



# NEWS



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## Tykes go big at fifth annual Touch-A-Truck

FRANCIS ROURKE, Redlands Community News

Posted: June 14, 2019



Gunner Craig, 2, in front of a San Bernardino County Fire Department tractor.  
Redlands Community News photos by Francis Rourke

Trucks are normally big, noisy things. But the beginning of the Redlands Rotary Club’s Touch-A-Truck event on Saturday morning was deemed “No Noise Ninety Minutes” in consideration for all the young children or noise-sensitive attendees.

But that didn’t stop the little tikes from crawling all over the big rigs.

The fifth-annual event took place in the parking lot of Ted Runner Stadium at the University of Redlands.

The lot was filled with trucks and other vehicles of all shapes and sizes — cranes, buses, race cars and fire engines — all of which attended by the men and women who operate them.

“It’s such a wonderful event for the kids,” said Monica Saunders, a Redlands local. “We love it.”

Contributors included the **San Bernardino County Fire** Department, Redlands police, Mowbray’s Tree Service, Redlands Unified School District, the former Norton Air Force Base, Cemex, Auto-Club Speedway, Harber Construction, Servpro and Stater Bros.

Also in theme with the event were food trucks including hamburgers, popcorn, ice cream and funnel cakes.

It is this kind of opportunity that ignites the interests of our future generations.

The children, bright-eyed with possibility, their worlds not yet entirely shaped, take in this experience and begin to formulate what life they may want for themselves, what profession they might pursue.

[https://www.redlandscommunitynews.com/news/tykes-go-big-at-fifth-annual-touch-a-truck/article\\_869bf12e-8e17-11e9-aa36-dfd08632069c.html](https://www.redlandscommunitynews.com/news/tykes-go-big-at-fifth-annual-touch-a-truck/article_869bf12e-8e17-11e9-aa36-dfd08632069c.html)

## One in 4 Californians live in a ‘high risk’ wildfire area. Is the state ready for another fire season?

LOUIS SAHAGUN and JOSEPH SERNA, Los Angeles Times

Posted: June 14, 2019, 3:00 AM



Chad Hanson, executive director and research ecologist at John Muir Project of Earth Island Institute, points to extreme fire danger because of overgrown grasses and trees very close to and hanging over structures in the residential community of Sugarloaf near Big Bear. Wooden roof shingles and pine trees near homes increase the fire danger in the community of Sugarloaf, near Big Bear Lake. (Irfan Khan / Los Angeles Times)

In Big Bear Lake, officials worry about an explosive wildfire roaring through the resort city, trapping tens of thousands of people.

In the Santa Monica Mountains, authorities stage a mock evacuation in Mandeville Canyon, where police discover they are too slow to rescue residents from a wildfire disaster.

And in the thick forest of the San Jacinto Mountains, an Idyllwild resident laments that his town “resembles an arsonist’s dream.”

On the heels of the deadliest and most destructive wildfire season in state history, officials across California are growing increasingly anxious over what many fear will be another one.

Fire experts and climatologists warn that the heavy rains of recent months produced an excess of vegetation, which over the hot summer will become dry fuel. At the same time, the death toll from last fall’s Camp and Woolsey fires — and the Tubbs fire the year before that — has highlighted the vulnerability of communities throughout the state.

In a meeting with emergency managers recently, Gov. Gavin Newsom urged officials to “prepare for the worst” and then gave voice to a growing sense of dread.

“We just can’t take this anymore,” Newsom told the gathering. “The state can’t take 2018 again. Can’t do 2017. ... We can’t take it anymore.”

After the Camp fire killed 85 people in and around the town of Paradise — and revealed glaring shortcomings in municipal evacuation plans — the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection conducted a risk assessment that found an estimated 11 million residents, or 1 in 4 Californians, live in areas considered to be at “high risk” of a wildfire.

“I anticipate there’s a whole lot of people in suburban Southern California, and frankly in the Bay Area, that would never consider themselves a part of that ‘1 out of 4 Californians that live in a fire risk area,’ but they actually do,” said Wade Crowfoot, head of the California Natural Resources Agency.

### Sleeping giants

When it comes to the risk of forest fire in Southern California, Richard Minnich, a fire ecologist at UC Riverside, said he is most concerned about communities that haven’t burned since the 19th century: Big Bear

Lake and Lake Arrowhead in the eastern San Bernardino Mountains, and the isolated, mile-high community of Idyllwild.

These areas, he said, have hundreds of trees per acre with trunks more than 4 inches in diameter and an under-story of young conifers and brush. By way of comparison, he said, a healthy, safer forest has about 13 such trees per acre.

In the event of a fire, the heavy under-story would create what foresters call a “fuel ladder” that would send flames up into the canopy, triggering a massive blaze.

In Idyllwild, authorities have been sounding the alarm for years about the buildup of tinder-dry trees and brush.

“My town still resembles an arsonist’s dream,” resident Mark Yardas said.

#### Risk management

For all the urgency local and state officials are bringing into fire preparations this year, their methods for reducing the risks are nothing new.

“Near highways, we’ll probably do a combination of handwork and machine work: bulldozers, masticators, things like that,” said John Melvin, Cal Fire’s chief for resource protection and improvement. “It’s tried-and-true methods. What we’re doing is greatly increasing the pace and scale, and we have more resources to do that.”

Indeed, the National Guard troops that President Trump requested for border duty, and that Newsom recalled, are now working on fire breaks, Melvin said.

But a growing chorus of environmental advocates and some former fire officials are urging the state to shift its wildfire strategy to one that “starts from the home outward.” That means using fire-safe roofing materials and vent screens in homes and pruning vegetation within a 100-foot radius of residences, among other things.

The state’s current strategy — which relies primarily on altering forestland — is costly financially and environmentally, they argue. It also has failed to prevent deaths and massive property loss in extreme, wind-driven fire events such as the Camp and Tubbs fires — which together killed more than 100 people.

“Studies show that the principal cause of residential destruction is not the result of high-intensity wildfire engulfing homes,” said Big Bear Lake resident and ecologist Chad Hanson. “Instead, home ignitions are due to showers of firebrands landing on flammable materials or on nearby vegetation. After that, one burning home sets fire to another and another.”

During a recent walk down a shady lane in Sugarloaf — a densely populated neighborhood whose streets are arranged in a grid pattern — Hanson gestured toward a clutch of homes.

“Everywhere you look, there are piles of dry pine needles on deteriorating shake shingle roofs and thick brush growing against walls made of wooden planks,” Hanson said.

“I understand the comfort in people’s voices when they say: ‘The Forest Service plans to thin the forests around here. So, we’ll be OK,’ ” he said. “But they are wrong.”

Less than a block away, Amanda Mayer, 38, was striding beneath the branches of a 30-foot-tall oak tree draped over the veranda and roof of a wood-sided Victorian-style home she shares with her family. “Everybody knows this tree is too close to the house,” she said. “But this is a pretty poor community. Many of us have to work two jobs to get by. So, the idea of paying someone tons of money to trim this tree is not high on my priority list right now.”

#### Little response time

On a recent rainy Sunday in Mandeville Canyon, Los Angeles police officers moved from house to house as part of an elaborate evacuation drill.

As part of a scripted scenario, officers told residents that a fire had broken out nearby, amid 25- to 35-mph winds with gusts up to 40 mph. Residents had two hours to clear out before a shower of embers, and then flames, arrived.

But as officers made their way up the canyon, the fire prevented them from reaching residents to the north. As a result, first-responders scrambled to transform their simulated evacuation drill into a simulated rescue mission.

Among those residents who attended the drill was Maureen Levinson.

Although she lives in Bel-Air, she said she felt compelled to attend the event after watching images of the Woolsey fire, which ripped through Ventura and Los Angeles counties and devastated Malibu. She and her neighbors were heartbroken when they watched video of homes burning but saw no firetrucks nearby.

The lesson was clear, she said.

“If we’re in a fire, at some point they’re going to give up on us,” Levinson said.

#### Evacuation plans

In the heart of the San Bernardino Mountains, where the suburbs meet the wilderness, many have built homes amid forest and brush, despite the wildfire risk.

Big Bear Lake Fire Chief Jeffrey Willis knows the danger that comes with the high-velocity, dry Santa Ana winds that blow out of the desert each fall and transform the city’s 100-foot-tall Jeffrey pines into fuel.

“You can plan all you want, but a plan is only good until something doesn’t fit,” Willis said. “Then you have to plan on the fly.”

Lake Arrowhead, which is home to 12,000 permanent residents, has not burned since 1879. Yet each time firefighters put out a small blaze, that means unburned brush and timber is left to fuel future fires.

Jason Brooks, a **San Bernardino County Fire** Department engineer, was only half-kidding when he said, “If every property owner in Lake Arrowhead created defensible space around their homes, there’d be no trees left to look at.”

In this high-altitude, high-fire risk area, a revised evacuation plan funded by the county calls for releasing vehicles in a series of periodic segments, or tiers, with only people in the most threatened areas leaving first at “a desired speed of 25 mph.”

That's because, according to the Mountain Region Emergency Road Capacity Study, if the entire community of Big Bear Lake, for example, "were to be evacuated in one instance, the roads would be overloaded and traffic would not process."

"There is potential for catastrophic losses," the study warns, "as thousands of people move into the mountaintop communities."

<https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-california-braces-for-new-wildfires-20190614-story.html>

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## **AN ARREST AFTER ONE OF 2 JOSHUA TREE BRUSHFIRES YESTERDAY**

Staff Writer, Z107.7 FM News

Posted: June 14, 2019



An illegal cooking fire caused a one-acre vegetation fire in Joshua Tree Thursday afternoon. Photo courtesy San Bernardino County Fire Department

One person was arrested after an illegal cooking fire led to a vegetation fire in Joshua Tree Thursday afternoon. **County Fire** Battalion Chief Mike McClintock said that firefighters from Joshua Tree, Twentynine Palms, and Yucca Valley, as well as Bureau of Land Management and National Park Service firefighters, responded to the blaze in the 6200 block of Juniper Avenue at 12:17 p.m.

Firefighters were able to contain the fire from spreading to nearby residences. During the investigation, it was discovered Michael Leonard, 65, a transient living in the desert, had ignited the brushfire while starting a campfire. The fire burned about two acres of land and caused damage to approximately 10-15 Joshua Trees in the area. Michael Leonard was arrested for investigation of the unlawful setting of a fire and booked into the Morongo Basin Jail in lieu of \$25,000 bail. McClintock said, "Just one spark can get our grass going out here with the wind and dryness of the grass." He added that the dried vegetation was too close to the flames, which led to the fire spreading.

Then at 1:30 p.m., firefighters were called to another vegetation fire in the 63600 block of Walpi Drive in Joshua Tree, also caused by an illegal burn. McClintock said embers from unattended camp fire from Wednesday night caught fire and burned about a 50- by 10-foot area of grass behind the home. Firefighters had the blaze knocked down and under control quickly. McClintock reminds residents and visitors that all open flame fires are prohibited until further notice.

<http://z1077fm.com/an-arrest-after-one-of-2-joshua-tree-brushfires-yesterday/>

## Outdoor cooking fire blamed for blaze in Joshua Tree

Stacy Moore, Hi-Desert Star

Posted: June 13, 2019



Firefighters work to put out embers in a wildfire blamed on someone using a cooking pit Thursday in Joshua Tree. San Bernardino County Fire

**JOSHUA TREE** — A cooking fire spread and burned roughly an acre of grass, bushes and Joshua trees before firefighters put out the flames Thursday in Joshua Tree.

Battalion Chief Mike McClintock from the **county fire** department said the flames were reported around noon in the 6000 block of Juniper Road.

“Someone was cooking outside in a non-approved fire pit,” McClintock said. “All it takes is one spark or one ember in the seasonal grass and with a little bit of wind, it’s gone.”

The dry grasses cloaking the desert floor make any outdoor fire dangerous, the chief warned. The grass is flash fuel that ushers flames from brushes to trees and eventually to homes, creating fast-moving wildfires of the kind that many people don’t expect in the desert.

“With all the grass, any spark can cause a large fire,” he said hours after Thursday’s blaze. “Pretty much every few days this week, we’ve had a couple of acres going up in flames.”

Both the state and county fire agencies have suspended all burn permits and McClintock urges everyone in the Morongo Basin to be aware of how dangerous any flame can be.

“We’re trying to get people to not have fires outside,” he said. “With a little bit of wind, it will burn a pretty significant amount of land. It gets out of control really quick and doesn’t allow people to handle it.”

Adding to the problem, he said, is the number of tourists staying in vacation rentals. They usually don’t see warnings about the fire danger in local media, and may not understand that fire can be a real danger in the desert.

McClintock said recent wildfires in the desert have been caused by “a mix” of locals and visitors.

After winter’s record rainfall, the fire danger is more significant than ever in the Morongo Basin, he emphasized.

“We’re really trying to keep people away from having fires and toward having defensible spaces and a plan for evacuation.”

Thursday’s fire was the second this week in Joshua Tree. Nearly 4½ acres burned in the Joshua Tree Highlands area near Anaconda Drive and Quail Springs Road Monday.

Crews from the county and state fire agencies worked together to knock down the flames and prevent them from catching in nearby homes. County and Cal Fire are investigating the cause.

[http://www.hidesertstar.com/news/article\\_64b0615a-8e3d-11e9-b561-d313c12588ee.html](http://www.hidesertstar.com/news/article_64b0615a-8e3d-11e9-b561-d313c12588ee.html)

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## **Firefighters battling 10 acre brush fire near Mitsubishi Cement Plant in Lucerne Valley**

Staff Writer, Victor Valley News

Posted: June 13, 2019



LUCERNE VALLEY, Calif. (VVNG.com) — Fire crews are busy fighting a 10 acre brush fire near the Mitsubishi Cement Plant in Lucerne Valley.

The fire dubbed the “Plant Fire” was first reported just before 7:00 pm on Thursday, June 13, 2019, in the 5800 block of State Highway 18.

According to a tweet from Cal Fire BDU, the fire is 10 acres in size with a moderate rate of spread and no structures are threatened.

**San Bernardino County Firefighters** are assisting CalFire who are taking the lead in the fire.

Several helicopters were requested and assisted ground crews with water drops.

The cause of the fire is currently under investigation.

Eastbound and westbound lanes on SR-18 are expected to remain closed for several hours.

Additional information will be updated as it becomes available.

<https://www.vvng.com/firefighters-battling-10-acre-brush-fire-near-mitsubishi-cement-plant-in-lucerne-valley/>



## No structures threatened after 10-acre blaze ignites in Lucerne Valley

Shane Newell, Palm Springs Desert Sun

Posted: June 13, 2019, 9:20 PM

No structures were threatened Thursday night as a 10-acre vegetation fire burned in Lucerne Valley, according to fire officials.

The blaze was reported near the 5800 block of Highway 18, the **San Bernardino County Fire Department** announced in a tweet. Lucerne Valley is about 50 miles west of Yucca Valley.

The blaze was reported off Highway 18 in Lucerne Valley.

As of 8:30 p.m., the fire was burning at a moderate rate of spread, according to Cal Fire.

No word on a cause and no reports of any injuries.

<https://www.desertsun.com/story/news/local/2019/06/13/lucerne-valley-vegetation-fire-10-acres-no-structures-threatened/1452689001/>

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## Man sitting in car shot in Hesperia

Garrett Berghold, Daily Press

Posted: June 13, 2019, 5:41PM



**San Bernardino County Fire** personnel transport a shooting victim into a medical helicopter on Thursday in Hesperia. [Photo courtesy Lewis Busch]

HESPERIA — A man was shot multiple times while sitting in his vehicle near Hercules Street and Timberlane Avenue at midday on Thursday, authorities said.

The unidentified man was transported to Desert Valley Hospital prior to being airlifted to a trauma center, said San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department spokeswoman Cindy Bachman.

Bachman said the department is withholding the name of the trauma center until the suspect is identified and arrested.

There is no suspect information or anybody in custody currently, she said.

Sheriff's detectives are actively working the case. Anybody with information is asked to call the Hesperia Sheriff's Station at 760-947-150.

<https://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20190613/man-sitting-in-car-shot-in-hesperia>