NEWS

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New engine comes to Yucca Mesa

Leah Sanson Hi-Desert Star
Posted: September 21, 2016, 6:28 PM



Firefighter Ethan Blood stands in front of the new medic engine at station 42 in Yucca Valley.

YUCCA MESA— A 2015 fire engine is now being used by the crew at **San Bernardino County's** station 42 on Aberdeen Drive.

"The new engine is four-wheel drive so it enables us to get into areas that are sandy and wash areas that are inaccessible to two-wheel-drive engines," engineer John Martin said.

Station 42's previous engine was over 20 years old and had over 340,000 miles on it.

The new engine also features side view and rear view cameras. In addition, there is an Apple iPad in the vehicle that allows crews to handle calls and situations more efficiently.

"Many of us may have never imagined seeing a tablet such as an iPad in our fire engine or ambulance; yet that day has come," engineer Jeff Allen wrote in a County Fire news article.

The iPad shows pending calls, gives directions to fires, gives the location of hydrants, helps manage incidents and even helps train new firefighters with simulation applications.

"We're just getting started with them," Martin said.

Firefighters in Division Five, which includes the Hi-Desert, completed training in the first week of June and have since implemented tablets into their routine.

Station 42 serves the communities of Yucca Valley, Yucca Mesa, Landers, Flamingo Heights and Johnson Valley.

http://www.hidesertstar.com/news/article_ec4bd5bc-8063-11e6-bb09-738c5508761d.html

Yucca Mesa Fire Station Gets New Medic Engine

Z107.7 News
Posted: September 22, 2016



Fire Station 42 in Yucca Mesa received a new 2015 Kovatch Mobile Apparatus 4-wheel drive Type I Fire Engine earlier this summer. Photo Credit: Brandon Barsugli

When you're responding to 1,200 calls a year, fire engines quickly rack up the miles. After 20 years and 340,000 miles, Yucca Mesa Fire Station 42 received a new medic fire engine a few months ago. Managing editor Tami Roleff says the engine has all the latest gear…

County Fire Station 42 on Aberdeen Road in Yucca Mesa retired its old fire engine earlier this summer after it racked up 340,000 miles in the past 20 years. In its place, it received a 2015 4-wheel drive engine that includes a 500-gallon water tank, a pump that pumps 1,500 gallons per minute, a full set of advanced life support paramedic gear, rope rescue equipment, high pressure air bags, and the Jaws of Life. The engine also has side and rear view cameras for the driver, and an Apple iPad that serves as a mobile computer and allows real-time incident information to be relayed to crews and dispatch. The medic engine is staffed by a captain, engineer, and firefighter/paramedic.

http://z1077fm.com/yucca-mesa-fire-station-gets-new-medic-engine/

Crews knock down house fire in Trona Tuesday

Fire crews responded to a house fire Tuesday morning, Sept. 20, at the top of Birch Street in Trona.

Jack Barnwell, Ridgecrest Daily Independent

Posted: September 20, 2016, 10:58 AM



Jack Barnwell/Daily IndependentFire crews from San Bernardino County Fire Engine 57 and Searles Valley Minerals Fire Engine 108 remain on scene to sweep up following a house fire on Birch Street in Trona Tuesday morning.

Fire crews responded to a house fire Tuesday morning, Sept. 20, at the top of Birch Street in Trona.

According to **San Bernardino County Fire** Capt. Doris Van Horn with Station 57 in Trona, the fire was called in at approximately 8:45 a.m. and fire crews responded at 8:53 a.m. to find the house fully engulfed in flames.

In addition to Engine 57, Searles Valley Mineral fire engine 108 responded as well. Van Horn said fire crews immediately stepped up to a reinforced alert to protect adjacent homes.

One house was completely saved while another sustained damage that was stopped at the roof. China Lake Fire Department was initially called in to assist but was cancelled when fire crews on scene knocked down the fire.

Van Horn said the cause of the fire was still under investigation, with a fire investigator called in from Victorville. The estimated initial damage was estimated $30,000.

This story will be updated as more information becomes available.

http://www.ridgecrestca.com/article/20160920/NEWS/160929980

Fire breaks out at Barstow Wal-Mart

Store evacuated, firefighters seen climbing on roof

Mike Lamb, Daily Press

Posted: September 21, 2016, 3:41 PM



First responder vehicles line up in front of the Barstow Wal-Mart on Wednesday after a fire was reported. Mike Lamb, Desert Dispatch

BARSTOW — A fire broke out after 2 p.m. Wednesday apparently inside Wal-Mart's loading bay, resulting in the closure of the store and bringing firefighters scrambling to extinguish it.

Six engines, some from **San Bernardino County Fire Department** as well as the Barstow Fire Protection District, responded, along with an ambulance and a couple of Barstow Police Department squad cars.

Workers and customers were evacuated from the store at 621 Montara Road and all entrances and exits were blocked while firefighters battled the blaze.

There have been no reports of injuries, but information at the scene was scarce. Wal-Mart employees were directed not to talk to a Desert Dispatch reporter and authorities provided no immediate information.

Firefighters at one point were seen climbing onto the roof, and chain saws were heard later. No flames were seen.

About 20 Wal-Mart employees remained outside the building at 3:30 p.m.

Meanwhile, construction continued on the new Super Wal-Mart next door.

This story will be updated as more information becomes available.

http://www.vvdailypress.com/news/20160921/fire-breaks-out-at-barstow-wal-mart

Community disaster organization starts in Basin

Josh Allen, Hi-Desert Star
Posted: September 21, 2016 6:26 PM



Cheryl Nagy explains how the Morongo Basin COAD group will operate, during Wednesday's kick-off meeting at the community center.

YUCCA VALLEY — The initial meeting of the Morongo Basin Community Organizations Active in Disaster was held at the Yucca Valley Community Center Wednesday.

County Emergency Services Officer Cheryl Nagy discussed the role of different groups if the local COAD is activated in response to a future disaster.

The idea of the organization is to pool recourses and prepare for a disaster before it happens, as well as respond to public needs after a major episode.

While earthquakes are the major concern in the Morongo Basin, Nagy said, preparation for a catastrophic quake can get Basin residents ready for other emergency.

“Don’t think you can rely on everybody else, because you need to be ready to take care of your family and then others,” Nagy said. “The better prepared the community is as a whole, the quicker you can recover.”

Nagy discussed a cycle that included preparation before an impact event, first response after an event, recovery from the event and mitigation before preparing for the next event.

The communities involved in the MBCOAD include Yucca Valley, Twentynine Palms, Joshua Tree, Yucca Mesa, Pioneertown, Johnson Valley and Landers.

The presentation focused on the fact that Southern California is overdue for a major earthquake and Basin residents should prepare as though they will be cut off from recourses from surrounding communities.

“We need to prepare like Twentynine Palms Highway is inaccessible as well as Old Woman Springs Road,” Nagy said. “Other communities down the hill will have exhausted resources and it could be more than 72 hours before we get needed help.”

The initial meeting was designed to bring faith-based groups together, while future meetings will focus on bringing first responders and other personnel groups together to continue to expand the organization.

Meetings will be held monthly, although the date for the second meeting has not been set yet.

http://www.hidesertstar.com/news/article_92b9b92e-8063-11e6-a966-5f4f0e58bfbc.html

Firefighters rescue hiker hurt in closed Upper Big Falls

San Bernardino Sun
Posted: September 21, 2016, 6:30 PM



Firefighters carry a 25-year-old man out of closed Upper Big Falls after he was injured Wednesday while hiking at Southern California's highest year-round waterfall. (Courtesy of Brandon Barsugli)



A red-helmeted San Bernardino County firefighter, Misha Boiarski, attaches a rope and carabiner to a litter, held up by other firefighters, that holds a 25-year-old man injured Wednesday while hiking in closed Upper Big Falls. They're preparing to lift him from the base of the third falls where he fell near Forest Falls. (Courtesy of Brandon Barsugli)

San Bernardino County firefighters used ropes and a litter Wednesday to rescue a 25-year-old seriously hurt while hiking in closed Upper Big Falls, part of Southern California's highest year-round waterfall.

The man suffered head trauma, a potential wrist fracture and leg pain when he fell while trying to reach the base of the second falls near Forest Falls.

Eighteen firefighters from Forest Falls, Mentone and the Old Cajon hand crew hiked into the steep canyon after an injured hiker was reported at 12:45 p.m., said San Bernardino County Fire Department Capt. Tom McIntosh, who oversees the Forest Falls fire station and supervised the rescue.

Firefighters placed the man in a litter and used ropes to lift him 20 feet above where he'd fallen. Four to seven firefighters at a time took turns lowering and carrying him about 200 feet over steep terrain and boulders with two safety lines attached.

The ropes were removed about 50 feet above the start of the closure area. Firefighters then carried the litter about a quarter mile to a staging area.

An ambulance took the hiker to a hospital. Drivers said they'd try Redlands Community Hospital.

A San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department helicopter also responded, but the man's medical condition didn't require being hoisted and flown to a hospital, McIntosh said.

http://www.sbsun.com/general-news/20160921/firefighters-rescue-hiker-hurt-in-closed-upper-big-falls

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Morongo Valley CSD Gets Short Term Help. Looks to Long Term Solutions

Z107.7 News
Posted: September 21, 2016

The Morongo Valley Community Services District has been struggling to keep operational both the district and its aging main fire engine. At last night's board meeting, the public learned one of those issues appears to be solved, while the board took action that may address the other. Assignment reporter Mike Lipsitz has details …
In its audit and review last month, the Local Agency Formation Commission cautioned that while the district's finances were stable, they were not sustainable. Loss of their fire engine was one of three perilous scenarios outlined by LAFCO, any one of which could spell the end for the CSD. Well last night Morongo Valley Fire Chief Jock Johnson announced the District has been awarded a $420,000 federal grant for purchase of a new fire engine. It was great news, but tempered by a warning from Finance Committee Chair Johnny Tolbert. He warned, "If we do not come up with a way to bring more money into this district we are going to lose it. It's not spending," he said, "we just don't have it coming in." Left to grapple with a precarious financial outlook, the board also voted last night to seek proposals for takeover of Morongo Valley's fire protection services by Cal Fire and **County Fire.**

http://z1077fm.com/morongo-valley-csd-gets-short-term-help-looks-to-long-term-solutions/

‘We Need To Be Prepared’

Mary-Justine Lanyon, Mountain News
Posted: September 22, 2016, 6:00 AM



Chief Kat Opliger and Division Chief David Kelly used maps to show where the Pilot Fire burned, where fuel modification has been done and what areas of the mountain have burned over the past 110 years.

Pointing to a map of the mountain communities dating back to 1906, David Kelly, the division chief for the U.S. Forest Service, noted that “you can see most everything has burned. Fire is not an unusual member of our landscape.

“We need to be prepared to deal with it.”

And that, Chief Kelly said, is what the Forest Service and its cooperators have been doing—treating the fuel to remove the hazard.

“Look across the Rim (on the map),” he said. “That’s where we started. Fires start down the hill and burn up so that was a first priority.” He pointed to areas bearing a variety of colors, indicating when it was treated.

Chief Kelly joined a number of his fellow first responders at the September meeting of the Lake Arrowhead Municipal Advisory Council. Their purpose was to update residents on the status of both the Pilot and Blue Cut Fires and to share lessons they had learned.

“When a fire like this starts,” said Chief Kat Opliger of **San Bernardino County Fire**, “each agency has a responsibility in protecting a particular area. Our objectives are always centered around public and firefighter safety.”

“We’re all working together,” added Battalion Chief Travis Throgmartin of Cal Fire. He added that extreme fire behavior—rapid rates of spread and destruction—are “not the exception anymore. It’s becoming the norm.”

Throgmartin asked everyone to help the firefighters do their jobs. “Be set—have a plan. We make plans every day,” he said. “We ask you to do so. Evacuate when you need to.”
That leads to “go.”

“Leave the area,” Throgmartin said. “Allow us and our equipment to get into the fire area without delaying the response time.”

Opliger noted that they do not make the decision to order an evacuation—either voluntary or mandatory—lightly. “We make the decision collaboratively with our law enforcement partners and other agencies,” she said. “We look at the fire behavior, the topography, the wind. We assess how much time it will take to get folks out.

“Our mountain communities are riddled with small, narrow roads,” Chief Opliger added.
It was quickly apparent with the Pilot Fire, she said, that “it was a bigger issue than a couple of firefighters putting it out. The sheriff and Caltrans were on scene quickly. It was important we pull together to get people out safely.”

Captain Dale Gregory of the Twin Peaks sheriff’s station said his first fear when he took his assignment on the mountain was a big fire.

“I was shocked by the number of people who didn’t evacuate,” he said, adding he understands people get complacent if a previous fire hadn’t reached their house or if they don’t see smoke.
“I’ve learned more about fire in the last month than I ever thought I would,” the captain said. “Evacuation is a group effort.”

Gregory acknowledged that in a mandatory evacuation, each household makes the decision whether to leave or stay put. “If you leave,” he said, “you don’t have the opportunity to go back in. A voluntary evacuation is somewhat of a swinging door but it can suddenly change to mandatory. You need to be prepared to not go back.”

The captain said he heard a lot of excuses from people as to why they had to re-enter the Deer Lodge Park area when it was under mandatory evacuation during the Pilot Fire. “I had to threaten the penal code. If you go back in, you will go to jail. I don’t like to do that. My hat’s off to the CHP; they took the brunt of it, manning the closures.

“We ask people to leave not only so the fire department can get in and out but so we can. We don’t want to end up with gridlock,” Gregory said. The fire departments see things you can’t see. They know fire behavior.”

He added he was happy to report there was no looting during the Pilot Fire evacuation. “If we’re asking you to leave your home, we’re going to flood the area. All the stations in the valley sent up deputies so we would have high visibility in the mandatory evacuation area.”

They stopped people and questioned them, making sure they belonged in the area. “We try not to let anyone in who doesn’t belong,” Gregory said.

CHP Lt. Tel Preszler added that “if you decide to stay and firefighters are heading to the fire but have to assist you, there will be homes they can’t get to and save.

“Allow the fire departments, the sheriff and us to do our jobs to keep your homes safe,” Preszler said. He reiterated that “if you leave, you will not be allowed back in. I have given strict orders to my personnel. That’s a safety issue and we take it very seriously.”

The Blue Cut Fire, District Ranger Marc Stamer of the Forest Service said, “created some challenges for us as a community and the agencies.”

Terri Kasinga, the chief of public and media affairs for Caltrans District 8, noted they are part of the unified command. “We saw the fire 15 minutes after it started. It took off up the slope,” she said.

Kasinga said the only time they will shut down a state highway—as happened with I-15 during the Blue Cut Fire—is if something affects the safety of the traveling public.

With road closures possible during an emergency, Preszler urged all motorists to take the time to figure out an alternate route to regular destinations. “Try them once or twice,” he said. “Know how to get home by more than one route so if your regular route is closed you don’t panic.”

He also asked for the public’s help in moving over to the right and stopping if they see an emergency vehicle with its lights and sirens in operation. Then, Preszler said, “we can go through on the middle of the road.”

Stamer cautioned that residents can still expect to see smoke at the Pilot Fire site (see the related article in this week’s issue). Oak, he said, is burning on the interior.

http://www.mountain-news.com/news/article_3d286bbe-804e-11e6-931f-132be9f28ac0.html

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Pilot Fire Flareups Cause Alarm

Mike Harris, Mountain News
Posted: September 22, 2016, 6:00 AM



Mountain residents often see Forest Service helicopters dipping water from area lakes to respond to Pilot Fire flareups. Bob Sherman

Even though the 8,110-acre Pilot Fire was fully contained more than a month ago, smoke from a flare-up on Saturday morning caused some nervous residents to call 9-1-1 about a possible fire near the Pinnacles in Lake Arrowhead.

“We put a (Forest Service) helicopter up at first light and then inserted crews into the area,” Bob Poole, Forest Service public information officer, told the Mountain News. “We expect to see flare-ups (within the burn area perimeter), especially in the heavier fuels areas where fuels can smolder. The fire can get in the roots and, with heat and low humidity, it can flare and we saw that on Saturday.”

Using infrared equipment onboard spotter aircraft, crews found two flaring hotspots and then discovered a third.

Firefighters worked a quarter-acre flare-up within the fire perimeter with a Forest Service helicopter dipping water from Papoose Lake to help knock them out.

“They were back in the Grass Valley Creek drainage area, west of the Pinnacles,” he said about the hand crews. “It was a really inhospitable area for the crews trying to get there, and near vertical in some areas.”

Poole said the main flare-up was from the trunk of a tree which had burned, and the others were from snags.

The Forest Service currently is staffing its fire engines seven days a week, 24 hours a day. “And we are conducting nighttime infrared flights over the burn area to assist with detection,” he added.

Isolated pockets of vegetation within the Grass Valley Creek drainage may continue to flare up. While occasional smoke and flame may be visible, the area of concern is well within the fire perimeter and does not pose a threat to adjacent communities.

“Even though flare-ups are expected, we want the public to say something if they see something, and try to pinpoint the area where they see it.” Poole said.

Forest Service Heaps Peak Helicopter 534 and Forest Service Mill Creek Hotshots are assigned to the Pilot Fire incident.

The 8,110-acre Pilot Fire started at about 12:10 p.m. on Sunday Aug. 7, near the Miller Canyon OHV area off Highway 138. During the fire, the Forest Service was in unified command with Cal Fire, San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department and **County Fire.**

Other cooperating agencies included the California Highway Patrol, California Office of Emergency Services, San Bernardino County Office of Emergency Services, Bureau of Land Management, Caltrans and Southern California Edison.

http://www.mountain-news.com/news/article_cc451ea6-804d-11e6-b2c7-eb12db9ad805.html