



NEWS



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One hurt in suspected Hesperia honey oil lab explosion

Beatriz Valenzuela, San Bernardino Sun

Posted: May 5, 2017, 4:03 PM



San Bernardino County fire crews and sheriff's deputies were called to 8457 Long View Ave. when a garage exploded Wednesday afternoon. Authorities say the garage was being used as a suspected honey oil lab. (Courtesy photo)

HESPERIA >> A man was severely injured after a suspected honey oil lab in a garage exploded a short distance from an elementary school Wednesday afternoon, officials said.

A man was in the garage during the explosion and was first taken to a local hospital, then later flown by helicopter to Arrowhead Regional Medical Center in Colton.

Just after 11 a.m., San Bernardino County sheriff's deputies and fire crews were called to 8457 Long View Ave. for reports of a garage fire, officials said.

Arriving personnel reported seeing flames and hearing explosions coming from the garage. It was later determined the explosions were butane canisters.

After firefighters put out the flames, the Sheriff's Arson and Bomb detail, along with the **County Fire Inspector**, discovered evidence the garage was being used as a THC extraction lab.

Investigators located approximately 34 butane cans inside the garage and a large high-pressure steel cylinder. Shrapnel from the exploding canisters tore a hole through the building and landed on the street. The roof over the garage was completely destroyed as it collapsed under the intense fire and heat.

The home is located behind Cedar Middle School which was in session during the explosion, officials said.

Investigators believe the injured man was manufacturing concentrated cannabis at the home at the time of the explosion, according to a press release.

The THC extraction process is extremely dangerous and has a high potential for explosion and fire due to the use of large amounts of flammable chemicals used during the extraction process, sheriff's officials said.

Once the investigation has been completed, a criminal report will be sent to the San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office for prosecution.

Anyone with information regarding this investigation is urged to contact the Sheriff's Gangs and Narcotics Division at 909-387-8400. Callers wishing to remain anonymous are urged to call the WeTip Hotline at 800-78-CRIME (27463) or leave information on the WeTip website at www.wetip.com.

<http://www.sbsun.com/general-news/20170505/one-hurt-in-suspected-hesperia-honey-oil-lab-explosion>

One Man Injured in THC Extraction Lab Fire and Explosion Near Cedar Middle School

24/7 **Headline News**

Posted: May 5, 2017

HESPERIA – On Wednesday morning a garage burst into flames as a result of an apparent THC extraction lab authorities said. On Wednesday, May 3, 2017, at around 11:15 a.m. when the Cedar Middle School which is in very close proximity was still in session the fire was reported.

When the first responding deputy from the Hesperia station arrived at the home located at 8457 Long View Avenue in the City of Hesperia he arrived at the home with the front engulfed in flames and heard multiple explosions, which sounded similar to ammunition.

Through investigation, it was learned that the explosions were butane cans. The **San Bernardino County Fire** responded to the home and the fire was extinguished a short time later. The Sheriff's Arson/Bomb detail were called to the scene to assist in the investigation. Together the Sheriff's Arson/Bomb detail and the San Bernardino County Fire Inspector discovered overwhelming evidence of what they believed was a THC lab. Due to their finding, the Gangs/Narcotics Division Marijuana Enforcement Team (MET) responded to the home. MET arrived and served a search warrant locating sufficient evidence that there was a THC extraction lab at the location.

Approximately 34 butane cans were found inside the garage, all rupturing with the heat of the fire and sending pieces of the cans to around 100 feet away, some landing in the street. A large high-pressure steel oxygen cylinder ruptured, tearing a large hole in the side wall of the cylinder; launching the cylinder out to the sidewalk. The roof collapsed as a result of the fire and the home all sustained major damage. During the explosion and unidentified man was inside the garage, and was transported to a local hospital, but ultimately airlifted to Arrowhead Regional Medical Center.

The home is located in a regular neighborhood with homes and Cedar Middle school nearby, which serves around 1000 7th and 8th-grade students. Authorities believe that the suspect was manufacturing concentrated cannabis at the home at the time of the fire and subsequent explosions. Investigators believe that the operation was capable of producing several pounds of cannabis each week. This THC extract from the marijuana is known as "honey oil", "butane hash oil", "wax", "budder", and "dabs". This product is more concentrated than smoking the plant material, therefore it is in demand by those using cannabis. THC or Tetrahydrocannabinol is the main or active ingredient in marijuana that causes the "high" when using the drug.

The extraction process, as proven in this incident, can be very dangerous and has a high potential for explosions and fire due to the used of large amounts of flammable chemicals during extraction. The process is illegal, investigators are attempting to identify the suspects involved in the operation. Once the suspect(s) are identified a criminal report will be sent to the San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office for prosecution.

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 are urged to call the We-Tip Hotline at 1-800-78-CRIME (27463), or you may leave information on the We-Tip Hotline at www.wetip.com.

<https://247headline.com/one-man-injured-in-the-extraction-lab-fire-and-explosion-near-cedar-middle-school/>

Spreading the word on safety

Monica Solano, Daily Press

Posted: May 6, 2017, 8:07 PM



Chase Danger Nunez, right, prepares to ride the San Bernardino County Office of Emergency Services Seismic Simulator at the Family Preparedness Fair on Saturday. [David Pardo, Daily Press]

APPLE VALLEY — Disaster can strike at any given moment and many Apple Valley residents were preparing for the worst on Saturday.

Despite high winds, hundreds of people came out to learn how to be prepared for a natural disaster at the first Family Preparedness Fair hosted by the Town of Apple Valley.

“The goal for this event was to keep our community safe while also putting into perspective that an emergency can occur at any given moment,” said Emergencies Service Officer Joseph Ramos.

“We have so much great information here and we want to assure our residents are getting the best to be prepared.”

The Town of Apple Valley, Apple Valley Fire Protection District and the Apple Valley Police Activities League (PAL) came together to bring awareness to the community and to better prepare neighborhoods their residents on fire, flood, earthquake and other safety measures.

With 38 groups and organizations participating in the event, guests were not only educated on safety practices, but they were also given the opportunity to experience a little shake, rattle and roll thanks to the earthquake and fire seismic simulator provided by **San Bernardino County Fire Office of Emergency Services**.

Nicole Nunez and her son Chase Danger Nunez, 5, of Apple Valley, told the Daily Press the simulator provided them with quite a jolt.

“It definitely put things into perspective once you were in there and felt the tremors start to get bigger and bigger,” Nicole Nunez said.

fire prevention, water safety, car seat installation, utility safety, children’s fingerprinting and other vital and useful safety information.

“It’s important that people know how to prepare for the worst and this is a great event to get the word out there and help others,” said AFVPD Fire Chief Sid Hultquist.

Marylú Maya and her daughter Sheily Torres, 13, of Apple Valley said they come to the event every year and always “leave learning something new” about safety preparedness and appreciates the time and effort everyone makes to help educate them.

“We also want to relate the message to our residents that they can come up to any of their local officials with questions on safety at any given time,” Ramos said. “We’re here to ensure you are safe and well prepared.”

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20170506/spreading-word-on-safety>

Hundreds of Attendees Enjoyed the Apple Valley Family Preparedness Fair

Christie Martin, 24/7 Headline News

Posted: May 6, 2017

APPLE VALLEY – A crowd of men, women, and children all came out to attend the Family Preparedness Fair at the Town Hall Conference Center located at 14975 Dale Evans Parkway in the Town of Apple Valley.

On Saturday, May 6, 2017, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. families came out to enjoy fun-pack learning, while receiving nice gifts, prizes, food, face painting, fingerprinting, and so much more.

Kids and Adults both lined up to experience the **San Bernardino County Fire Department** Earthquake Seismic Simulator, which gave quite a shake just following learning about earthquake safety. Outside there were representatives from Liberty Utilities, VVTA, Apple Valley Animal Control, Apple Valley Code Enforcement, and Apple Valley Recreation “Come Play”.

Children and adults enjoyed free barbecued hot dogs, chips, and bottled water. Inside there were representatives from local organizations, law enforcement, search and rescue, South West Gas, and much more all teaching how to stay safe. Attendees left with a bag full of goodies, tummies full of a great lunch, and a wealth of safety information.

<https://247headline.com/hundreds-of-attendees-enjoyed-the-apple-valley-family-preparedness-fair/>

Grass fire breaks out in San Bernardino field

Doug Saunders, The Sun

Posted: May 4, 2017, 8:56 PM



A **San Bernardino County Firefighter** hoses down a field at Colton Avenue and Inland Center Drive near the 215 Freeway Thursday evening. Photo by Doug Saunders

SAN BERNARDINO >> Fire swept through a field charring nearly five acres Thursday.

Shortly before 6 p.m. fire broke out in a grassy field in the 900 block of Inland Center Drive. A header of smoke could be seen blanketing the city for miles.

The fire, which surrounded a radio broadcasting antenna, grew to a size that prompted officials to ring a second alarm bringing help to battle the flames from all over the city and neighboring jurisdictions.

Firefighters were mopping up the scene shortly after 8 p.m. and releasing some of the assisting personnel.

It's unclear how the blaze started. Officials are investigating.

No injuries were reported.

The fire erupted in part of city councilman John Valdivia's ward who rushed to the scene from his son's tee-ball game.

"I began receiving multiple calls from concerned residents regarding a vegetation fire in the neighborhood," Valdivia said. "When I arrived on the scene, the brush fire was already under control and thankfully firefighters stopped it from spreading into nearby homes and businesses."

<http://www.sbsun.com/general-news/20170504/grass-fire-breaks-out-in-san-bernardino-field>

Authorities believe THC extraction lab caused Hesperia garage fire

Jose Quintero, Daily Press

Posted: May 5, 2017, 9:59 AM



San Bernardino County Firefighters grab water after fighting a garage fire at Long View Avenue in Hesperia on Wednesday. [James Quigg, Daily Press]

HESPERIA — Fire investigators believe a THC extraction lab caused a house fire in the 8400 block of Long View Avenue in Hesperia, located near Cedar Middle School, on Wednesday that resulted in a man being airlifted to a local trauma center.

San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department officials said a deputy responded to reports of a fire at approximately 11:15 a.m. and heard what sounded like "ammunition exploding."

"He observed the front of the residence engulfed in flames," sheriff's officials said in a statement. "The explosions were later found to be butane cans that exploded."

San Bernardino County Fire Department firefighters arrived to find the garage fully involved with flames and smoke, and the fire having made its way into the attic.

The home is located in a "heavily populated area" in Hesperia and shares a wooden fence with the school, which was in session at the time.

The Sheriff's Arson/Bomb detail responded, along with a County Fire inspector, and found what they believed was evidence of a THC extraction lab during their investigation, authorities said.

"Investigators from the Sheriff's Marijuana Enforcement Team and Arson/Bomb Detail served a search warrant ... and discovered evidence of a THC extraction lab," sheriff's officials said in a statement. "Investigators located approximately 34 butane cans inside the garage. All of the butane cans ruptured sending pieces of the cans approximately 100 feet away, landing in the street. A large high pressure steel oxygen cylinder ruptured, tearing a large hole in the side wall of the cylinder; launching the cylinder out to the sidewalk."

The operation was capable of producing several pounds of concentrated marijuana per week, authorities said.

The home sustained severe fire damage, including the roof over the garage collapsing due to “intense fire and heat.”

“An unknown adult male was in the garage during the explosion,” sheriff’s officials said.

“Emergency medical personnel responded to the residence and transported the unidentified male to a local hospital, where he was later airlifted to Arrowhead Regional Medical Center. ... Once the suspect(s) are identified, a criminal report will be sent to the San Bernardino County District Attorney’s Office for prosecution.”

The THC extraction process is extremely dangerous and has a high potential for explosion and fire due to the use of large amounts of flammable chemicals during the extraction process. This chemical extraction process is illegal and is a felony violation of California’s Health & Safety Code.

The investigation is ongoing and anyone with information is urged to contact the Sheriff’s Gangs/Narcotics Division at 909-890-4840. Callers wishing to remain anonymous are urged to call the We-Tip Hotline at 1-800-782-7463 or online at www.wetip.com.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20170505/authorities-believe-thc-extraction-lab-caused-hesperia-garage-fire>

Victorville looking to increase public safety

Monica Solano

Posted: May 5, 2017, 3:07 PM

VICTORVILLE — The City Council met Tuesday afternoon in a pre-budget workshop, discussing the upcoming fiscal year 2017-2018 spending plan, with public safety remaining a top priority.

As staff from the City’s Finance Department presented a very preliminary budget for the Council’s review, the city is projecting \$58.6 million in General Fund revenues and capital improvement funds estimated at \$41.6 million. Revenue projections were deemed stable for the city, which means revenue and expenditures are expected to increase by about \$2 million each, according to the finance staff.

“The budget presented on Tuesday was in a very draft form. We expect the numbers to change as they are reviewed more closely,” said city spokesperson Sue Jones. “Because the numbers were very preliminary, I think it is appropriate for us to discuss trends rather than specific dollar amounts.”

In a nutshell, the CalPERS retirement system lowered its projections for annual returns from 7.5 percent to 7 percent. As a result, the city must share the burden and contribute more toward employee retirement benefits. This adjustment also will impact the city’s contracts for police and fire services.

Contracts with the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s and Fire departments make up two-thirds of General Fund expenses, or \$37.8 million, according to material provided by the city before Tuesday’s workshop. Funds for public safety for the 2017-2018 fiscal year were estimated at \$38 million with no percentage change to the total operating budget, but Council members expressed their desire to allocate more money for police if at all possible.

“Funds are not going down but they’re not growing quickly either,” said Victorville Sheriff’s Capt. Jon Schuler.

The Council previously opted not to vote to annex the city's fire services, which would have called for County Fire to assume financial responsibility from Victorville.

According to City Manager Doug Robertson, the process of seeking other options for fire services is "nearing completion." However, Robertson said it was "very complex" and the Council would have to wait until June to schedule discussion for this issue. Officials also expressed their desire to use any remaining funds to purchase a new fire truck.

"I feel we're in a good place and there's lots of flexibility," Robertson said. "Thankfully we've been successful at attracting businesses to the city that are looking to work with us, which is good for us as it will bring in more revenue."

With two hours not being enough time for all department heads to present their budget request, the Council agreed to adjourn the pre-budget workshop until 3 p.m. May 16 for further discussion.

Budget documents dating to fiscal year 2011-2012 are available for viewing on the city's website at www.victorvilleca.gov. To view and access, click the quick link for Financial Transparency.
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<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20170505/victorville-looking-to-increase-public-safety>

County fire annexation best option for Upland: Guest commentary

Martin Thouvenell, Mark Hartwig and Jeff Schneider, Daily Bulletin

Posted: May 5, 2017, 3:11 PM



A fire engine pulls out of Upland Fire Station 163 on Benson Avenue in this November 2013 photo. (Will Lester/Inland Valley Daily Bulletin file photo)

Pursuing annexation into the **San Bernardino County Fire Department** was not an easy choice for the Upland City Council. It has required an equal amount of soul-searching on the part of the city's fire personnel.

At the end of the day however, the facts are clear: Annexation will save the city millions of dollars a year, and will lead to better fire services in terms of staffing, equipment, infrastructure and response capabilities, which are vital to public safety now and in the future.

Years of declining revenues, rising expenses and the loss of redevelopment funds have put Upland in a position of severe financial hardship. An economic analysis done last year shows that years of expense reductions have put the city's budget — currently at \$46 million — as much as \$12 million below where it needs to be to provide essential services such as public safety and street maintenance. Our infrastructure is crumbling, and without a substantive change in the way the city does business, we face the distinct likelihood of operating at a deficit by 2018.

The consequences of that would be dire — the possibility of insolvency, or worse. Without the savings that annexation into the county fire department would bring, the survivability of our essential fire services would be in jeopardy. With aging fire apparatus, and limited support staff, the city would be forced to consider further staffing reductions including station closures. All while the demand on these services has seen an increase each year.

With annexation, the fire station at 20th Street and San Antonio will close, but due to the county's economies of scale, nearby stations will be able to provide many of our neighborhoods with faster response times and assist city units during high call volume. In addition, all fire personnel at 20th Street will be relocated to other departments in the city, while the current county fire station at 24th Street and Euclid Avenue will become a more robust operation — well-equipped and resourced to handle a wider service area. As a result, the Upland service area will now have 15 firefighters rather than 12.

So why county fire?

The city examined a variety of alternative fire-service delivery options — including CalFire — and determined that San Bernardino County provided the best service proposal. Annexing into county fire not

only pays for the service — through the \$152 annual parcel tax — but relieves the city of financial liability for the maintenance and upkeep of its fire-protection assets and new pension obligations. Analysis by city staff shows the financial impact to be about a \$50 million savings over 10 years.

Up until now, the city's approach to its financial challenges has been to cut services and underfund those remaining, including the fire department. This has resulted in Upland residents today getting less back, dollar-for-dollar, than any of our neighboring communities.

We believe our community deserves better than that.

Annexing into county fire will provide the needed resources to fire personnel and allow them to meet the growing demands of the community now and in the future. It's the best course of action for this community, which is why the Upland firefighters think annexation into county fire is the best option.

For more information on annexation, please visit the city's website at:
www.uplandpl.lib.ca.us/#Fire_Annexation_

Martin Thouvenell is acting city manager for Upland. Mark Hartwig is fire chief of the San Bernardino County Fire Department. Jeff Schneider is president of the Upland Firefighters Association.

<http://www.dailybulletin.com/opinion/20170505/county-fire-annexation-best-option-for-upland-guest-commentary>

Mobile home destroyed in blaze

Sara Kernan, Hi-Desert Star

Posted: May 5, 2017, 6:23 PM



Residents watch as fire consumes a home in the Joshua Tree Mobile Estates Thursday afternoon in Joshua Tree. Sara Kernan

JOSHUA TREE — With smoke visible from two miles away, the fire in Joshua Tree around 2 p.m. Thursday was hard to miss. The fire completely destroyed a mobile home in the Joshua Mobile Estates at 62414 Twentynine Palms Highway.

No one was hurt in the fire. Its cause is still under investigation by the **San Bernardino County Fire Department**.

Crews from the county fire stations in Joshua Tree, Twentynine Palms and Yucca Valley and Cal Fire responded and had the blaze under control within 20 minutes of arriving on scene, according to Battalion Chief Scott Tuttle.

Another mobile home fire occurred in the area in February. The two events do not appear to be linked, according to Tuttle.

http://www.hidesertstar.com/news/article_8cb5d168-31fa-11e7-997a-27812e397cce.html

How a chilly Saturday will bring rain on Sunday

Michael Watanabe, Press Enterprise

Posted: May 6, 2017, 5:55 PM

You can thank a low-pressure system from the Gulf of Alaska for Saturday's 30-some-degree drop in temperatures for many Inland residents.

That front on Sunday is likely bring rain for much of the day and a chance of thundershowers, especially in the afternoon, said Noel Isla, a National Weather Service meteorologist in San Diego.

And in the San Bernarardino Mountains, early morning drivers might encounter some ice on the roadways, as the Saturday night low in Big Bear Lake was expected to be 23 degrees.

"We are aware of the forecast and are on heightened alert," said **San Bernardino County Fire Department** Capt. John Borowski, who was stationed in Fawnskin on Saturday.

There was no significant rainfall in the mountains Saturday, he said.

For dwellers in the valleys, the Alaskan cool-off was a welcome chilling from a high of 95 degrees on Thursday in Riverside, and 94 degrees in Ontario and San Bernardino to 67 in Riverside and 64 in San Bernadino and Ontario, Isla said.

Valley residents could see rain into the morning commute and beyond, he said.

Although the low-pressure system will move eastward early in the new week, temperatures will not return to 90s for some time, Isla said.

<http://www.pe.com/2017/05/06/how-a-chilly-saturday-will-bring-rain-on-sunday/>

Suspected arsonist arrested in series of Highway 18 fires

Douglas W. Motley

Posted: May 7, 2017



One of three spot fires just below the Crestline Bride set by an alleged arsonist on Monday evening, May 1. (Photo courtesy of San Bernardino Sheriff's Department)

A 27-year-old Cedar Glen man was taken into custody late Monday in connection with three arson fires that broke out around 8:07 p.m. Monday, May 1. The three spot fires, reportedly ignited by a flare gun, burned approximately seven acres of dense brush alongside Highway 18 just below the Crestline Bridge.

According to a news release from the Twin Peaks Sheriff's Station, multiple witnesses reported a male subject, later identified as Benjamin Andrew Baptiste, attempting to start a fire just below the Highway 138 cut off below Crestline. Numerous 911 calls from motorists were received reporting Baptiste was armed with a firearm and carrying an axe. Baptiste also was reported to be throwing rocks at a passing vehicle.

Baptiste reportedly ran down the highway, fled over the side and headed down toward Lower Bonnie Canyon, below the highway, where he lit an additional fire in dense brush below the highway. Highway 18 was closed to all traffic from the Cliffhanger to Sierra Way for several hours while law enforcement officers scoured the area for the suspected arsonist's whereabouts.

Multiple law enforcement agencies, including the Sheriff's Department, CHP, San Bernardino Police Department, Cal Fire and the U.S. Forest Service, along with K9s from the Sheriff's Department and Montclair Police Department, participated in the search. A perimeter was established as Sheriff's and CHP helicopters used FLIR thermal imaging systems to search for the suspect in the dense brush.

Baptiste was subsequently located on the side of the highway near Mormon Road around 10:22 p.m. and taken into custody without incident. He was treated by paramedics for multiple lacerations from the brush and burns to his hands and arms and then transported to the Sheriff's West Valley Detention Center, where he was booked on multiple counts of arson.

According to scanner reports, progress on containing the blazes was slow due to difficulty in accessing the rugged terrain where the fires were burning. At least a dozen fire engines from Cal Fire, U.S. Forest Service and **County Fire**, assisted by a hand crew from Glen Helen, worked throughout the night and early morning hours to gain control of flare-ups that kept occurring in perimeter areas.

The Sheriff's Department is requesting that anyone who may have witnessed the suspect or who have any other information regarding the investigation to contact Deputy Brian Butts at the Twin Peaks Sheriff's Station at (909) 336-0600.

<http://alpenhornnews.com/suspected-arsonist-arrested-in-series-of-highway-fires-p8091-155.htm>

Officials: Arson 'has not been ruled out' as cause of Bluecut Fire

Jose Quintero, Daily Press

Posted: May 8, 2017, 11:09 AM



Investigators have not ruled out arson as the cause of the Bluecut Fire that burned more than 36,000 acres in August 2016. [Daily Press file photo]

CAJON PASS — Investigators have not ruled out arson as the cause of the Bluecut Fire that burned more than 36,000 acres in August 2016.

During a press conference Monday morning for Wildfire Awareness and Arson Awareness week, **San Bernardino County Fire Department** officials announced that investigations into the cause of the fire that blackened the majority of the Cajon Pass and forced the evacuation of tens of thousands of residents are still ongoing.

“Arson has not been ruled out as a cause of the Bluecut Fire and that is why the investigation is ongoing by the San Bernardino County Forest Service and San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department,” said County Fire Marshal Mike Horton said.

The 36,274-acre Bluecut Fire, which began Aug. 16 and quickly grew, was the fifth largest wildfire reported in the state in 2016. The blaze erupted in the Cajon Pass just hours after fire officials announced the Pilot Fire, which burned more than 8,000 acres in the San Bernardino Mountains and Summit Valley area, had been fully contained.

Firefighters made aggressive attacks, including using 241,414 gallons of fire retardant on the first day, but erratic winds spread the fire quickly and carried embers up to 2 miles away, touching off new fires.

By the end of the first day, authorities had shut down Interstate 15 in both directions and issued mandatory evacuation orders for over 82,000 residents, including those in West Cajon Valley, Wrightwood, Phelan, Oak Hills and southwest Hesperia.

The blaze destroyed an estimated 105 homes, 213 outbuildings and more than 200 vehicles, mostly in the West Cajon Valley area, before being declared fully contained on Aug. 23.

At the peak of the battle to control the Bluecut Fire, 2,684 personnel were actively involved. The Bluecut Fire saw 499,336 gallons of retardant used and the last estimates showed more than \$18 million was spent fighting the blaze.

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/news/20170508/officials-arson-has-not-been-ruled-out-as-cause-of-bluecut-fire>