



NEWS



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County ‘hopeful’ on new deal, but Victorville to interview fire chief candidates for own department

Shea Johnson, Daily Press

Posted: February 7, 2018 at 3:11 p.m.



San Bernardino County Fire Chief Mark Hartwig, center, speaks with Victorville’s Interim City Manager Keith Metzler and Mayor Gloria Garcia during the State of the City presentation Wednesday. Even as the city prepares to interview fire chief candidates for an in-house department, County Fire is ‘hopeful’ a new deal can be struck. [James Quigg, Daily Press]

VICTORVILLE — Thirteen people have applied to oversee the first city-run Fire Department in a decade and interviews were expected to begin Thursday, according to Deputy City Manager George Harris II.

Harris said Tuesday that officials were making “significant progress towards securing and hiring a fire chief” and that interviews were actually occurring three weeks earlier than planned.

Also on Thursday, officials were expected to start recruitment for battalion and division chiefs, with interviews for those positions beginning as early as later this month.

And the city was in the process of securing necessary details about fire apparatus and staff vehicles, Harris said.

The reports of progress come the month after the City Council directed employees to begin steps to reactivate a city Fire Department that ceased to exist in 2008 when the city signed a 10-year deal with the **San Bernardino County Fire Protection District**.

That contract is set to expire June 30 and city officials view a return to a city Fire Department strictly as a cost-saving pivot, saying it will reduce spending by 5 percent annually and equate to a \$3.8 million savings in the first five years.

Despite city insistence last month that renewing an agreement with County Fire remained on the table, that option is now seemingly on life support. Adding to its increasing unlikelihood, city officials said Tuesday that a second “best and final offer” request to the department about three weeks ago had not been submitted after fire officials appeared to suggest they possessed new information to provide to the city.

“I actually expected my phone to ring the very next day,” interim City Manager Keith Metzler said. “It did not. Never received any emails.”

Asked whether another offer was underway or if the department had conceded consideration, spokeswoman Tracey Martinez said, “We continue to work with city staff to provide additional information that the city might use to determine their path forward.”

Martinez also conveyed that County Fire had not thrown in the towel.

“County Fire has provided fire, rescue and EMS services as part of our regional network of programs and resources to the City of Victorville and its citizens for the past 10 years,” she said. “The County Fire District remains hopeful that we will be able to reach an agreement and continue our partnership into the future.”

Meanwhile, the Council agreed to extend a contract Tuesday with Mat Fratus, the former chief of the Rialto Fire Department, to provide advisory services to the city Fire Department, including implementation planning.

The month-to-month contract, on an as-needed basis, will not exceed \$75,000 after initially being capped at \$25,000, according to city documents. An extension was determined to be necessary as Fratus assists with recruitment, vehicle and apparatus procurement, inventory and contracts.

On its current course, the city plans to enter into a six-month deal with County Fire to carry it through the second half of the calendar year. A city Fire Department would then be operational beginning Jan. 1.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20180207/county-hopeful-on-new-deal-but-victorville-to-interview-fire-chief-candidates-for-own-department>

Grand Terrace High School Evacuated After Multiple Students, Staff Members Sickened by Chemical Irritant

Erika Martin, KTLA 5

Posted: February 7, 2018, 1:21 p.m. Erika Martin



Authorities respond to Grand Terrace High School after students and staff were sickened by what’s being described as a chemical irritant on Feb. 7, 2018. (Credit: KTLA)

A high school in San Bernardino County was evacuated amid a hazardous materials incident on Wednesday, officials said.

Ambulances were requested for three to five Grand Terrace High School students and two staff members who were complaining of respiratory issues, the **San Bernardino County Fire** Department said.

However, the students were released to their guardians and only the two adult school employees were transported from the campus to the hospital, officials said.

The issue began as a strong chemical smell in a building at the school, firefighters said. Authorities were first on scene around 11 a.m.

A hazmat team responded and investigated the structure involved but could not identify any problematic substances. The building was being ventilated.

Firefighters were preliminarily describing the substance as a chemical irritant. No further details were immediately available.

<http://ktla.com/2018/02/07/grand-terrace-high-school-evacuated-after-multiple-students-staff-member-sickened-by-chemical-irritant/>

Hazmat team responds to Grand Terrace High after students, staff complain of strong chemical smell

Beatriz E. Valenzuela, Gail Wesson, San Bernardino Sun
Posted: February 7, 2018, 11:54 a.m.



Emergency personnel respond to reports of a strong chemical smell coming from a classroom at Grand Terrace High School in Grand Terrace on Wednesday, Feb. 7, 2017. (Photo by Watchara Phomicinda, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

Two Grand Terrace High School staff members were transported to the hospital and 15 students were monitored at the scene after fire and hazmat crews responded to reports of a strong chemical smell coming from a classroom at about 11:30 a.m. Wednesday, Feb. 7.

Staff members and students complained of having problems breathing, prompting the evacuation of Building A and a soft lockdown of the entire campus, according to school and fire officials.

Student Emily Howard, who was in the affected classroom, said her teacher had the students get up and move out of the room after students began coughing and then notified administration.

“We were just in the classroom and then all of a sudden people started coughing,” Howard said. “It was a little foggy but then everyone ... was having a hard time breathing.”

The students who complained of respiratory issues, which were described as minor, were monitored by paramedics at the scene before being released to their parents, according to Capt. Steve Tracy with the **San Bernardino County Fire Department**.

School staff called the parents of students who had been in the affected classroom and told them they could come pick up their students, according to Jon Howard, Emily's father. He said staff also told him he could request that his daughter be taken by ambulance to be further medically evaluated.

Once county fire had cleared the building, students were allowed to return to the classroom at the beginning of sixth period, Katie Orloff, Colton Joint Unified School District spokeswoman said by phone.

She did not have updated information about the status of the staff members taken to be checked out at a hospital. Sixth period starts about 1:30 p.m., according to the high school schedule.

Fire crews were initially called out to the school at 21810 Main Street before requesting a hazmat team and ambulances also respond.

"Our 911 dispatchers received a call from the high school indicating there was some kind of irritant and with several students complaining of some minor respiratory difficulties," Tracy said. "Upon the arrival of the Fire Department, they did determine there was some type of irritant. They were unable to identify that during the investigation, so we did call out the San Bernardino County Hazmat Team."

Officials isolated the building where the classroom was located to test the air in the area, but nothing came up on the monitors, Tracy said.

Due to the air systems in the classrooms and the amount of time that elapsed before hazmat crews could get inside, Tracy said the irritant most likely dissipated.

"It obviously was strong enough to have complaints of respiratory problems," he said. Officials used large fans to get rid of the smell.

Upset parents who rushed to the school after receiving calls for their children were told by school staff members that crews had to make sure the classroom was safe before all students could be released.

While some parents demanded the release of their children early, others were glad for the extra safety measures.

"I want to make sure they take the proper precautions," parent Manny Gonzalez said. He came to the school after he got a call from his daughter, who wasn't in the affected classroom, about the situation.

The school district sent out automated phone calls and a push notification through a district app to parents when the incident was first reported to let them know what was going on, and again when the building was cleared for reentry, according to Orloff.

<https://www.sbsun.com/2018/02/07/hazmat-responds-to-strong-chemical-smell-from-grand-terrace-high-classroom/>

Hearts offer red dress pins to send message about health

Staff Writer, **Hidesertstar**

Posted: February 7, 2018, 6:07p.m.

YUCCA VALLEY — The Hearts of Yucca Valley is selling red dress pins to raise awareness about heart disease at three Yucca Valley businesses through February.

Pins are available for \$3 at the following locations:

- Bob Dunn State Farm Agency, 7248 Joshua Lane.
- Healthy Generations, 57121 Sunnyslope Drive.
- Pacific Marine Credit Union, 57402 Twentynine Palms Highway, Suite 6.

At the credit union, customers who donate will sign a Valentine's Day card that will be on display.

The pins commemorate February as American Heart Month. Go Red for Women is the American Heart Association's national movement to end heart disease and stroke in women.

The red dress was adopted as the national symbol for women and heart disease awareness in 2003 by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute.

Building on that symbol, the American Heart Association created its Go Red for Women campaign to encourage women to take charge of their health. Heart disease and stroke is the No. 1 killer of women in America, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

Go Red for Women is celebrated on the first Friday in February each year, but the entire month is set aside for women and heart-health awareness.

In the Morongo Basin, the Hearts of Yucca Valley, a women's service club, has been raising awareness and money since 1966.

The Hearts have partnered with the Hi-Desert Medical Center, **San Bernardino County Fire** paramedics, the Morongo Valley Fire Department, Morongo Basin Ambulance and the facility now known as the Center for Healthy Generations.

Today, the Hearts of Yucca Valley still meets and holds fundraisers to donate to first responders and organizations providing heart health services to women.

This February, Hearts is partnering with Morongo Basin Ambulance, Hi-Desert Medical Center, the Center for Healthy Generations, the Hi-Desert Star and Bob Dunn State Farm to get the word out that women need to learn about the risks and take charge of their heart health, Vice President Donna Munoz said.

Hearts of Yucca Valley meets at 11 a.m. on the first Thursday of each month at the Country Club Mobile Estates, next to the golf course. More than 35 women gather to make crafts and work on fundraisers held throughout the year.

For information about Hearts, to order red dress pins or to donate, call Munoz at (760) 413-4639.

http://www.hidesertstar.com/news/article_de22d46a-0c74-11e8-93be-4bec31d80c08.html