



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Daniel R. Munsey
Fire Chief / Fire Warden



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CONTACT: Mike McClintock, Battalion Chief / Public Information Officer
(909) 677-7413, MMcClintock@sbcfire.org

Joshua Tree Fire Burns 150 Acres

Date/Time: Monday, May 11, 2020, 11:27 am
Location: Area of La Contenta x 29 Palms Highway, Joshua Tree
Incident: Vegetation Fire

Summary: At 11:27am San Bernardino County Fire crews were dispatched to a reported vegetation fire in the area of 29 Palms Highway & La Contenta Road in Joshua Tree. Units arrived in the area within six minutes to find smoke showing from a large plot of land Southeast of the intersection.

Crews made access to find 2-3 acres of medium fuels with a moderate to rapid rate of spread. Strong and erratic winds quickly pushed the fire into dry, receptive fuels. Arriving crews anchored the fire and started putting in hose lays to limit spread. Additional crews were quickly requested due to the size and rate of spread. The fire continued to burn at a rapid rate of spread Northeast towards 29 Palms Highway and Joshua Tree Memorial Park. Initial priorities were keeping fire South of the highway and West of the Memorial Park. The highway was closed due to fire equipment, heavy smoke and proximity of the fire. Despite strong winds & an active fire, crews successfully held the fire at the highway. Engines also kept the fire from damaging nearby buildings on the Memorial Park property. A San Bernardino County Fire bulldozer and inmate hand crews worked on containment lines to keep the fire from jumping into nearby receptive fuels. Crews continued to work into the late afternoon and evening on mop-up operations and line construction. By 7:45 the fire was 100% contained and held at approximately 150 acres. Crews will continue to monitor the fire and patrol the perimeter for hot spots.

Early on in the fire 911 callers stated they saw an adult male leaving the area where the fire started. San Bernardino County Sheriff Deputies and Fire Investigators responded and searched the area, finding the person responsible for starting the fire. A 43-year-old adult from Joshua was arrested for unlawfully causing the fire. He is being held on \$25,000 bail. Anyone with information related to this investigation is asked to contact the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department, Morongo Basin Station at (760)366-4175 or San Bernardino County Office of the Fire Marshal at 909-386-4800. Anyone wishing to remain anonymous may contact We-Tip at 1-888-78-CRIME.

The 150-acre fire burned on Mojave Desert Land Trust (MDLT) land in unincorporated Joshua Tree. The 623-acre property features thousands of Joshua trees and other native plants, as well as desert tortoises, burrowing owls, desert kit foxes, and badgers. San Bernardino County personnel worked closely with MDLT staff to establish a plan for conserving land while providing containment lines to ensure no further spread. With high winds forecasted for the coming days, containment lines were a high priority. Line construction by bulldozer was kept to a minimum to minimize impact.

San Bernardino County Fire responded with (9) Engines, (2) Hand Crews, (2) Water Tenders, (2) Fire Investigators and (3) Chief Officers. CalFire assisted with one Engine. Joshua Tree National Park responded with an Engine and Chief Officer. Combat Center FD assisted with station coverage. Strong interagency cooperation made a positive impact on keeping the fire South of 29 Palms Highway and out of structures. CHP & Cal-Trans provided a road closure & traffic control while crews worked on the fire. Thanks to all our public safety partners for your help.

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