



NEWS



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Young child dies in Fontana; mother and grandfather are arrested on child abuse charge

Fontana Herald News

Posted: October 25, 2016, 8:49 AM



The Fontana Police Department is investigating a case in which a young child died on Oct. 24. The child's mother and grandfather have been arrested on child abuse charges.

A 2-year-old girl died in Fontana on Oct. 24, and the child's mother and grandfather have been arrested for allegedly causing the death, according to the Fontana Police Department.

At 9:14 p.m., the Fontana P.D. and **San Bernardino County Fire Department** responded to a medical aid of a child not breathing at a residence in the 16700 block of Slover Avenue. The child was subsequently declared deceased at the scene.

Police detectives responded and took over the investigation, which revealed significant evidence of neglect and abuse against the girl, which is believed to have contributed to the child's death.

Detectives arrested the child's mother, Cheyenne Cobb, 20, and Jon Palechek, 47, on a charge of felony child abuse causing death. Cobb is the child's biological mother and Palechek is the stepfather to Cobb.

Both suspects were booked into West Valley Detention Center.

This investigation is ongoing, and anyone with any information is encouraged to contact the Fontana Police Department at (909) 350-7740.

http://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/news/young-child-dies-in-fontana-mother-and-grandfather-are-arrested/article_8f500802-9aca-11e6-b9f0-9fa662674937.html

Mother, grandfather arrested after death of 2-year-old girl

Brittney Mejia, LA Times

Posted: October 26, 2016, 10:40 AM

A mother and grandfather were arrested after an investigation revealed evidence that their abuse and neglect led to the death of a 2-year-old girl, police said.

Cheyenne Cobb, 20, and Jon Palechek, 47, were arrested on suspicion of felony child abuse causing death, Fontana police said in a statement. Cobb is the child's biological mother; Palechek is Cobb's stepfather.

The child possibly died of a strangulation-type injury, due to the way she was confined in her bedding area, said Fontana Police Sgt. Kevin Goltara.

On Monday at 9:14 p.m., Fontana police and **San Bernardino County fire** officials and paramedics responded to a medical aid call for a 2-year-old child not breathing at a home in the 16700 block of Slover Avenue, police said.

The child was declared dead at the scene.

"The upkeep of the house and the condition that the child was kept in was obviously not satisfactory," Goltara said. "Part of that, we believe, led to the death of the child."

Police described the house as a "hoarder-like house."

Goltara said he could not provide any more details on the condition of the child or the home. He said it did not appear that there had been calls to the residence before.

"I don't see any calls for any type of child abuse or anything at the residence in the past," Goltara said.

The child's great-grandmother was also in the home and is a "dependent adult," Goltara said. Family was called to take her from the residence, he said.

Cobb and Palechek were booked into West Valley Detention Center.

The investigation is ongoing, and anyone with information is asked to contact the Fontana Police Department at (909) 350-7740.

<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-mother-child-abuse-death-20161025-snap-story.html>

Fighter pilot survives landing mishap at Marine base in Southern California desert

Matt Hamilton, LA Times

Posted: October 25, 2016, 10:30 PM

An F/A-18 fighter jet had a landing mishap Tuesday evening at a military base in Southern California's high desert, forcing the pilot to eject from the aircraft.

The pilot, stationed to a Marine Corps aviation group in South Carolina, was hospitalized with minor injuries, according to 1st Lt. John Roberts, a spokesman for the Marine Corps.

What precipitated the emergency escape is under investigation.

The incident was initially reported as a jet crash about 6 p.m. at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center in Twentynine Palms, about 140 miles east of Los Angeles, according to a spokeswoman for the **San Bernardino County Fire Department**.

Roberts said a preliminary report indicated the jet had touched down, but for an unknown reason, the pilot needed to bail out of the aircraft.

The pilot's identity was not released but he is with Marine Aircraft Group 31 at the Marine Corps air base in Beaufort, S.C. The purpose of the flight in Southern California was not disclosed.

The sprawling base in the middle of the Mojave Desert is used to train Marines and sailors in realistic settings for forward deployments.

An F/A-18C crashed July 27 during a training mission near the Twentynine Palms Marine base, killing Maj. Richard Norton, 36, of Arcadia.

Norton, a fighter pilot who joined the Marines in 2005, had been stationed at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar.

<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-crash-base-20161025-snap-story.html>

US Marine Corps lose another F/A-18 in fiery crash

Press TV

Posted: October 26, 2016, 1:56 PM



An F/A-18 Hornet prepares to launch from the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt (File photo by US Navy)

A US Marine Corps F/A-18 Hornet fighter jet has crashed and burned at an airbase in California, raising questions about the warplane's safety after a hike in incidents involving F/A-18s.

The incident happened on Tuesday evening, and the Hornet's pilot was forced to eject upon landing at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center in Twentynine Palms, a spokeswoman for the **San Bernardino County Fire Department** said.

The pilot was taken to the hospital with only minor injuries, according to military officials.

"Initial reports say that he had touched down and after he touched down, he needed to eject," First Lt. John Roberts, a Marine spokesman, said. "He's OK and doing well right now."

It was not clear what exactly caused the landing mishap and destroyed the jet, which belonged to Marine Aircraft Group 31 from Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort in South Carolina.

The airbase, which is located at about 140 miles east of Los Angeles, is mainly used to train pilots from across the US.

Each F/A-18 fighter jet has an estimated price of \$57 million, making the plane "the most cost-effective aircraft" in the US aviation fleet, costing less per flight hour than any other in the US forces inventory, according to the US Navy.

However, a high number of incidents involving the aircraft have prompted growing questions about the way F/A-18 pilots are trained.

Between October 2014 and April 2016, the US Navy sustained a total loss of over \$1 billion in damage caused by fighter jet accidents, according to data by the Naval Safety Center.

The US Navy's Blue Angels aerial acrobatics team lost one of its pilots in June, after his F/A-18 jet crashed.

A Marine AV-8B Harrier jet crashed off the East Coast in May, inflicting some \$62.8 million in damage.

Additionally, two US Navy F/A-18 fighter jets were destroyed in late May, after a mid-air collision during a training mission, American military officials said.

General John Paxton, the assistant commandant of the Marine Corps, had warned that American pilots were getting inadequate training due to a severe lack of funding.

<http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2016/10/26/490783/US-Marine-FA18-California>

How a community healed together from Esperanza fire tragedy

Deaths of 5 firefighter left an indelible mark on firefighters and mountain residents.

Ali Tadayon and Mark Muckenfuss, Press Enterprise

Posted: October 25, 2016, 11:29 PM



Larry Donahoo, a retired firefighter who owns Village Hardware in Idyllwild, keeps a photograph of the Engine 57 crew in his office. Kurt Miller, Staff Photographer

In the 10 years since the Esperanza fire claimed five firefighters' lives, 40,000 acres and 34 houses in the San Jacinto Mountains, area residents and firefighters have relied on each other to overcome the tragedy.

From Day 1, the community stepped up to help fill both practical and emotional needs. That has continued through the years, and while the pain remains, firefighters and mountain residents alike say the intertwined communities have become more close-knit.

"If you could say that anything good came out of it afterward, it was that the whole town came together," said Idyllwild resident Rick Holmes.

No public memorials are planned today, but Cal Fire will observe a moment of silence at 7:57 a.m., the time of the horrific burnover that killed the firefighters. And the U.S. Forest Service and firefighters' families, as they do almost every year, will gather at the site to mourn in a private event.

The fire is likely to be on the minds of many mountain residents as well. At the Mountain Communities Fire Safe Council, director Pat Boss said the community can't forget what happened in 2006.

"It's always on everybody's minds," Boss said, "every time you see a Forest Service engine go through. It never goes away."

Just hours into the Oct. 26, 2006 Esperanza fire – which was started by an arsonist in the hills above Cabazon – it turned into an inferno that burned over the crew of U.S. Forest Service Engine 57: Capt. Mark

Loutzenhiser of Idyllwild, Jess McLean of Whitewater, Jason McKay of Phelan, Pablo Cerda of Fountain Valley and Daniel Hoover-Najera of San Jacinto.

In the immediate aftermath of the deaths, firefighting agencies from across the region reached out to help, said San Bernardino National Forest Service spokesman John Miller, who held the same position at the time of the fire.

“Everybody rallied around us,” Miller said. “When Esperanza happened, the first person I spoke to was Pat Dennen, who was the fire chief for **San Bernardino County Fire Department**. ... “Pat said, ‘John if there’s anything you need, just let me know,’ and we had the same reaction from all the fire agencies. People came together and said, ‘What do you need?’”

Miller said firefighters from other agencies came and staffed local Forest Service stations while firefighters attended the funerals.

TOWN COMES TOGETHER

The community’s solidarity became clear to Holmes when Idyllwild residents helped build a new house for the family Loutzenhiser left behind: wife Maria and five children. He had started building an addition to their two-bedroom, one-bathroom cabin before he died.

The outpouring of generosity was so much that the home was torn down and one almost twice its size was built through donations and volunteer labor.

“There were a lot of people who pitched in to help the widow and her family,” Holmes said.

Chris Fogle, a battalion chief at the Alandale fire station where Engine 57 was based, was one of Loutzenhiser’s best friends and remains close with his widow, Maria.

As Loutzenhiser’s family has recovered, Fogle said, so has the community.

“Mark was well known,” he said. “To lose him, and the other four guys as well, was pretty impactful for the entire town. I don’t think they’re ever far off of our minds.”

MURALS AND MEMORIES

Before he died, Loutzenhiser had asked another employee at the Alandale station to paint a nature scene in the office. He wanted to bring the serene surroundings of the San Bernardino National Forest indoors.

The station stayed closed for about seven months after the fire. When it reopened, only one of its previous employees remained: fire prevention technician Susie Carlson, the painter. But initially, she couldn’t bring herself to finish the project.

The three-wall mural has now been finished, and portrays deer, birds and other animals in a grassy meadow.

Inside the station’s garage is another painting of the classic wildfire-prevention mascot Smokey Bear holding his hat at his heart below five white doves. The caption reads: “In memory of our fallen heroes E57 firefighters.”

San Bernardino National Forest officials would not allow the Alandale station's current staff to comment for this story.

'SAFETY FIRST'

Holmes said the fire prompted residents to look out for each other when wildfires occur. Several large fires have ravaged the San Jacinto Mountains since the Esperanza fire.

A disabled 86-year-old woman lives near Holmes. He said he has coordinated with her in the past and made plans in case they need to evacuate.

"Everybody has each other's backs," he said.

Dolma Rollins, who lives in Pine Cove, said the fire prompted her to have an evacuation plan ready for her family and their animals. Strong winds during the Esperanza fire caused flames to sweep up the mountainsides and behave erratically.

Former firefighter Larry Donahoo, who owns Village Hardware in Idyllwild, keeps a photograph of the Engine 57 crew over the desk in his office. Donahoo, who retired from firefighting in 2010, said he knew Loutzenhiser well.

Despite a decade of distance, Donahoo said the Esperanza tragedy crosses his mind frequently during fire season and he reminds the firefighters to be careful.

"It's safety first," he said. "Whenever I see a firefighter during fire season, I just tell them stay safe."

FIREFIGHTERS NOT FORGOTTEN

Miller said members of the Inland firefighting community continue to mourn the loss of their colleagues.

"Everybody copes differently, and some people can deal with these things better than others," Miller said.

After the fire, the Forest Service established a program called "You Will Not Stand Alone," which links a group of trained counselors with firefighters coping with loss.

For many firefighters, the fate of Engine 57 remains in the back of their minds when they respond to a fire, Miller said.

"For some people, not a day goes by that they don't think about it," Miller said. "When you look at the crew, they were highly trained and overrun by fire. You know its not something that you expect. No one wakes up in the morning thinking 'I'm going to go to work today and not come home.'"

<http://www.pe.com/articles/fire-816827-firefighters-forest.html>

Inland-area homes top list for 'extreme risk' to wildfire danger

With a resurgence of new-home construction in the U.S. since 2008, more homes than ever are located in areas with an elevated risk of wildfire activity.

Richard K. De Atley, Press Enterprise

Posted: October 26, 2016, 9:39 PM



A home burns on Mountain Avenue near Yucca Drive in San Bernardino during the 2003 Old Fire, which reached deep into residential areas. Greg Vojtko , File Photo

The Inland region has the most homes at “extreme risk” for wildfire damage in a survey of 13 Western states, with 51,775 properties in that category at a reconstruction cost value of \$15.38 billion, property analyst group CoreLogic said Wednesday, Oct. 26.

The study broke down wildfire danger into low, moderate, high, and extreme categories and was scored on susceptibility to wildfire and proximity to high-risk areas, CoreLogic said. Surrounding vegetation and terrain were among the factors considered.

For the entire survey, nearly 29 million homes were found to be at some kind of risk, with an estimated recovery cost value of \$6.7 trillion. The majority of homes, nearly 27 million, were in the low-risk category.

In addition to looking at 13 states, CoreLogic also examined 258 statistical areas, and concluded the Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario led those for homes at extreme risk.

The interface of property development and wildland in the Inland area, with growing cities in the mountains and urban areas pushing into foothills, has long been a concern of public safety officials in San Bernardino County and Riverside County.

“With a resurgence of new-home construction in the U.S. since 2008, more homes than ever are located in areas with an elevated risk of wildfire activity,” the report said. “With drought conditions ... there is a continuing fear that plagues approximately half of the western U.S., with the strong possibility for fires to grow into large blazes and cause associated property losses.”

Other findings:

- Overall, the Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario area had about 1.17 million homes at some kind of wildfire damage risk. The majority, slightly over 1 million, were in the low-risk category, followed by 22,547 at moderate risk and 50,910 at high risk, then those 51,775 at extreme risk. The estimated reconstruction cost value for all the homes is \$374.7 billion.

- California, the nation’s most populous state, also has the most homes at some kind of wildfire damage risk, 9.1 million. Of those, 8.3 million are considered low risk and 263,152 at extreme risk. The reconstruction cost for all categories is estimated at \$3.1 trillion.

- Three other California statistical areas were in the top-10 extreme-risk category list: Sacramento-Roseville-Arden-Arcade at No. 2; Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim at No. 5 and Chico at No. 9. While the Sacramento-area has fewer homes at extreme risk than the Inland area, 41,937, its estimated recovery cost value is higher, at \$16.4 billion.

- The 13 states, in order of properties at risk: California, Texas, Washington, Arizona, Colorado, Oregon, Oklahoma, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming.

- Texas was second with 7.7 million homes at some type of risk, according to the survey, with 261,595 at extreme risk, and the recover cost estimate at \$1.4 trillion.

<http://www.pe.com/articles/risk-816889-homes-extreme.html>

Storm brings mudslide danger to Blue Cut fire burn area

Doug Saunders, Press Enterprise

Posted: October 26, 2016



Jeff Gritchen, , Jeff Gritchen, File Photo

Meteorologists at the National Weather Service believe a storm expected to pass throughout the Southland by the week’s end may cause debris flows and mud slides in areas recently affected by wildfires – including the Blue Cut fire that burned through the Cajon Pass this summer.

The Weather Service forecast calls for showers to pound the region Thursday and Friday, possibly dropping more than an inch of rain in the San Bernardino and Angeles national forests.

Meteorologist Stephen Harrison says heavy rainfall is expected in the area where the Blue Cut fire burned over the summer in San Bernardino County’s High Desert region. Enough rain could amount to debris flows and mud slides.

“Normally, vegetation absorbs rain, but after a wildfire, the charred ground where vegetation has been burned away creates a loss of soil strength and can no longer easily absorb rainwater, increasing the risk of flooding and mudflows for several years,” **San Bernardino County** fire spokeswoman Tracey Martinez said

Wednesday. “Properties directly affected by fires, and those located downstream of burn areas, are most at risk.”

According to the National Weather Service, rainfall rates are expected to reach a half-inch per hour in both San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

San Bernardino County residents needing sandbags to redirect storm water from their properties can pick them up /at most parks, along with piles of sand.

“Post-fire landslide hazards include fast-moving and highly destructive debris flows,” Martinez said. “Post-fire debris flows are particularly hazardous because they can occur with little warning, can exert great impulsive loads on objects in their paths, can strip vegetation, block drainage ways, damage structures, and endanger human life.”

Over the previous weekend, grand lightning storms followed by loud claps of thunder could be seen and heard throughout the Southland.

“There were 285 cloud-to-ground lightning strikes from Sunday night to Monday morning in San Bernardino and Riverside counties,” meteorologist Harrison said.

<http://www.pe.com/articles/fire-816927-san-bernardino.html>

When it comes to wildfire murder, is capital punishment a deterrent?

Fewer arson wildfires have been set locally in the decade since Raymond Lee Oyler's arrest, but hard to prove causation.

Brian Rokos, Press Enterprise

Posted: October 26, 2016



William Wilson Lewis Iii , William Wilson Lewis Iii, File Photo

Beaumont mechanic Raymond Lee Oyler is believed to be the first person in the United States convicted of first-degree murder for setting a wildland arson fire.

In 2009, a Riverside County jury found Oyler guilty and a judge sentenced him to death for touching off the 2006 Esperanza fire, which killed five U.S. Forest Service firefighters in the San Jacinto Mountains. Oyler is on death row but is appealing the case.

Has Oyler's conviction and punishment deterred would-be wildland arsonists? Although the number of arson wildfires has decreased significantly in the San Bernardino National Forest since Oyler's arrest, it's difficult to say with certainty why more fires haven't been set.

"You can't prove a negative," said Riverside County District Attorney Mike Hestrin, who as a deputy district attorney prosecuted Oyler.

There's no consensus among those who study crime about how much the death penalty deters the most serious offenses. Violent homicides that could merit a death sentence continue.

Rickie Lee Fowler was convicted of murder in August 2012 and sentenced to death five months later for setting the Old fire in San Bernardino County, which a jury ruled caused five people to suffer fatal heart attacks. That fire was set in 2003, three years before Esperanza.

Officials at the Death Penalty Information Center, a nonprofit organization that analyzes issues related to capital punishment, said they have not heard of any subsequent wildland arson death penalty cases.

"I still believe that the death penalty is a deterrent. And to what extent is difficult to determine," Hestrin said.

The number of arson fires started per month in the San Bernardino National Forest since the Esperanza fire is less than half the number started in the decade before the fire, U.S. Forest Service statistics show. The total number of fires is down only slightly.

Cal Fire statistics on wildland arsons were not available. But Cal Fire Battalion Chief Tim Chavez said arson fires have almost disappeared in the past few years from the San Gorgonio Pass, where prosecutors said Oyler started 23 blazes culminating in the Esperanza fire.

“Vigorous prosecution of the law deters crime, and I think arson would certainly qualify as that. ... In law enforcement, we’ve made a statement that we are not going to tolerate these arsonists,” Hestrin said.

Academic studies indicate that the threat of incarceration and prison conditions could be more of a deterrent of all crimes than the death penalty itself.

A 2009 study by the University of Colorado reported that 88 percent of criminologists surveyed said they believe the death penalty is not a deterrent.

Recent real-life examples provide evidence that not all criminals fear the consequences of committing a capital offense.

This month, four law enforcement officers statewide, including two in Palm Springs, have been shot to death.

Three suspects are in custody and could face the death penalty.

<http://www.pe.com/articles/death-816952-fire-penalty.html>

Measure A

Letters to the Editor, Daily Press

Posted: October 27, 2016, 5:45 PM

Many people have written about the pros and cons of Measure A, so I tried to sort them out. All the research that I have done tells me this is a confusing issue.

The Apple Valley Fire Protection District is indeed a County organization. Our County property taxes are supposed to be used for infrastructure and safety of the residents. The word safety is meant to include police and fire protection and should be paid before any other dollars are spent from our property tax fund.

The Apple Valley Fire District only receives 58 percent +/- of their expenses from the County, nowhere near the 100 percent they should be receiving. So this is why the Fire District needs Measure A.

However, there are some alarming problems I see in this measure. One, it goes on to eternity with no termination date. It will be a special fire tax added to our property tax bill that will increase 2 percent every year. Or as I see it in just the first 20 years another \$58.07 added to the first year cost of \$126.80 which will then come to \$184.87 and keeps going up 2 percent ever after.

Another potential problem I see is in Section 3. (It allows the Fire District's Board of Directors to adjust the rate of The Special Fire Tax Measure as appropriate to the financial condition of the District.)

This clause tells me they won't have any problem with unfunded retirement plans that are bankrupting so many cities today.

So this leaves us between the proverbial rock and the hard place. The property taxpayer will lose either way this measure goes.

Lawrence McCarthy
Apple Valley

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20161027/letters-to-editor-10282016>