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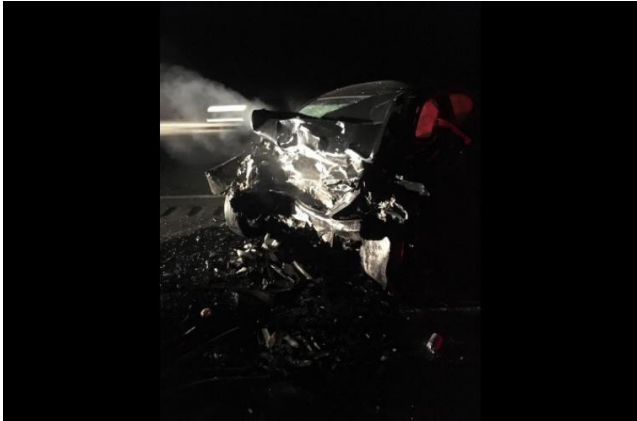
News Headlines 3/20/2018

- Two people killed in head-on collision on Highway 395 early Tuesday
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Two people killed in head-on collision on Highway 395 early Tuesday

Kevin Trudgeon , Daily Press

Posted: March 20, 2018 8:23 a.m.



Two people were killed in a head-on collision on Highway 395 early Tuesday Morning. [Submitted photo]

ADELANTO — Two people were killed in a head-on collision on Highway 395 early Tuesday morning, authorities said.

The crash was reported at 4:37 a.m. near Colusa Road, according to **San Bernardino County Fire** Department spokesman Eric Sherwin.

“It looks like it was a two-vehicle collision and the first unit on scene called it an extrication assignment, saying parties were trapped,” Sherwin said.

That call was eventually canceled as the two people, who were the solo occupants in each vehicle according to California Highway Patrol officials, suffered fatal injuries and were pronounced deceased at the scene.

The collision shut down the No. 1 southbound lane of Highway 395, according to Caltrans District 8 officials, and authorities were still at the scene as of 8:15 a.m.

The cause of the crash is still under investigation.

This story is developing and will be updated as more information becomes available.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20180320/two-people-killed-in-head-on-collision-on-highway-395-early-tuesday>

Hostile workplace: Harassment from management rampant at local AMR division, union says

Paola Baker, Daily Press

Posted: March 19, 2018, 6:16 p.m.



VICTORVILLE — Amidst multiple alleged incidents, local emergency medical professionals are concerned by what they see as a lack of response and push back from an ambulance provider here for those willing to come forward while protecting the accused.

Severe issues of harassment by management staff at American Medical Response (AMR) Victorville division were allegedly brought to light by the local branch of the International Association of EMTs and Paramedics Union, or IAEP Local R12-152, on Monday.

“We’ve been dealing with this for a very long time,” Local R12-152 vice president and AMR Emergency Medical Technician Michael Romero said. “No one wants to work here because of management.”

In a statement Monday and in interviews with the Daily Press, the union outlined several alleged incidents of harassment and misconduct — such as inappropriate jokes, remarks about sexual orientation, and rampant physical and verbal abuse — by supervisors toward employees dating as far back as 2010.

The most recent incident occurred in mid-February, with a pregnant employee reporting to union leaders that a supervisor had struck her on the back of the head.

“She told the supervisor, ‘That is assault,’ and the supervisor just laughed and said, ‘Oh no, it’s battery,’” Romero said. “Management thinks they can do whatever they want and think everything is just a big joke.”

Another report alleges an employee was “brought to tears after enduring verbal abuse and intimidating behavior” by the same supervisor. AMR launched an investigation into the claims in mid-February.

The investigation was closed by March 9, according to the union, and the supervisor in question was rumored to have been promoted to a different division.

“We don’t know if they’re taking action or plan on taking action,” Local R12-152 Union President Adam Verduzco said. “And the problem is, they say the investigation is closed, but the behavior continues.”

AMR Director of Communications and Government Relations Jason Sorrick said the company could not disclose details of an internal investigation, unless the employee in question is terminated.

“We thoroughly investigated the union’s complaints, and have issued corrective action in those cases where the facts substantiated the claim,” Sorrick said. “AMR takes all accusations of harassment seriously and we work hard to ensure a safe working environment for our employees.”

Yet the union claims nothing is done to the alleged perpetrators, with many remaining at their posts, oftentimes in close proximity to their supposed victims.

“We still have to deal with these people, and then they turn it around on the victim,” said Romero, who claimed he was sexually harassed by a supervisor.

Retaliation from management is also a factor, according to Romero, Verduzco, and several other employees at AMR’s Victorville division— with some taken to task for seemingly minor infractions, such as taking too much time to fill out incident reports, according to several employees who wished to remain anonymous.

“We’ve never had a problem with [incident reports] before,” one employee said. “It just feels like they’re coming after us and grasping at straws to try to bully us.”

Some spoke about how management staff encourages an environment where bullying from the top down is commonplace, exacerbated by the company “dragging their feet” when it comes to correcting management’s actions.

“There are separate rules for management, which are less harsh than for employees,” AMR employee and former IAEP president Eric Van Sant said.

Yet Sorrick strongly denied many of these claims, stating that many of the union’s allegations were made “years after the alleged event occurred, which limited our ability to validate the facts of the case.”

“Unlike the union, AMR would never send out a press release or use a media campaign in an effort to shame an employee because we did not agree with the outcome of an investigation,” Sorrick said.

The process AMR uses to investigate and discipline management is the same as the protocol used for non-management staff, Sorrick said.

“The fact is, AMR has a legal obligation to ensure a fair and impartial review of harassment allegations, and that applies to both the accuser and the accused,” Sorrick said. “The union’s actions in this case are not only unprofessional; we believe they will likely negatively impact our ability to investigate claims in the future.”

But any future action by AMR may be too little too late for the local IAEP branch.

“It’s awful that AMR thinks they can get away with it,” Romero said. “EMTs and paramedics serve the community every day, and we love what we do. We can’t let them win.”

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/news/20180319/hostile-workplace-harassment-from-management-rampant-at-local-amr-division-union-says>

Hesperia City Council to discuss annexation of fire protection district

Rene Ray De La Cruz, Daily Press

Posted: March 19, 2018 at 3:12

HESPERIA — The City Council will conduct a public hearing on the annexation of the Hesperia Fire Protection District (HFPD) into the **San Bernardino County Fire** Protection District-North Desert Service Zone.

Hesperia submitted an application for annexation to the Local Agency Formation Committee (LAFCO) in March 2017, with the city recently receiving a final report on the proposed annexation that would see the county taking over the functions of fire, emergency medical response and ambulance services.

“This is just one step in a very lengthy process,” Councilman Paul Russ told the Daily Press. “We’re actually updating the public on LAFCO’s report and hearing their feedback. Our main focus will be the property tax revenue portion of the agreement between the city and county.”

During the meeting, the city attorney, manager and finance director will make important distinctions about the conditions under which the city is agreeing to the annexation, said city spokeswoman Rachel Molina

“A yes vote” by the Council does not complete the annexation of the district, but rather moves the annexation along in the LAFCO process, she added.

Both the Council and San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors must approve the final annexation before it moves to LAFCO, which could “approve, reject or modify” the agreement, Russ said.

In the proposed agreement, County Fire estimates that in addition to the \$3.5 million in property tax revenue transfers from Hesperia, there will be revenues of just over \$5.3 million available to fund services beginning in the next fiscal year. The cost of providing services to the city will be approximately \$11.2 million, which equates to a funding gap of \$2.4 million.

LAFCO had expressed concern on the financial sustainability of the proposed reorganization that would provide the same level of service to residents of Hesperia.

The proposed action by the Council would approve the property tax sharing agreement and pass-through revenue sharing agreement between the city and county. The agreement would allow for a portion of this revenue to return to the city to pay for legacy inactive California Public Employees’ Retirement System (CalPERS) obligations owed by the HFPD to former employees.

The city had budgeted just over \$2.5 million in the current fiscal year for its CalPERS obligation, with about \$600,000 allocated for 43 retirees of the HFPD, city staff reported.

The current total CalPERS amount owed this year by Hesperia has nearly doubled since fiscal year 2005-06 when the city paid out just over \$1 million.

The HFPD would transfer approximately \$3.8 million in the agreement, with nearly \$3.4 million going to the county and the remainder to the city.

“This is a win-win-win situation for the city, the county and the taxpayers, who won’t see a tax increase if the annexation is approved,” said Russ, who added it is possible an additional fire station would be opened in the annexation.

During the approval process, the Council and county opted not to approve an annexation agreement that would have placed the city into Fire District No. 5, which would have meant a near \$150 increase in property taxes per lot, Russ said.

A determination of the property tax revenue transfer associated with the proposed organization must occur prior to issuance of the Certificate of Filing by LAFCO.

The Council meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday at Hesperia City Hall, 9700 Seventh Ave. For more information, visit www.cityofhesperia.us or call 760-947-1000.

<http://www.vvdaily.com/news/20180319/hesperia-city-council-to-discuss-annexation-of-fire-protection-district>

Hesperia City Council meeting: What to watch for

Rene Ray De La Cruz, Daily Press

Posted: March 19, 2018, 4:46 p.m.

HESPERIA — The City Council will discuss several agenda items during its bi-monthly meeting scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Tuesday.

- A public hearing as it pertains to the approval of the annexation of the Hesperia Fire Protection District into the **San Bernardino County Fire** Protection District-North Desert Service Zone, with the county overseeing the functions of fire, emergency medical response and ambulance services.
- A second reading and adoption of several amendments as they relate to the Hesperia Municipal Code related to commercial cannabis activities. One issue includes the removal of a distance requirement from residences within the cannabis zone.
- The introduction and first reading of an ordinance to include the city of Hesperia Local Agency Management Program regarding the use of onsite wastewater treatment systems.
- Direction to staff on supporting the 2018 Victor Valley Bicycle Tour.
- The approval of a one-time purchase from Core & Main for piping and materials needed for the Pipeline Water Line Replacement Program Construction in the not-to-exceed amount of \$101,405.
- A contract award to Match Corporation for the CDBG Street Improvement project for a total construction budget of \$1,560,000, which includes a 10 percent contingency.

- An amendment to the existing professional services agreement with Geocon West, Inc. for on-call geotechnical engineering services by increasing the agreement to \$150,000 in order to have adequate funding.
- An amendment to the Capital Improvement Program Budget and the appropriation of an additional \$100,000 from CDBG Housing.
- An amendment in the amount of \$15,000 to the current \$65,000 contract with Earth Development to continue to conduct abatements as needed through the end of current the fiscal year.
- The approval of a two-year agreement with Prudential Overall Supply to provide uniform services in the total not-to-exceed amount of \$52,139.
- The adoption of the 2017 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Update and the authorization of staff to make future non-substantive revisions to the plan.
- The adoption of a resolution as it relates to the Hesperia Performance Appraisals and Honors Program. It would clarify performance appraisal procedures and establish a system for exceptional employees at the top of their salary range to receive recognition.
- A resolution to deny a general plan amendment that would have allowed Lake Arrowhead Community Services District to construct a solar farm on 4.7 gross acres located on the east side of Arrowhead Lake Road, south of Hesperia Lake Park

The Council meeting is scheduled to begin at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday at Hesperia City Hall, 9700 Seventh Ave. For more information, visit www.cityofhesperia.us or call 760-947-1000.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20180319/hesperia-city-council-meeting-what-to-watch-for>