze.

Sieliet said firefighters on the ground are expected to remain on scene throughout the night. A night-flying air attack helicopter has been ordered, but all other air units have been grounded for the night.

Sieliet said fire personnel is expected to gather soon for a briefing on the current status on the fire. Information will be updated on “Holcomb Fire” Inciweb website at www.inciweb.nwcg.gov/.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20170619/firefighters-battle-fast-moving-holcomb-fire-monday>

Holcomb Valley Fire grows to 850 acres, road closures in effect

Judi Bowers, Big Bear Grizzly

Posted: June 19, 2017



UPDATE: 6:14 p.m. — The Holcomb Valley Fire has grown to 850 acres and continues to spread rapidly. Highway 18 from Big Bear to Lucerne Valley is closed.

Nick Bruinsma with Big Bear Fire said there are constant flare ups as the fire continues to rage toward Lucerne Valley. The fire is burning in a north-northeast direction. Unchecked, the fire will reach the foothill area of Lucerne Valley and the Mitsubishi Cement Plant area, Bruinsma said.

The vegetation in the area is pinion pine, which is hot, sappy wood. The brush is dense and crews are battling steep terrain.

Bruinsma said that if the fire heads toward the cement plant there are a lot of roads cut into the forest area near the plant, which is a benefit to fire crews.

Temperatures in Big Bear are in the 80s, with a sustained mild wind. While there haven't been any major gusts, Bruinsma said fires create their own wind and that can be a concern.

At this time Forest Service Road 3N16, the Pacific Crest Trail and Highway 18 between Big Bear and Lucerne Valley are closed to all traffic, including foot traffic.

As more information becomes available, this story will be updated.

UPDATE: 4:49 p.m. — A fire burning near Holcomb Valley has grown to 200 acres with a rapid rate of spread, according to Nick Bruinsma, assistant fire marshal with Big Bear Fire Department.

The vegetation fire is burning near Lucky Baldwin Mine and is burning in a northwest direction toward the desert, Bruinsma said.

At this time there are seven air tankers, five helicopters and a bull dozer crew along with fire crews from Big Bear Fire, US Forest Service, CalFire, BLM and **San Bernardino County Fire**.

An evacuation order was issued earlier for the personnel at the Bear Valley Dump. Bruinsma said he isn't aware of campers or hikers on the forest who are impacted. The biggest concern at this time is the power lines, Bruinsma said.

Paul Marconi of Bear Valley Electric Service said the fire is near the power lines that feed Big Bear Valley and the entire Valley is experiencing power surges as a result.

Marconi updated the Big Bear Grizzly with information that Bear Valley Electric is switching the Village to another circuit to improve reliability. "We lost one SCE (Southern California Edison) line from Lucerne but are able to operate on the other Lucerne SCE line," Marconi said.

As more information becomes available, this story will be updated.

Holcomb Valley Fire June 2017

UPDATE: 4:15 p.m. June 19—Forest Service crews are recommending closure of Van Dusen Canyon Road to Tanglewood Campground due to the vegetation fire.

Reports are that the fire is at least 200 acres and growing.

Black smoke is visible above Gold Mountain on the north side of Big Bear Valley toward Baldwin Lake. The fire was reported at Holcomb Valley Road cross of North Shore Drive.

Air support has been ordered and crews are enroute.

Big Bear Fire is asking that the area near the Big Bear Dump be evacuated. This involves residences in the Baldwin Lake area.

Motorists are encouraged to avoid North Shore Drive near the dump until further notice. This story will be updated as more information becomes available.

http://www.bigbeargrizzly.net/news/holcomb-valley-fire-grows-to-acres-road-closures-in-effect/article_c6ee7946-5542-11e7-a238-7f72adb527e9.html

Victorville Kohl's remains closed due to trash compactor fire Sunday evening

Daily Press

Posted: June 19, 2017, 9:52 AM



Kohl's department store remained closed Monday following a fire in a trash compactor Sunday evening that forced customers and employees to evacuate the business. [Submitted photo]

VICTORVILLE — Kohl's department store remained closed Monday following a fire in a trash compactor that forced customers and employees to evacuate the business on Sunday evening.

According to **San Bernardino County Fire Department** spokesman Ryan Vaccaro, reports of a fire came in a 7:25 p.m. Sunday and firefighters found a trash compactor along the side of the building in Dunia Plaza off Bear Valley Road with flames and smoke coming out of it.

“There was no threat to the structure itself, the fire was contained to the trash compactor,” Vaccaro said. “But the piping to it was connected to the building and filled the store with a little bit of light smoke. They had to temporarily evacuate the store.”

The fire was knocked down at 7:52 p.m., Vaccaro said.

A Kohl's employee told the Daily Press that the store did not open at its usual 9 a.m. time Monday and they were not sure when the store would reopen.

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/news/20170619/victorville-kohls-remains-closed-due-to-trash-compactor-fire-sunday-evening>

Zermatt Fire in Wrightwood at 90 percent containment Monday

Daily Press

Posted: June 19, 2017, 10:35 AM



The Zermatt Fire in Wrightwood was 70 percent contained Monday morning, authorities said. [Courtesy of Ginger Wheeler]

WRIGHTWOOD — Fire crews kept a weekend blaze from spreading and were closing in on full containment Monday, authorities said.

The Zermatt Fire, which broke out in a residential area along the east side of Wrightwood on Saturday afternoon, was 90 percent contained and still holding at 11 acres as crews continued to mop-up and monitor the fire's perimeter on Monday, according to the Angeles National Forest Service's Twitter account.

The vegetation fire started near Zermatt and Pacific Crest drives at approximately noon Saturday, forcing mandatory evacuations for 30 to 35 homes as firefighters battled the blaze, authorities said.

An evacuation center was opened at Serrano High School, according to the American Red Cross, but evacuations were lifted at 5:30 p.m.

San Bernardino County Fire Department and San Bernardino National Forest Service assisted in battling the blaze, with several air tankers dropping retardant.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20170619/zermatt-fire-in-wrightwood-at-90-percent-containment-monday>

Fire in front yard of Hesperia home leads to marijuana grow discovery

Daily Press

Posted: June 19, 2017, 12:31 PM

HESPERIA — Deputies responding to reports of a fire in front of a home Sunday uncovered an illegal marijuana grow inside of the residence, authorities said.

San Bernardino County Sheriff's Hesperia Station deputies were assisting **San Bernardino County Fire Department** personnel who were extinguishing a small fire caused by a downed power line at a home in the 8500 block of 11th Avenue.

According to authorities, when firefighters entered the home to check for possible interior damage and to clear the structure of occupants, they found marijuana plants growing inside several of the rooms.

The Sheriff's Marijuana Enforcement Team responded to the location and, after serving a search warrant, investigators discovered a large-scale indoor marijuana grow consisting of over 1,200 plants in various stages of growth inside the home, authorities said.

"The grow operation used advanced lighting, air conditioning, fans, exhaust blowers and an air-filtering system to control the climate inside the house, as well as the odor coming from the residence," sheriff's officials said in a statement. "The suspects were stealing electrical power to facilitate the grow operation."

The suspects, identified as Qiao Wen Zhao, 48, and Xian Lin Zhao, 51, both of New York, were contacted by deputies several blocks away from the residence and were arrested on suspicion of theft of utilities, authorities said. Additional charges against the suspects will include cultivating marijuana.

Both were later booked at the High Desert Detention Center in lieu of \$25,000 bail.

Anyone with information regarding this investigation is urged to contact the Sheriff's Gangs/Narcotics Division at 909-387-8400. Callers wishing to remain anonymous may call the We-tip Hotline at 1-800-782-7463 or visit www.wetip.com.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20170619/fire-in-front-yard-of-hesperia-home-leads-to-marijuana-grow-discovery>

Fire burns 5 acres on Perris Hill in San Bernardino; second in a week

Doug Saunders, The Sun

Posted: June 19, 2017, 4:01 PM



Firefighters stand atop Perris Hill in San Bernardino, where a vegetation fire burned 5 acres Monday, June 19, 2017. Photo by Doug Saunders

SAN BERNARDINO >> For the second time in less than a week, firefighters battled a vegetation fire on Perris Hill in the heart of San Bernardino.

Shortly before 2 p.m. Monday, a person from the football field at Pacific High School called 911 about a fire below the water tower atop Perris Hill.

San Bernardino County firefighters found the southwest slope of the hill completely charred as flames rushed through the light, flashy fuels, turning the grass from a flowing shade of gold to jet black.

The fire was knocked down in about 30 minutes, officials said. It burned about 5 acres.

Firefighters could be seen lighting backfires to prevent the flames from spreading.

Fire officials said 50 personnel from both the county fire department and San Manuel Fire Department responded.

On Thursday afternoon, a section of Perris Hill burned just west of what was once the Del Rosa Bowling alley, charring 1 acre of grass.

Both fires are under investigation.

<http://www.sbsun.com/general-news/20170619/fire-burns-5-acres-on-perris-hill-in-san-bernardino-second-in-a-week>

Landers woman dies in off-roading accident

Hi-Desert Star

Posted: June 19, 2017, 4:52 PM

LANDERS — Rhea Mears, a 64-year-old resident of Landers, died in an off-roading accident Saturday.

Mears left her home on Shawnee Trail around 9 a.m., riding her quad, according to a sheriff's call log, and when she did not return by shortly before 1 p.m., her husband called for help.

Sheriff's deputies R. Moreno and K. Myrick were able to track Mears' vehicle westbound from her home.

With help from aircraft from the Sheriff's Department, the deputies found Mears crashed in the desert about one quarter-mile east of Old Woman Springs Road and 1½ miles north of Happy Trail.

Mears was breathing, but had suffered major injuries.

Deputies immediately began CPR and continued until the **San Bernardino County Fire Department** arrived to help.

A sheriff's aviation crew flew Mears to Desert Regional Medical Center for treatment, but she later died from her injuries.

The California Highway Patrol is investigating the crash.

http://www.hidesertstar.com/news/article_5624bc72-554a-11e7-89ff-f33f597ffcc9.html

San Bernardino officially out of bankruptcy

Ryan Hagen, The Sun

Posted: June 19, 2017, 7:53 PM



A view of city hall on October 3, 2016 in San Bernardino. FILE PHOTO

SAN BERNARDINO >> The city's exit from bankruptcy, which Judge Meredith Jury approved months ago, is now official.

The effective date of the bankruptcy exit — June 15 — means the city has 30 days from then to start making payments to its creditors under the terms laid out in its bankruptcy exit plan. Those obligations had been halted since August 2012, when the city filed for bankruptcy and began the long process of crafting and negotiating approval for the exit plan.

Payments to creditors already have started, the city said in a release Monday.

Mayor Carey Davis said in a statement that he appreciated the hard work by many people during the nearly five-year bankruptcy process.

“Due to the patience and commitment of San Bernardino employees, citizens and businesses, and the sacrifices of creditors, we have come to the City's momentous exit from that process,” Davis said. “The proceedings guided us through a process of rebuilding and restructuring, and we will continue to rebuild and create systems for successful municipal operations. We will continue to dedicate our attention to improving service delivery, quality of life, and attracting business investment to our community.”

Five years ago, San Bernardino faced a \$45 million deficit for the 2012-13 year, forcing an emergency bankruptcy filing.

While the court stopped creditors from collecting their debts or suing the city from then until now, officials made major changes to its operating structure, annexed into the **county fire protection district** and contracting out for refuse services.

Now, the City Council is set to pass a balanced budget that increases staffing in key departments including police — in addition to the Violence Intervention Program, the city's name for their planned version of the Ceasefire program that dramatically reduced homicide in other cities — and new street rehabilitation, street light and traffic signal repair and maintenance for storm drains and medians.

That's in large part thanks to a plan that pays many creditors as little as 1 cent for every dollar they would have been entitled to without the bankruptcy. All told, the city's savings from the bankruptcy amount to \$350 million, according to the city.

Attorneys and consultants working on the bankruptcy cost close to \$25 million since 2012, a number that will grow much more slowly now but not stop completely, City Attorney Gary Saenz said Monday.

Two alleged victims of police misconduct, who would receive only 1 percent of what a jury might award them, are appealing the bankruptcy, and other creditors will go through an alternative dispute resolution process to determine what the city will pay them.

In addition to beginning payments under the plan and the removal of a stay that had blocked lawsuits against the city during the bankruptcy, Saenz said he expected the official end of bankruptcy to improve the city's image.

"One of the greatest effects is the perception," Saenz said. "Being in bankruptcy is a cloud over the city, if you will. Notwithstanding that filing for bankruptcy can be beneficial for a city that reached the point where we were, there is a cloud. ... Now, I think people should give San Bernardino a second look and see that it is an ideal place and has a lot of potential."

While a large majority of creditors voted to approve the city's bankruptcy plan, this isn't a day to celebrate, said Jeff Breiten, president of the City of San Bernardino Retired Public Employees Association.

"The city may not have a cloud hanging over anymore, but those retirees who had their retirement benefits impaired in the bankruptcy will never have those benefits restored," Breiten said Monday. "We hope that our elected official do not return to the spending habits that resulted in the city filing bankruptcy, but we have already seen expenditures approved by the council such as positions in City Manager's Office and the call center that may not be really necessary while the city should be creating a reserve funds for unexpected events."

<http://www.sbsun.com/government-and-politics/20170619/san-bernardino-officially-out-of-bankruptcy>

Firefighters battle Victorville house blaze Monday

Hazards due to a marijuana grow found inside the home hampered firefighters' efforts in dousing the flames, according to County Fire officials.

Paola Baker, Daily Press

Posted: June 19, 2017, 8:16 PM

VICTORVILLE — An apparent illegal marijuana grow may have hampered firefighters' efforts in combating a blaze at a home Monday afternoon.

The blaze, which took **San Bernardino County Fire Department** firefighters over an hour to get under control, erupted at a home in the 14400 block of Chumash Place on Monday afternoon.

Hazards due to a marijuana grow found inside the home hampered firefighters' efforts in dousing the flames, according to County Fire spokesman Ryan Vaccaro.

Firefighters arrived on scene minutes after the blaze was first reported at 5:20 p.m. Monday. Vaccaro said the two-story home had "heavy fire" coming from its second floor upon their arrival.

Firefighters battling the blaze were forced to retreat when heavy fire burst through the roof of the home around 5:45 p.m., according to a tweet from County Fire.

"Firefighting was delayed due to hazards from a grow house," Vaccaro said.

These hazards may have included the home's electricity, with scanner traffic reporting that firefighters were unable to shut off power at the home due to an apparent illegal power bypass setup. A Southern California Edison crew was requested to respond to the home just after 6 p.m.

The fire was under control by 6:30 p.m., Vaccaro said, and was knocked down a half-hour later. One firefighter sustained a minor injury due to the blaze, but no other injuries were reported.

Vaccaro said the cause of the blaze remained under investigation.

Further details on the marijuana grow weren't available, and messages left with the San Bernardino County Hesperia Sheriff's Station weren't returned Monday night.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20170619/firefighters-battle-victorville-house-blaze-monday>

City receives a bid from Baker Ambulance for the old fire station

Saul A. Flores, Needles Desert Star

Posted: June 19, 2017

NEEDLES — The **San Bernardino County Fire District** recently completed construction of a new fire station in Needles, causing the previous fire station to be deemed surplus property, not necessary for city operations.

According to Needles city staff, the city has received notification from all agencies that there isn't any interest in the facility. The property was offered for auction with a bid received from Baker Ambulance in the amount of \$60,000.

“We put this out to bid and we notified the Needles School District, state parks department and other public agencies and we only received one proposal, from Baker Ambulance. This building meets their needs,” said Rick Daniels, city manager.

The city council approved the action item to sell the former fire station to Baker Ambulance in a 4-1 vote during the city council meeting on June 13.

http://www.mohavedailynews.com/needles_desert_star/city-receives-a-bid-from-baker-ambulance-for-the-old/article_a7478982-553a-11e7-9ce7-5f7ea78c09c9.html