



NEWS



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Man arrested on suspicion of arson in 250-acre Bryant fire in Mentone; Highway 38 reopens with escorts

Doug Saunders, The Press-Enterprise

Posted: August 3, 2017, 3:44 PM



Firefighters on Thursday afternoon were battling a vegetation fire north of Highway 138 near Plummers Lane in the Mentone area. Photo by Jennifer Cappucio Maher, Redlands Daily Facts/SCNG

MENTONE >> A Yucaipa man was arrested on suspicion of arson Thursday, Aug. 3, in connection with the 250-acre wildfire burning off Highway 38 in the Mentone area that prompted evacuations and the closure of part of the road.

By 8 p.m. Thursday, the evacuations remained in effect but motorists — with a CHP escort — were being allowed back on Highway 38. The fire was 5 percent contained, and 150 people from Cal Fire, the U.S. Forest Service and the **San Bernardino County Fire Department** were fighting it, according to Cal Fire.

San Bernardino County sheriff's deputies responding to the fire saw a vehicle in the area and stopped it. The driver, Jarrod Samra, 23, was detained. After an investigation and questioning, Samra was arrested on suspicion of arson and booked into Central Detention Center, a news release said. Bail was set at \$250,000.

Storms developed over the mountains on Thursday afternoon, but none of the rain reached the area that was burning.

The Bryant fire started shortly before 3 p.m. off Highway 38 behind the U.S. Forest Service station at Bryant Street.

Residents on Yucaipa Ridge were told to evacuate as the fire burned dangerously close to their homes.

Not everyone left.

"They're really getting on it with all of the air drops," 59-year-old Darrell Young said. "I hope they don't tell me I have to go because I'd rather stay and protect my home."

Other residents who were away when it started weren't able to get back.

Jolene Martinez and her two sons waited at the roadblock at Bryant Street and Highway 38.

“They aren’t letting me go to my home,” she said. “They said we could be waiting all night.”

<http://www.pe.com/2017/08/03/fire-chars-10-acres-in-mentone-highway-38-closed/>

Fire in the north bench of Yucaipa

Manny B. Sandoval, Rachael Gustuson, Yucaipa News Mirror

Posted: August 3, 2017



Photo by Doug Earnest

A fire broke at Bryant Street and Highway 38 on Thursday, Aug. 3 around 3 p.m. in the north bench area of Yucaipa. The fire is near Mill Creek Station. It's currently threatening structures. As of 4 p.m., 100 acres are burning at a moderate rate of spread.

Unified command includes US Forest Service, Cal Fire and **San Bernardino County Fire**.

Highway 38 and Bryant Street are closed. Please avoid the area. More information to come as it becomes available.

Update: Yucaipa Fire, San Bernardino County Fire, CAL Fire, and U.S. Forest service are all on the scene.

Highway 38 is closed.

120 acres have burned, zero percent contained.

3-4 homes have been evacuated.

City of Yucaipa is currently working with a local church to set up an evacuation center.

Update: 250 acres has burned.

The fire is five percent contained and burning east.

There are still three homes under evacuation.

150 personnel and aircraft are out on the scene.

There are two reported firefighter injuries, one serious and one minor.

Road closures are set from Garnet in Mentone, up to Bryant Street in Yucaipa. Road closures are also in place from Garnet/hwy38 up to Big Bear.

http://www.newsmirror.net/news/fire-in-the-north-bench-of-yucaipa/article_4eaa9994-789f-11e7-9de9-27bb0da7e355.html

Thunderstorms hit outside Temecula, Big Bear; more possible tomorrow

Brian Rokos and Ali Tadayon, The Press-Enterprise

Posted: August 2, 2017, 7:41 AM



Be prepared for another muggy Thursday.

And as the monsoonal moisture lingers, there's a chance for another round of thunderstorms like those through brought a fair amount of chaos to the Inland Empire on Tuesday and, to a lesser degree, Wednesday.

The above-average humidity Southern California residents experienced this week that is more characteristic of southern Florida is expected to stick around another day, the National Weather Service said.

Expect a slight chance of thunderstorms in the Inland valleys and a good chance in the mountains Thursday, said Brandt Maxwell, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service. There could be locally heavy rain, he added.

All of western Riverside and San Bernardino counties remain under a flash flood watch through 10 p.m. Thursday.

By Friday, however, drier air is expected to move in. Temperatures should stay in the upper 90s for the foreseeable future.

A rural area southeast of Temecula got the worst of Wednesday's storms, receiving more than 2 inches of rain in a short period of time Wednesday afternoon.

A segment of Highway 79 in the community of Aguanga washed out, and flooding, mud and debris caused vehicles to get stuck at the 79 and 371, according to a California Highway Patrol incident log.

Highway 79 was closed and Caltrans was called out to clear the road. Crews got one lane open by evening.

As the flash-flood warning associated with that storm expired at 4 p.m., another thunderstorm near Big Bear Lake was intensifying and more frequent lightning strikes were being seen, according to the Weather Service.

Though it wasn't showing up in the official Weather Service data, a radar analysis showed that area may also have gotten over 2 inches of rain.

Elsewhere, rainfall totals were under 0.2 inches, and some areas like Corona, Murrieta and Rancho Cucamonga remained dry.

Meanwhile Wednesday, some people were still cleaning up from Tuesday's afternoon storms that flooded roads, downed power lines, dropped hail and toppled trees into houses.

The storms knocked out electricity in several areas of the Inland Empire. The lights were on for all but a few dozen customers by Wednesday evening. Storm-related outages were reported to Southern California Edison in Jurupa Valley, San Bernardino, Highland, Grand Terrace and Lake Mathews.

In Tuesday's storms, areas hit especially hard included Lake Elsinore, Mead Valley and northern San Bernardino.

"It definitely made a mess," said Lake Elsinore Senior Management Analyst Nicole Dailey, referring to a large amount of debris in the streets from a "microburst" over the city.

The National Weather Service even received reports of a funnel cloud over San Bernardino. (To be considered a tornado, a funnel cloud has to make contact with the ground.)

The wind was so strong that two flagpoles were bent in half along the outfield fence at Al Houghton Stadium in San Bernardino, site of the Little League Western Region Headquarters, according to Assistant West Region Director Brian Pickering.

"Also damaged were tents set up in 'Tent City' beyond the outfield fence at Houghton Stadium in preparation for next week's 47th Annual Little League Western Region Baseball Tournament," Pickering said in an email.

San Bernardino County Fire Department spokeswoman Tracey Martinez said firefighters responded to several small vegetation fires and managed to put them out before they became a big problem.

In Riverside, Fire Department Battalion Chief Todd Gooch said things were tamer than he expected Tuesday. Though there were some reports of downed power lines due to wind, he didn't know of any major flooding in the city.

<http://www.pe.com/2017/08/02/more-than-200-in-san-bernardino-highland-still-without-power-in-wake-of-tuesdays-stormy-weather/>

Classic treasures destroyed: Local couple looking for answers after arsonists destroy classic cars

Paola Baker, Daily Press

Posted: August 4, 2017, 8:28 AM



Classic cars and trucks remain on a property after they were destroyed by a June fire in Oro Grande. The fire was determined to be arson, according to authorities, and the owners of the property are offering a reward for any help in catching the perpetrators. [James Quigg, Daily Press]

ORO GRANDE — One local couple is offering a reward to find the people responsible for an arson fire that destroyed almost 20 classic cars in June.

Dan Stillmunks said he and his wife, Jo, were shocked and devastated when they received a call from a San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department deputy on June 29. The deputy informed them that a steel building on their property in Oro Grande, which housed 17 classic "muscle cars," was destroyed in a blaze that morning.

"The fire was suspicious from the get-go," Stillmunks said. "[The deputy] asked if I stored flammables in my steel building. I emphatically said, 'No.'"

Sheriff's spokeswoman Jodi Miller said **San Bernardino County Fire Department** firefighters responded to the building, in the 15100 block of Elderberry Drive, at 6:09 a.m. that morning after receiving reports of black smoke in the area. Two large carports on the property, which contained the classic cars, were burned in the blaze.

Sheriff's deputies were requested by the firefighters shortly afterward. They arrived at 9:25 a.m. that morning, Miller said, and began to probe the cause of the blaze.

"Through investigation, it was determined to be arson," Miller said. She declined to provide more details, citing the ongoing investigation.

According to Stillmunks, the blaze left an estimated \$600,000 in damages. The Hesperia couple paid cash to purchase the Oro Grande property eight years ago and never had problems there until recently.

Stillmunks said several plastic gallon containers, which he believes were used to pour gasoline and ignite the building, were found inside the building once the fire was extinguished.

“This crime was premeditated,” Stillmunks said, noting that the perpetrators cut the lock on the fence around his property to gain entry. They also cut holes into the building’s wooden side walls, which eventually burned in the blaze.

Several of the Stillmunks’ classic cars, including a 1967 Ford Mustang GT with its original paint job, a 1972 Dodge Challenger, and a 1966 Chevy S10 pickup truck, among other treasures, were completely destroyed.

Each car had new or restored parts, as Stillmunks said he hoped to display the vehicles in a repair shop he was thinking of opening on the property, which is close to National Trails Highway.

“We were thinking of having some sort of Route 66 display in the shop with them,” Stillmunks said. “Jo and I are heartbroken. Some cars we’ve had since 1971.”

The Stillmunks are offering an \$1,000 reward for anyone who may have information that leads to identification and arrest of the arsonists, while the Sheriff’s Bomb and Arson Detail continues to investigate the incident.

Anyone with information is urged to contact the Sheriff’s Department at 909-890-4840. Persons wishing to remain anonymous may contact the We-Tip Hotline at 1-800-782-7463 or online at www.wetip.com.

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/news/20170804/classic-treasures-destroyed-local-couple-looking-for-answers-after-arsonists-destroy-classic-cars>

San Bernardino School shooting hit first responders harder than other incidents

Doug Saunders, San Bernardino Sun

Posted: August 4, 2017, 9:00 AM



Officer Rob Snyder speaks about his experience responding to the North Park Elementary School shooting during an interview at the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department Headquarters in San Bernardino on Thursday, April 20, 2017. FILE PHOTO

SAN BERNARDINO >> "Walking in the building, you could still smell the gunpowder," said San Bernardino police Officer Robert Snyder.

He and dozens of first responders had raced to North Park Elementary School that sunny spring day where they found a horrifying scene inside Classroom B1. A teacher's estranged husband had shot her and two children before killing himself.

Snyder had seen other tragedies during his police career, but this one deeply affected him.

"For me, this was worse than the terror attack at the (Inland Regional Center) because of the kids," he said. "When I arrived on scene at North Park, I immediately put on body armor and was directed to the classroom."

Snyder went directly to the side of 8-year-old Jonathan Martinez, who had been shot in the head by Cedric Anderson, of Riverside. Anderson also fatally shot his wife, special education teacher Karen Smith.

"Jonathan was still breathing, although he had significant injuries, and I just didn't leave his side," Snyder said. "Once the helicopter landed, I stayed with him all the way to the hospital."

The boy didn't make it: He was pronounced dead at Loma Linda University Medical Center almost immediately after he arrived.

"It was hard for everyone," Snyder said, tears welling in his eyes. "Most of us, including the hospital staff, are parents, so something like this is extremely difficult to deal with."

SAVING LIVES

The crew that flew in and landed on school grounds to take victims to the hospital is part of an aviation team made up of **San Bernardino County firefighters** and sheriff's deputies.

"We heard the call come out over the radio and immediately went airborne," said Cpl. Mike Ells, the crew chief. "Once the information came out, as a crew, we just loaded up and launched."

The rescue team isn't required to wait to be dispatched, Ells said.

“We hear the need for help, and we just go,” he said. “We go on a lot of calls that are just plain bad.”

Experience and training keep team members steady under pressure.

Flight Paramedics Jennifer DeShon and Jason Williams were calm and steady as they worked together that day, Ells said.

“They were focused on saving lives,” he explained.

San Bernardino County District Attorney’s Office Victim Services Chief Flerida Alarcon and her team quickly made their way to the scene. Tagging along were Lupe and Dozer, 4-year-old black Labrador retrievers, who are the main components of the DA’s Special Victims K-9 Unit.

“We knew the children of North Park were going to be removed from the school grounds to an off-site area where they could be reunited with their parents,” Alarcon said. “They were greeted by Dozer and Lupe when they arrived.”

Students came up and petted the dogs, which are used to calm victims after incidents such as the murder-suicide at North Park school.

“Watching those students surround Lupe and Dozer and petting and loving them gives an added purpose to what we do,” Alarcon added.

CRITICAL INCIDENTS

San Bernardino County has had more than its share of high profile incidents in recent years from the manhunt for rogue ex-LAPD cop Christopher Dorner in Big Bear to the terror attack at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino and, most recently, the shooting at North Park.

“It’s a sad state of affairs when we get very good at responding to critical incidents,” Sheriff John McMahon said. “The only way you get good at it is when you have a lot of experience dealing with critical incidents like that.”

DeShon, who’s worked as a paramedic with San Bernardino County Fire for more than 20 years, said such incidents keep her committed to her job.

“This unit deals with the worst of the worst incidents, and we debrief after each mission,” she said. “But helping people is why I wanted to get into this.”

Finding an outlet to relieve the stress is important to the police and firefighters.

“Going to the gym helps me deal with what we see out there every day,” Snyder said. “After the North Park incident, I still had my kid’s soccer game to get to. I still have to be able to function as a loving parent. But, honestly, that was an extremely tough day.”

Alarcon, whose team works with victims of violent crimes, including children who have been sexually assaulted and abused, said team members can seek help from mental health professionals if needed, but they also debrief daily by sitting around and talking things out.

They did that after North Park.

“Afterwards, we all sat together to talk about what happened,” Alarcon said. “Many of us were still in a state of shock, but we had to be strong for others.”

<http://www.dailybulletin.com/general-news/20170804/san-bernardino-school-shooting-hit-first-responders-harder-than-other-incidents>

Fire destroys old Katz Restaurant and Cocktail Lounge in Barstow

Daily Press

Posted: August 4, 2017, 9:43 AM



A commercial structure fire gutted the old Katz Restaurant and Cocktail Lounge early Friday morning. [Photo courtesy of Barstow Fire Protection District]

BARSTOW — A commercial structure fire destroyed the old Katz Restaurant and Cocktail Lounge early Friday morning, authorities said.

Reported at 2:07 a.m. in the 100 block of W. Main St. across from Barstow Tire & Brake, the blaze gutted the building.

Barstow Fire Protection District Chief Jamie Williams told the Daily Press that 21 fire personnel were on scene to battle the blaze and it took 90 minutes to get the fire under control with assistance from the Marine Corps Logistic Base Fire Department, Apple Valley Fire Protection District, **San Bernardino County Fire Department** and Ft. Irwin Fire Department.

No injuries were reported, according to Williams, and crews were still on scene as of 6:30 a.m. Friday.

The cause of the fire is unknown at this time.

<http://www.desertdispatch.com/news/20170804/fire-destroys-old-katz-restaurant-and-cocktail-lounge-in-barstow>