



NEWS



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JOSHUA TREE HOME DAMAGED BY FIRE SUNDAY

Staff Writer, Z107.7 FM News

Posted: September 3, 2019

A Joshua Tree home was damaged in a fire Sunday afternoon. Firefighters from Joshua Tree, Yucca Valley, Yucca Mesa, and Twentynine Palms were called to the structure fire near Sun Mesa Drive and Sun Ray Road at 5:21 p.m. Residents said the fire spread from an outdoor fire to a tree which caught the front porch on fire, and the flames spread into the home's living room and kitchen. There were no injuries and all residents were able to get out safely.

<http://z1077fm.com/joshua-tree-home-damaged-by-fire-sunday/>

San Bernardino County Fire Ops 101 (video)

Staff Writer, Victor Valley News

Posted: September 2, 2019



Recently over 30 elected and appointed officials as well as several members of the media from throughout the county participated in Fire Ops 101 hosted at the Richard Sewell Training Center in San Bernardino.

Fire Ops 101 is a collaborative effort between the **County Fire** District, Local 935 and the IAFF.

Nothing gives elected officials a taste of the fire service like experiencing Fire Ops 101.

Our decision-makers experienced sweat, fatigue and an adrenalin rush as well as a taste of the daily physical and mental strain that accompanies the job duties of being a firefighter. At the same time, these officials were exposed to complex issues such as the importance of maintaining staffing standards and having adequate equipment.

Presumptive health issues such as increased risk to cancer and behavioral health were also discussed.

Our members deal with a variety of challenges in this county. We serve the largest fire district in the nation at 19,293 sq. miles from 48 professionally staffed fire stations and in 2018 we responded to just shy of 150,000 emergency calls.

On behalf of Local 935 we extend a thank you to all of our decision makers who attended #SBCoFireOps101.

<https://www.vvng.com/san-bernardino-county-fire-ops-101-video/>

Feel the heat!

Terri McCawley Hill, Mountaineer Progress Newspaper

Posted: August 31, 2019



On August 7, San Bernardino County Professional Firefighters Local 935 partnered with the **San Bernardino County Fire** Protection District and the International Association of Firefighters to hold a special event for County and City officials. Fire Ops 101, “Feel the Heat,” brought the dignitaries together to suit up and perform emergency response scenarios under the guidance and protection of the professional firefighters. In an effort to educate policy and budget makers, Fire Ops demonstrates the equipment and staffing necessary to perform the emergency services the departments face every day.

Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) units are called on for victims over the side of the road, or below the trail, and for extrication from vehicles. Fire Ops participants learned stokes basic rigging, body harness donning, and hand signals with lowering and raising a litter (basket) for Low Angle Rope Rescue Operations used for retrieving victims from below. At another station, cars were staged in a collision scenario, for which extrication was necessary for access to the victims. After a demonstration, Fire Ops attendees were given a chance to remove all or part of crushed car door, using the Jaws of Life - or hydraulic spreader. Each of these operations requires a minimum of five rescuers, a staffing point driven home when one scenario involved a city councilman, who played the role of man suffering heart failure during the opening remarks and orientation to the “As we near Smokey Bear’s 75th birthday later this week, we’re asking the public to take his ‘one less spark’ message to heart.”

The restrictions, which are enforced through a forest order, are set to expire December 31, 2019, but may be rescinded early or extended depending on conditions at that time.

The forest order and the list of which campgrounds and picnic areas where fires in Forest Service-provided fire rings and grills will still be allowed.

<http://mtprogress.net/opinionsandcolumnist/retrospection.html>

Fire crews fighting brush fire near Hesperia airport

Staff Writer, Victor Valley News

Posted: September 2, 2019



View from Apple Valley Road of the fire burning near the Hesperia airport. (Hugo C. Valdez, Victor Valley News)

UPDATE – The fire is holding at 10 acres and firefighters have a line around the fire. Most of the aircraft has been called off.

HESPERIA, Calif. (VVNG.com) — Fire crews are battling a brush fire near the Hesperia Airport.

On September 2, 2019, at about 4:33 pm **San Bernardino County Fire** responded to a vegetation fire at the old Hesperia dump off Summit Valley Road.

Firefighters on scene south of Summit Valley Road and are reporting the fire to be 10 acres in size with a potential of 50 acres.

Cal Fire will take the lead on the incident. Per scanner traffic reports, a full aircraft response has been ordered.

This is a developing story. Additional information will be updated as it becomes available.

<https://www.vvng.com/fire-crews-fighting-brush-fire-near-hesperia-airport/>

Motorcyclist critically injured in Hesperia on Labor Day

Staff Writer, Victor Valley News

Posted: September 2, 2019



HESPERIA, Calif. (VVNG.com) — A motorcyclist was critically injured in a crash on Labor Day Monday in Hesperia.

It happened at about 11:38 am near the intersection of Main Street and I Avenue.

For reasons still under investigation, a street bike and black Toyota sedan collided near the driveway of the 76 gas station.

Firefighters from **San Bernardino County Fire** requested a medical helicopter to airlift the rider to a trauma center.

The rider was being transported to the Hesperia Airport when a change in condition prompted paramedics to instead rush him to the emergency room at Desert Valley Hospital. The helicopter was put on stand-by for a short time and at this time its unknown if the rider was airlifted.

The female driver of the sedan who was wearing medical scrubs remained at the scene and cooperated with police during the investigation.

Eastbound traffic at Main Street will remain shutdown between I ave Camphor for several hours while the Major Accident Investigation Team processes the scene.

The official cause of the accident is under investigation by the Hesperia Sheriff's Station.

This is a developing story and additional information will be updated as it becomes available.

<https://www.vvng.com/motorcyclist-critically-injured-in-hesperia-on-labor-day/>

Structure fire caused by a suspected butane honey oil lab

Staff Writer, The Desert Independent

Posted: September 1, 2019

JOSHUA TREE, Calif – On Monday, August 29 at about 6:21 p.m., the San Bernardino County Sheriff's dispatch received multiple 911 calls of a structure fire and explosions at a residence in the 61800 block of Rosemary Lane in Joshua Tree. Deputies from the San Bernardino County Sheriff Department's - Morongo Basin Station and personnel from the **San Bernardino County Fire Department** arrived and found a detached garage and two vehicles fully engulfed with dozens of exploded butane canisters on the ground.

Responding personnel suspected Butane Honey Oil/THC extraction lab was in operation at that location. Investigators from the Sheriff's Bomb/Arson Detail, Sheriff's Narcotic's Division, and Fire Department responded and conducted an investigation.

Investigators identified Patrick Ryan (age 48 of Joshua Tree) as one of the suspects and arrested him for violation of California Health and Safety Code 11376.9(a) manufacturing a controlled substance. Ryan was transported to the West Valley Detention Center where he is being held on \$500,000 bail. A second suspect, identified as Michael Doty (age 57 of Landers), was contacted at a local hospital with severe burns he sustained when the lab exploded.

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.

Persons charged with a crime are considered innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

<https://www.thedesertinde.com/Articles-2019/Structure-fire-caused-by-a-suspected-butane-honey-oil-lab--0901.html>

TWO MEN ARRESTED, SUSPECTED IN HONEY OIL LAB EXPLOSION IN JOSHUA TREE; PETS AND HOME SAVED IN FIRE

Staff Writer, Z107.7 FM News

Posted: August 30, 2019



Yucca Valley firefighters arrive on the scene of a structure fire in the 61800 block of Rosemary Lane in Joshua Tree Thursday evening. Neighbors reported hearing small explosions or popping sounds for about 10 minutes before seeing the smoke. David McChesney photo and San Bernardino County Photo

Two men were arrested Thursday following a fire in Joshua tree. Residents near the 61800 block of Rosemary Lane reported hearing small explosions and popping noises for about 10 minutes before they saw smoke and called in the fire at 6:22 p.m. Thursday evening. A garage was fully involved with flames, and heavy black smoke could be seen for miles when firefighters from Joshua Tree, Yucca Valley, Yucca Mesa, BLM, and Calfire arrived about 10 minutes later.

County Fire Battalion Chief Donnie Vilorio said poorly maintained dirt roads, limited water supply, and the report of the explosions all posed challenges in fighting the blaze. There was a fire hydrant in the area, but it was quite a distance from the house. Strong winds also made fighting the blaze difficult, but still, firefighters

managed to contain the blaze to the garage and several vehicles and prevented it from spreading to the home. Vilorio said the fire was knocked down at 7:12 p.m.

A neighbor told Z107.7. News that another neighbor took a man and two girls to Hi-Desert Medical Center, the father with third-degree burns. The occupants and firefighters rescued a dog, two non-venomous snakes, and a family of guinea pigs.

Because of the suspicious circumstances surrounding the blaze, firefighters called in investigators from the Bomb and Arson detail. Sheriff's investigators found dozens of exploded butane canisters on the ground and suspected a honey oil extraction lab was responsible for the fire.

Patrick Ryan, 48, of Joshua Tree, was arrested on suspicion of manufacturing a controlled substance. Patrick Ryan was booked into the West Valley Detention Center with his bail set at \$500,000. A second suspect, Michal Doty, was contacted at Hi-Desert Medical Center with severe burns that he sustained when the honey oil lab exploded. Doty has not been arrested at this time.

<http://z1077fm.com/two-men-arrested-suspected-in-honey-oil-lab-explosion-in-joshua-tree-pets-and-home-saved-in-fire/>

Homeowners in fire-prone areas of Riverside and San Bernardino counties losing insurance

Sandra Emerson, The Sun

Posted: September 1, 2019



CalFire fighter/paramedic Kyle McDermott of Beaumont Station 66 hosed down hot spots on one of the homes on Deer Foot Lane burned in the fast moving Cranston fire as it grows to more than over 3,500 acres in the San Bernardino National Forest in Idyllwild on Wednesday, July 25, 2018. (Photo by Terry Pierson, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

When Mary Morse's insurance company declined to renew the policy for her Pine Cove home, she found herself in a difficult situation common among homeowners in the mountain communities and other fire-prone areas of Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

Morse, who has lived in her home for 13 years, said she has never filed an insurance claim. She has a fire hydrant in her front yard, and there's a fire station two blocks down the road.

But due to recent wildfires across California, there's been a surge in insurance companies declining to renew policies, or hiking premiums, in areas with higher risk of wildfire, like Pine Cove in the San Bernardino National Forest, leaving homeowners with few options.

"There's a lot of people up here having the same issue," Morse said of her community in the San Jacinto Mountains in Riverside County. "They've had insurance for years and years and all of a sudden (the insurers) wouldn't renew."

The trend isn't limited to the Inland Empire.

New data from the state Department of Insurance revealed that insurers declined to renew policies for 350,000 homeowners living in wildfire-prone areas across the state between 2015 and 2018. Nonrenewals have gone up in areas served by Cal Fire, especially in the ZIP codes impacted by wildfires in 2015 and 2017, the data shows.

The data, released Aug. 20, does not reflect the full impact of fires in 2018, such as the Camp and Carr fires in Northern California and the Woolsey/Hill fires in Los Angeles and Ventura counties. The effect of these fires on the insurance market could appear this year and later, insurance department officials say.

The data did not show how many people who lost their insurance were able to purchase it elsewhere or how much more it cost. It showed, however, that the total number of new and renewed insurance policies increased in high-risk fire areas during the same period.

While insurer initiated nonrenewals were up across the Inland Empire in 2018, a breakdown on the rate of nonrenewals for the high-risk fire areas was not immediately available.

The insurance industry, meanwhile, noted the number of nonrenewed policies remained fairly steady year-over-year and said many insurers are still offering policies in high-risk fire areas.

Rates are periodically adjusted to reflect historical loss trends, as well as things like increased costs for building materials and labor, Luis Sahagun, spokesperson for Farmers Insurance, said in an email. “When statewide base rate increases occur, it is not unusual for some consumers to experience a higher than average adjustment, while others see a lower than average increase,” Sahagun said.

Morse, like other homeowners dropped by their insurers, found coverage through the California FAIR Plan, a shared market plan that provides last resort coverage to those living in higher risk areas, but it requires an additional wrap policy to ensure full coverage.

Coverage is also limited to \$1.5 million on one property. Nearly 57% of these policies are written in Cal Fire service areas, which is up from 47% in 2015, according to the state insurance department’s data.

Morse’s annual premium jumped from \$792 for one policy to \$1,365 for the California FAIR Plan and wrap policy, she said.

“That’s really the only option they have that’s affordable and will provide the coverage that they need,” said Bob Severns, owner of Severns Insurance Agency in Hemet.

A bigger problem

Homeowners in the mountains and other fire-prone areas have been dealing with the fallout from wildfires for a while.

Larger insurance companies stopped writing policies in the forest areas years ago, Severns said, so homeowners turned to subsidiaries or out-of-state insurers for coverage. Now, even those policies cost more or they are not being renewed, Severns said.

“In 2019, we saw the largest expansion for the nonrenewals go across Yucaipa, San Bernardino, Banning, Beaumont, Cherry Valley, Hemet and other areas and now it’s expanding into Riverside County as well,” said

Brenda Meyer, a real estate broker with Cozy Cabins Realty in Crestline in the San Bernardino Mountains. “They’re looking at the close proximity to where they have had fires and there’s higher fire risk.”

To help, Meyer said, the \$1.5 million limit under the California FAIR Plan should be raised to \$2.5 million. She also would like insurance companies to take into consideration a community’s efforts to reduce fire risk. Currently, communities recognized by the wildfire-reduction Firewise USA program get a 10% deduction on their insurance, Meyer said.

“The San Bernardino Mountains have a very restrictive policy and ordinances on reduction of fire fuel surrounding the properties, more than any other area within California, yet we’re penalized” because the area is deemed a high-risk zone for wildfires, Meyer said.

Some homeowners have resorted to selling their homes due to the increased insurance costs, Meyer said.

“With people just trying to survive, a lot of them are choosing to sell because their insurance more than tripled,” Meyer said. “We are seeing homes come on the market specifically for this issue and (the owners are) choosing to move out of state.”

Shelli Wimmer, an independent broker and Crestline resident, blames fire-risk assessments for insurance companies choosing to cancel policies or raise premiums.

The Fireline Score, for example, ranks a property from zero to 25 based on fuel, slope and access. Homeowners living in the same neighborhood may end up with different scores and different premiums as a result, Wimmer said. Scores also can’t be rebutted by homeowners, she said. The score for her own house, for example, doubled from a 6 to 12, which also sent her premium skyrocketing. Meanwhile, her neighbor’s home is ranked a 6, she said.

“I really hope that we’re going to be able to come to some kind of solution so that people can get fair insurance,” Wimmer said.

Turning to the state for help

Wimmer, who mapped about 600 homes in the mountains, sent Assemblyman Jay Obernolte, R-Big Bear Lake, her findings. Obernolte, along with San Bernardino County Supervisor Janice Rutherford and Sen. Mike Morrell, R-Rancho Cucamonga, has asked state Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara to hold a community meeting with residents to discuss the issue.

Obernolte has been working with the insurance industry regarding possible solutions and also has collected a case file with many examples of properties in his district where rates have increased substantially without justification, said Teresa Trujillo, Obernolte’s chief of staff.

“He is also very concerned about the increasing use of automated scoring systems to generate fire propensity scores without human oversight, and he’s shared examples of cases where this occurred and errors were made with the insurance companies involved,” Trujillo said.

Assemblyman Randy Voepel, R-Santee, a member of the Assembly Insurance Committee whose district includes the San Bernardino National Forest areas in Riverside County, said he’s determined to find a solution that ensures a stable insurance market and accessible and affordable coverage for all homeowners.

“I am deeply concerned with the lack of comprehensive, cost-effective policies available to my constituents who have been subjected to a loss in coverage,” Voepel said in an emailed statement. “My office has been assisting individuals in communicating with the Department of Insurance in regards to the loss of their policy and the prospects of obtaining a new policy through a different carrier.”

Meyer has been calling on state lawmakers and insurance companies to come to the table to find solutions because, the broker said, the problem isn’t going away.

“Your mortgage requires you have insurance,” Meyer said. “What if you can’t get it? Then do they foreclose? This has the potential for disaster if we don’t do something.”

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

<https://www.sbsun.com/2019/09/01/homeowners-in-fire-prone-areas-of-riverside-and-san-bernardino-counties-losing-insurance/>

Pedestrian struck and killed by train in Hesperia Saturday morning

Staff Writer, Victor Valley News

Posted: August 31, 2019



HESPERIA, Calif. (VVNG.com) — A pedestrian was struck and killed by a train in Hesperia Saturday morning.

At about 5:45 am **San Bernardino County Firefighters** were requested to respond for a vehicle versus pedestrian in the area of Summit Valley Road and Trout Street.

The BSNF train was traveling eastbound at the time of the incident prompting officials to stop both directions while they investigated.

Firefighters were waived down by BNSF employees and confirmed one person deceased at the scene. The county coroner was requested to respond.

The scene was turned over to the Hesperia Sheriff’s Station and BNSF Police.

No other information is available at this time, check back later for updates.

<https://www.vvng.com/pedestrian-struck-and-killed-by-train-in-hesperia-saturday-morning/>