



NEWS



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Big Bear's fire escape routes high risk

Matthew Cabe, Daily Press

Posted: May 8, 2019, 9:59 am



Fire burns along Highway 138 in the Cajon Valley on the first day of the Blue Cut Fire in August of 2016. [James Quigg, Daily Press]

There are three main routes out of the Big Bear Valley, but what happens when one of those routes proves too dangerous for evacuations during a large-scale wildfire?

That question became a reality during the Old Fire, which burned more than 91,000 acres after joining the Grand Prix Fire in October 2003. More than 1,000 structures were destroyed and six people were killed, ranking the Old Fire 11th and 16th, respectively, on CALFIRE's lists of the 20 most-destructive and deadliest wildfires in state history.

The Old Fire was one of 14 major fires that burned simultaneously during what the U.S. Department of Agriculture later dubbed the "California Fire Siege of 2003." By the time all 14 were extinguished, 24 lives were lost, 3,710 homes were gone and more than 750,000 acres were scorched.

For Big Bear Fire Department Chief Jeff Willis, the Old Fire is one that's difficult to forget. He told the Daily Press evacuations were complicated by an influx of people in the Big Bear area at the time.

"The first communities that were evacuated were Lake Arrowhead and Running Springs, and the evacuation route that most chose was coming to Big Bear," Willis said. "A few days later ... the Big Bear community needed to be evacuated, so we experienced a situation where we were artificially high (in population)."

The three routes out of the Big Bear Valley are highways 330, 38 and 18, Willis said. During the Old Fire, an estimated 80,000 full-time residents were evacuated from the San Bernardino Mountains between Oct. 25 and Oct. 29, according to a 2003 Daily Press report.

Evacuees in Big Bear experienced a 28-mile traffic jam into Lucerne Valley on Highway 18. Willis said that route was shut down, which "forced the issue on the other two" highways.

Ultimately, the Old Fire never reached Big Bear and none of the six deaths occurred there, but the small number of routes available for evacuations remains a pressing issue.

An analysis released last week by the USA TODAY Network-California placed the ZIP codes that comprise Big Bear, Minnelusa and Sugarloaf within the worst 1% statewide when it comes to population-to-evacuation-route ratios.

Another community included within the worst 1% was Paradise, the Northern California town decimated by the 153,336-acre Camp Fire that killed 85 in November.

Paradise, as well as Big Bear, Minnelusa and Sugarloaf, are considered very high risk zones, according to the USA TODAY analysis.

Paradise had five two-lane roads and one four-lane road leading out of town, according to an Associated Press report based on the analysis. The Camp Fire forced officials to close three of those routes, further clogging the remaining roads.

Looking at ZIP codes and multiple population data sets, the analysis found, on average, 134 Californians living in the riskiest areas for each lane of traffic going in either direction. Only one out of 20 ZIP codes had more than 313 people living in the riskiest areas for each lane of traffic.

Paradise had more than 1,000.

But some areas, such as Oak Park in Ventura County, South Lake Tahoe in El Dorado County or the Palos Verdes Peninsula in Los Angeles County, have two, three or five times the number of people living in the highest-risk zones, per lane of major roadway out, compared to Paradise.

No other section of San Bernardino County was within the worst 1%, but Caltrans spokesperson Terri Kasinga said the expanse of the agency's District 8, which includes 49 cities in San Bernardino and Riverside counties, doesn't decrease congestion during evacuations when major fires break out.

"It actually increases congestion with substantial delays on multiple routes surrounding the incident on both state and local roadways," Kasinga said. "Caltrans, CHP and other partner agencies provide viable detours during incidents in an attempt to mitigate traffic impacts."

How District 8's road infrastructure fares amid fires that prompt evacuations depends "on the location and magnitude of the incident," according to Kasinga. She said the detours offered prove "sustainable" during large-scale incidents.

During 2016's Bluecut Fire, which burned 37,000 acres, Kasinga said Caltrans worked with the California Highway Patrol, and the **San Bernardino County Fire** and Sheriff's departments as part of Incident Command in addition to San Bernardino County Emergency Management.

"Caltrans has multiple plans to respond to natural and man-made disasters," Kasinga said, including a Continuity of Operations/Continuity of Government Plan, an Emergency Operations Plan, a Technology Recovery Plan and the Pandemic Response Plan.

"The COOP/COG does not replace any of those plans; however, it complements them," she said.

Between 80,000 and 86,000 residents in the West Cajon Valley, local mountains and part of the High Desert found themselves in the Bluecut Fire's sprawling evacuation area, according to County Fire and Sheriff's Department officials.

Spokesperson Jodi Miller said the Sheriff's Department believes less than half of those residents complied with the evacuation orders. Even so, the "sheer volume hinders getting residents out of the area," according to County Fire spokesperson Tracey Martinez.

Martinez added, though, that County Fire had an "extensive" plan in place to ensure the timely evacuation of all 80,000-plus residents had they left, as well as three portable shelters capable of housing more than 15,000 people combined.

“One of the arsenals in our tool box is the Telephone Emergency Notification System,” she said. “We use TENS only in crisis situations.”

The system uses listed and unlisted numbers in the region’s 911 database to alert residents of life-threatening emergencies. It’s updated every six months and has placed hundreds of thousands of calls during wildfires and flood events since 2004.

But the 911 database includes only landline phones. Martinez said county residents can visit www.SBCounty.gov/SBCFire/TENS/TENSContact.aspx to register their cell phones. Those without internet access can dial 211 to sign up.

Willis, meanwhile, said at least half a dozen wildfires have posed some type of threat to the Big Bear area in the last decade, meaning the community must be constantly prepared.

He said the most effective approach requires a “holistic” program that starts with his department’s capability, capacity, training and equipment, and includes reducing risks in the community by ensuring residents replace shingle roofs and create defensible space around their homes.

Despite the congestion that resulted on roads, Willis said the Old Fire was a good example of early evacuation orders, which are also crucial.

“California is highly fire prone,” Willis said. “You’re not going to find anywhere else in the United States that compares to California ... so all those things have got to come together.”

<https://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20190508/big-bears-fire-escape-routes-high-risk>

Chino dairy hay fire continues to burn

BEATRIZ E. VALENZUELA, San Bernardino Sun

Posted: May 8, 2019, 6:45 am



A large fire erupted at a dairy operation in Chino on Tuesday night. (Photo by James Carbone, contributing photographer)

Firefighters on Wednesday continued to battle a massive hay fire that erupted overnight at a Chino dairy, according to authorities.

The fire was reported just after 9 p.m. Tuesday on the 8300 block of Pine Avenue, officials said.

Chino Valley Fire District, Ontario and **San Bernardino County Fire** Department crews were on scene while police blocked roads.

None of the dairy cows at the farm were hurt and were all moved away from the flames Tuesday night, according to officials.

The cause of the fire is under investigation.

<https://www.dailybulletin.com/2019/05/08/chino-dairy-hay-fire-continues-to-burn/>

Large fire erupts at Chino dairy operation

Staff Writer, Daily Bulletin

Posted: May 7, 2019, 10:18 pm



Dairy cows eat hay as a hay fire and a barn burns out of control at a dairy farm near the Chino Airport on the 8300 block of Pine Avenue in Chino, CA., Tuesday, May 7, 2019. (Photo by James Carbone Contributing Photographer)

Firefighters Tuesday night were battling a large blaze that was consuming hay and burned a large barn at a dairy operation in Chino, just south of the Chino Airport.

The fire was reported just after 9 p.m. in the 8300 block of Pine Avenue, officials said, according to ABC7.

The cause of the fire wasn't immediately known. Chino Valley Fire District, Ontario and **San Bernardino County Fire** Department crews were on scene while police blocked roads.

Pine Avenue was closed between West Preserve Loop and East Preserve Loop, the Chino Police Department said.

Pine Avenue between West Preserve Loop and East Preserve Loop was closed, FOX11 reported. According to broadcast reports, no injuries or evacuations were reported.

Helicopter broadcast footage showed crews driving loaders removing stacks of hay from the path of the flames.

Dairy cattle at the operation appeared to be situated safely away from the fire, broadcast reports said.

<https://www.dailybulletin.com/2019/05/07/large-fire-erupts-at-chino-dairy-operation/>

Red Flag Community Notification

Michael P. and Susan A Neufeld, Rim of the World News

Posted: May 8, 2019



This flag will fly at fire stations under the American Flag when there is a Red Flag Warning (File Photo)

Mountain Communities – As Santa Ana Winds and the possibility of wildfires loom on the horizon, your local **San Bernardino County Fire Department** (SBCoFD) has implemented some important programs to keep this county safe.

To promote Wildfire Readiness within San Bernardino County, SBCoFD has implemented the Red Flag Community Notification program. When conditions for extreme fire danger arise and the National Weather Service posts a Fire Weather Watch or a Red Flag Warnings residents will see a red flag flown below the American Flag at all SBCoFD stations within the affected area. Residents will the know to prepare by focusing on preparation and prevention in and around their homes.

“The Red Flag Warning program is designed to enhance public safety by providing a visual reminder that extreme fire conditions are predicted or present,” stated Fire Chief Don Trapp. “This program is another tool in reaching out to communities during Red Flag Warnings and asking them to take extra precautions.”

Deputy Chief Kathleen Opliger reiterated that SBCoFD is poised and prepared to defend life and property within the county. She states, “San Bernardino County Fire has an arsenal of resources readily available. These include our specialized firefighting workforce, gel tank force, dozers, hand crews, and a partnership with the Sheriff’s Dept. for water dropping helicopters.” SBCoFD continuously monitors all factors that contribute to the potential for large and damaging wildfires, and staff our resources accordingly.

Along with the Red Flag Warning program, SBCoFD also encourages you to become familiar with and implement your own Ready! Set! Go! plan. “This program is about helping residents understand how their home’s location, surrounding vegetation, construction elements, and other factors place them at risk during a wildfire,” Fire Marshal Mike Horton stated. Defensible space, disaster plans, and evacuation preparedness all make up the Ready! Set! Go! program to help citizens protect themselves and their family.

“See Something, Say Something”

SBCoFD asks that you be our eyes and ears, our lookouts. If you see smoke, or someone doing something that potentially can start a fire, call 9-1-1- and report it immediately. One spark is all it takes to start a devastating wildfire, especially during a Red Flag warning. Learn how you can be prepared, visit our the SBCoFD website at <http://www.sbcfire.org>

<https://rotwnews.com/2019/05/08/red-flag-community-notification/>

Two people die in separate traffic crashes

Scott Nordhues, Daily Press

Posted: May 7, 2019, 6:37 pm

Traffic collisions on Saturday and Monday in the High Desert have claimed the lives of two people.

According to the California Highway Patrol, the Saturday fatality occurred about 11 p.m. when a 23-year-old female from Lucerne Valley was driving a 2002 white Honda CRV eastbound on Highway 18, west of Cody Road.

A 40-year-old male from Lucerne Valley was walking within the eastbound lane of Highway 18 in the same area of Cody Road, CHP reported. Because of darkness, the driver of the Honda was not able to see the pedestrian in time to avoid a collision.

The pedestrian was struck by the Honda and thrown onto the south dirt shoulder of Highway 18, causing fatal injuries.

After the collision, the driver of the Honda lost control of her vehicle, which overturned. The CHP said the driver was not wearing a seatbelt and was ejected onto the eastbound lane of Highway 18.

The woman was then struck by a vehicle traveling east on Highway 18 and suffered major injuries, the CHP reported.

On Monday, a 23-year-old male from Phelan was killed about 2:50 a.m. when the 1992 Mazda he was driving collided head-on with a 2012 Hyundai driven by a 22-year-old male from Pinon Hills.

CHP said the Mazda was traveling west in the eastbound lane of Phelan Road near Vinton Road at a suspected speed of 10 miles an hour. The Mazda was traveling east in the eastbound lane on Phelan Road at a stated speed of 55 miles an hour when the collision occurred.

The collision happened completely within the eastbound lane of Phelan Road, CHP said.

The driver of the Mazda was not wearing a seatbelt and was pronounced dead at the scene by county fire department personnel, authorities said. The driver of the Hyundai, who complained of neck, collarbone and shin pain, was taken by **San Bernardino County Fire** Ambulance to Arrowhead Regional Medical Center, said CHP.

<https://www.vvdailypress.com/news/20190507/two-people-die-in-separate-traffic-crashes>

Adelanto City Council: On the agenda

Garrett Berghold, Daily Press

Posted: May 7, 2019, 4:14 pm



The City council meets at 7 p.m. Wednesday inside Council chambers at City Hall. [Daily Press File Photo]

ADELANTO — The City Council meets on Wednesday inside Council chambers at City Hall, 11600 Air Expressway.

Wednesday's agenda includes a new "Rules of Decorum" section advising members of the public on behavior that is considered disruptive. Under the rules, a person may be removed from a meeting after being warned if the behavior does not cease.

"If the person or group refuses to stop disruptive behavior, the mayor or presiding officer may order the person or group to leave the meeting room, and may request those persons be escorted from the meeting room," the agenda says.

Notable agenda items include:

Closed session, 6 p.m.

- The City Attorney will speak with Council members behind closed doors regarding two legal issues: one labeled anticipated litigation, another, labeled as possible exposure to litigation.
- The Council will then decide whether to "discipline, dismiss or release" a public employee.

Open Session, 7 p.m.

Presentations

- Mayor Gabriel Reyes will deliver a presentation to the Adelanto Little League.

Consent calendar

- The Council will be presented with the Building and Safety Department report for April, which includes zero commercial, manufacturing or industrial permits issued for the month.
- It's the second month in a row no permits have been issued in those categories.
- Since January, the city's Building and Safety Department has issued two new commercial, manufacturing or industrial permits.

The Adelanto Public Utility Authority Board

- The Council will vote to authorize the pre-purchase and transfer of temporary water rights from LHC Alligator, LLC for 125 acre-feet of production rights in the Alto Subarea of the Mojave Basin Area.

- The cost of the lease will be \$40,875.00

New business

- The Council will vote to approve a \$41,149.89 expenditure for repairs to a city-owned Caterpillar loader, which is used by the Public Works Department.

- A fiscal year 2019-2020 proposed budget for city fire protection services by the **San Bernardino County Fire** Protection District will then be considered by the Council.

- SBCFD is proposing a 5.7% increase from last year to \$4,724,802.

- The Council will also consider amending a law enforcement services agreement with the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department for fiscal year 2019-2020, which will include a 2.2% increase in cost from last year up to \$6,064,017.

- Lastly, the Council will vote to set a future public hearing for a resolution that would increase solid waste rates paid to Burrtec by Adelanto residents.

- If approved, the hearing would be scheduled for July 10, 2019 and notices would be mailed out to affected residents.

Meetings can be watched live online on the Adelanto city website or viewed later as archived versions. The agenda can be viewed here.

<https://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20190507/adelanto-city-council-on-agenda>