



NEWS



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County firefighters respond to abandoned commercial structure fire in Victorville

Staff Writer, VVNG

Posted: August 6, 2018



(submitted photo)

(Submitted Photo)

VICTORVILLE, Calif. (VVNG.com) — Firefighters with **San Bernardino County Fire** responded to a commercial structure fire in Victorville early Monday morning.

At 1:49 am, on August 6, 2018, Medic Engine 311 responded to the 16600 block of Tracy Street and reported a fire to the rear of an abandoned commercial property.

According to Captain Jeff Allen, the fire had also extended into the attic space of the commercial property. “A primary search was performed to check for any possible trapped occupants, which came up clear,” stated Allen.

Firefighters had the fire knocked down in approximately 10 minutes.

County Fire responded with 4 Paramedic fire engines, 2 truck companies, 1 paramedic squad and 1 chief officer for a total of 19 personnel.

The cause of the fire remains under investigation.

<https://www.vvng.com/county-firefighters-respond-to-abandoned-commercial-structure-fire-in-victorville/>

2 injured in Saturday night crash on I-15 freeway in Victorville

Staff writer, VVNG

Posted: August 5, 2018



(Hugo C. Valdez, Victor Valley News)

VICTORVILLE, Calif. (VVNG.com) — Two people were injured in a Saturday night crash that temporarily shut down all lanes of traffic on the I-15 freeway in Victorville.

It happened at about 10:35 pm, on the northbound 15, just north of the Mojave Drive on-ramp and involved a Toyota Tacoma and a red four-door sedan.

Victor Valley News member Edie Andujo, said, her son was driving the truck when a black Chrysler driving at a high rate of speed rear-ended her son's truck causing him to flip over four times and land near the center divider.

Cody Cessna said he and his wife were driving on the freeway when they noticed all these lights that didn't look normal and suddenly in front of them was an overturned pick-up truck in the middle of the freeway. "As we pulled over to help, I said someone is going to hit this truck and just as I said that a red sedan slammed into it," stated Cody.

Officers with the California Highway Patrol responded and shut down all lanes of northbound traffic as they investigated the crash and cleared the roadway.

Firefighters with **San Bernardino County Fire** transported the male driver and female occupant of the truck to a local hospital. According to Edie Andujo, her son and his girlfriend remain hospitalized and are recovering from their injuries.

The official cause of the crash remains under investigation by the CHP Victorville office.

<https://www.vvng.com/2-injured-in-saturday-night-crash-on-i-15-freeway-in-victorville/>

One year after Upland fire annexation, city says it's saving money, but litigation looms

Sandra Emerson, Daily Bulletin

Posted: August 4, 2018, 8:00 am



A City of Upland decal is placed next to a County of San Bernardino decal on a fire engine parked at Fire Station 163 in Upland on Monday, July 23, 2018. It has been one year since the city of Upland changed to San Bernardino County Fire services. (Photo by Stan Lim, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

A year after the city of Upland turned to the county for firefighting services, officials say the transition has been so seamless it may appear that nothing has changed.

A closer look at the city's budget, however, tells a different story.

According to Assistant City Manager Jeannette Vagnozzi, rough estimates show Upland has saved up to \$4 million since it was annexed into the **San Bernardino County Fire** Protection District last summer. "We're happy with what the county's provided to us and we couldn't be more excited as we move forward," said Martin Thouvenell, a former interim city manager who led the annexation effort. Thouvenell is now a consultant for the city. "It's been really good."

The potential for cost-savings was a driving force behind the Upland City Council's decision to dissolve its century-old fire department and join the county. But while a preliminary audit of the 2017-18 budget supports the city's projections, it still faces challenges over the controversial move, which put property owners in Upland and San Antonio Heights on the hook for about \$150 a year.

After the city applied for annexation, the Local Agency Formation Commission decided to include the Heights, an unincorporated community to the north already served by county fire. The San Antonio Heights Association has since filed suit against the city, county and LAFCO.

"I'm still upset about it," said Ken Petschow, an association member.

"It was underhanded and an illegal tax to impose on the residents of San Antonio Heights," he added. "It was just wrong for the county to annex us into a fire protection district when we were already in a fire protection district, and already had fire protection services that we were paying taxes for."

A financial move

In a move to avoid dipping into reserves and prevent a future financial crisis, Upland leaders initiated the annexation in November 2016.

At the time, the city was spending about \$12 million annually on fire services, and officials hoped to save about \$50 million over 10 years through annexation.

The city annexed into the county fire district in July 2017, transferring its fire personnel, stations, assets, obligations and liabilities to the county.

The financial impact of the annexation's first year, which included 21 days of Upland service and one-time expenses associated with the annexation, will be more clear by the end of December when the city's audit is complete, Vagnozzi said. Current estimates are a savings of \$3.5 million to \$4 million.

"While we don't have a huge surplus between revenues and expenditures to add into our operating reserves, it does show we have postponed any use of reserves until 2024, given a moderate economy and modest projections," Vagnozzi said.

"That gives us time to deal with other things," she added, "like our unfunded pension liabilities that need our attention."

Thouvenell said the city expects to see a substantial savings over the next 10 years since it no longer pays for fire equipment and maintenance.

"That's where I think we will start seeing some of the benefits and it will allow us to do other things, but we're just not there yet," he said. "It's only been a year."

A regional approach

When county fire took over services in Upland, it closed one station due to its close proximity to Station 12, a county station at Euclid Avenue and 24th Street in San Antonio Heights. Station 12 is now staffed with three fire personnel, rather than two, said Don Trapp, deputy chief of operations for county fire.

"Before, they really didn't cross borders and help each other, even though Station 12 is on the border of Upland," Trapp said. "Today they all work together as a regional concept and that's our model at county fire." Upland's remaining three stations were remodeled and some equipment was moved around, but staffing levels remain the same, Trapp said.

"We didn't reduce any people or staff," he said. "We just moved things around to be more efficient."

While Upland lost its city-managed fire department, county fire aims to be involved on the local level.

"Even though we're a large agency, we serve a lot of small communities and small towns, so we really do strive to be that hometown fire service, no matter where we are," Trapp said.

The annexation also gave Upland more immediate access to regional services, such as the county's reserve apparatus, Hazardous Materials Response Team, Urban Search and Rescue Response Team and wildland hand crews. A brush engine and Office of Emergency Services engine also are now stationed in Upland.

The annexation also includes an emergency services coordinator dedicated 90 percent to Upland from the county's Office of Emergency Services. Through that, the city has offered free emergency preparedness

classes to residents and FEMA compliant training for staff, is updating its emergency operations plans and received a grant for equipment to aid dogs in distress on scene at fires, according to Vagnozzi.

“The Upland Fire Department was an outstanding organization,” said Davie Corbin, who served as interim fire chief at the time of annexation and is now a county fire division chief in San Bernardino. “I can’t even begin to say how much I appreciated working for this fire department, but with county fire coming in the city of Upland is getting a more enhanced level of service. They can take advantage of the regional service model that county fire offers.”

When the idea of annexation was introduced, the fire department’s relationship with the city was strained. In September 2016, the city dissolved a two-year pilot program joining Upland and Montclair’s fire command staff. The program, implemented in 2014 as a cost-saving measure, was no longer cost effective, according to Upland officials.

“It was a very stressful time for all of us,” Corbin said. “For me, being at the helm of the department at the time, it was very difficult to try to deal with the politics that were going on and try to balance that with keeping our crew’s morale up. It was just really tough. They could see the writing on the wall.”

But, Corbin said, as staff in the two departments began talking, there was a sense of relief.

“County fire and the firefighters themselves really embraced (Upland’s) personnel and helped them to integrate into their department,” Corbin said.

More than 40 Upland fire employees joined the county department on July 22, 2017. About a dozen stayed in Upland, and the county transferred some personnel to maintain staffing in the city. Those who left Upland, such as Corbin, who spent 28 years with the city, took jobs elsewhere in the county.

“I will say, especially being a chief officer again, that for the first time in several years I’m actually enjoying my work again,” Corbin said. “This (county) fire department is really a class act. The people are great. The firefighters are very well trained, very good at what they do, and really do care about the community that they serve.”

Controversy remains

While Upland’s integration into county fire has gone smoothly, some residents in Upland and San Antonio Heights still take issue with how the annexation played out. The agencies involved pursued a written protest over objections of residents who wanted a traditional election.

Councilwoman Janice Elliott said she understands residents’ concerns over the protest process and recognizes that, for them, it is about more than the \$150 annual tax that accompanied annexation.

“It’s the fact that this is a fire service owned and run by the city of Upland and that people were attached to having their own fire department,” she said. “Even if this was the world’s best situation, there would be people who were reluctant to do that because they like having local control and I get that.”

But the city’s urgent budget issues meant holding an election would have been difficult, and costly, Vagnozzi said. Besides, LAFCO already required the protest process, which gave property owners a chance to send the matter to a vote or kill the annexation outright, if they could muster enough written objections. They did not.

“We’re a city with financial concerns,” Vagnozzi added. It did not benefit the city “to spend a quarter of a million on a special election, when we’re paying for this protest process to take place.”

Residents in San Antonio Heights, meanwhile, are preparing to make their case in court. The association’s lawsuit to undo the annexation is set for a hearing in October. Residents especially take issue with being made to pay the \$150 fee associated with annexation, when their property taxes already helped fund fire service in the community.

“We’re looking forward to it,” said John Goss, a Heights resident for 33 years. “I believe we have a very positive outlook for how this is going to come out for citizens of both Upland and San Antonio Heights, which will also affect every other city that’s been taken by this illegal tax.”

Due to the pending litigation, LAFCO is unable to comment, Executive Officer Kathleen Rollings-McDonald said in an email.

Upland opposed LAFCO’s decision to include the Heights, Thouvenell said, knowing it would cause problems.

“We took on many, many complaints and a lot of abuse from people in the county during the process,” he said. “We knew that was coming, but obviously we couldn’t do anything about it because it wasn’t our decision. We never supported it. We never wanted to be involved in that at all. We were just taking care of Upland.”

<https://www.dailybulletin.com/2018/08/04/one-year-after-upland-fire-annexation-city-says-its-saving-money-but-litigation-looms/>

Tour bus catches fire on NB-15 freeway near Wild Wash Road

Staff Writer, VVNG

Posted: August 4, 2018



(Photo by Lisa Sidberry)

APPLE VALLEY, Calif. (VVNG.com) — A tour bus fire on the northbound 15 freeway between Wild Wash and Hodge Roads prompted the California Highway Patrol to temporarily shut down several lanes.

Firefighters with **San Bernardino County Fire** were dispatched to a vehicle fire at about 10:00 am, on Saturday, August 4, 2018.

Firefighters arrived on scene and located the tour bus fully engulfed along the right shoulder of the freeway and confirmed all occupants had safely exited the bus.

Cell phone video and photos shared with Victor Valley News, showed a couple dozen passengers standing along a dirt hill away from the fully engulfed bus. Information on the bus or where it was heading are unknown at this time, however, the side of the bus read El Paso – Los Angeles.

CHP responded to the scene and shut down the no.2 and 3 lanes as firefighters and emergency personnel fought the blaze and checked on the passengers.

Scanner traffic reported the fire was contained by 10:48 am, and was mostly contained to the bus with the exception of a small vegetation spot.

County firefighters have requested a bus from VVTA to respond to allow the approximately 40 passengers to sit inside an air controlled climate as they wait approximately 2 hours for the replacement bus to arrive.

The cause of the fire is under investigation and no injuries have been reported. Additional information will be updated as it becomes available.

<https://www.vvng.com/tour-bus-catches-fire-on-nb-15-freeway-near-wild-wash-road/>

Motorcyclist airlifted to hospital in critical condition after Phelan Road crash

Staff Writer, VVNG

Posted: August 3, 2018



A motorcyclist was critically injured following a crash with a passenger vehicle on Phelan Road Friday afternoon. (Gabriel D. Espinoza, Victor Valley News)

PHELAN, Calif. (VVNG.com) — A male motorcyclist was airlifted in critical condition following a crash with a passenger vehicle in Phelan Friday afternoon.

At about 5:32 pm, Officers with the California Highway Patrol responded to a traffic collision at the intersection of Phelan and Clovis Roads and located a blue 2007 Dodge Caliber Hatchback, and a red 2002 Honda CBR motorcycle blocking the roadway.

The motorcyclist was traveling westbound on Phelan Road when the driver of the Dodge was attempting to make a left turn from eastbound Phelan Road onto northbound Clovis Road when the crash occurred.

According to witnesses at the scene, the rider was ejected and thrown 30-40 feet and came to rest on the sidewalk.

“He was messed up pretty bad but I’m hopeful that he will make it,” stated Phelan resident Tammy Elaine Boice. “At least he was asking for someone to call his mom. Everyone came together and took care of him until the paramedics got there.”

Firefighter-paramedics with **San Bernardino County Fire** requested a helicopter to airlift the patient to an out of area trauma center.

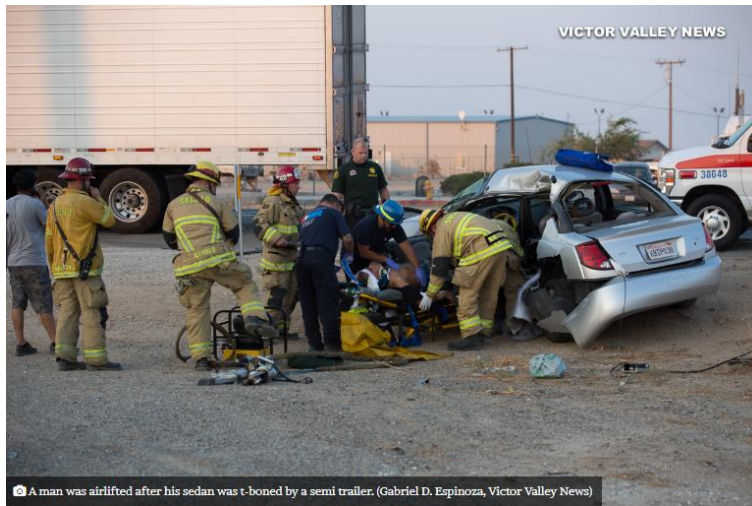
The elderly male driver of the Dodge was not injured in the crash. The official cause of the accident remains under investigation by the Victorville-CHP station.

<https://www.vvng.com/motorcyclist-airlifted-to-hospital-in-critical-condition-after-phelan-road-crash/>

Vehicle t-boned by semi on Highway 395, man airlifted in critical condition

Staff Writer, VVNG

Posted: August 4, 2018



A man was airlifted after his sedan was t-boned by a semi trailer. (Gabriel D. Espinoza, Victor Valley News)

ADELANTO, Calif. (VVNG.com) — A man was airlifted to a trauma center in critical condition after his vehicle was t-boned by a semi truck Saturday evening in Adelanto.

The crash was reported at 7:07 p.m. at the intersection of Highway 395 and Air Express way in Adelanto.

According to witnesses at the scene, the semi-truck was traveling northbound on Highway 395 when it reportedly ran a red light and struck the vehicle, a silver Saturn, which was occupied by one male adult.

The driver of the sedan had to be extricated from the car after he became trapped inside. The Saturn sustained major damage to the driver side, and the semi sustained major front-end damage.

Firefighters from the **San Bernardino County Fire** Department arrived on scene within minutes and freed the trapped driver.

American Medical Response (AMR) transported the man to a landing zone established at a nearby park behind the Adelanto City Hall.

The driver of the semi did not sustain any injuries.

Highway 395 is closed in both directions between Rancho Road and Chamberlaine Way for an unknown duration.

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department's Major Accident Investigation Team (MAIT) is conducting an investigation to determine the exact cause of the crash.

<https://www.vvng.com/vehicle-t-boned-by-semi-on-highway-395-man-airlifted-in-critical-condition/>