



NEWS



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CLEAN-UP CONTINUES AFTER STORM CAUSES MAJOR HAVOC IN MORONGO BASIN

Staff Writer, Z107.7 News

Posted: October 15, 2018



Alita Van Vliet photo

A storm that surprised everyone with its intensity and duration brought havoc to the Morongo Basin Friday night and Saturday. Thunder, lightning, rain, and hail started about 10:30 p.m. Friday and by 11:15, first responders started getting calls asking for help. **County Fire** Battalion Chief Scott Tuttle said firefighters received 13 water-related calls: from motorists who were stranded in flash flooding and mud flows on the highway; residents whose houses were being inundated with water; and concerning washed out roads.

One of the first calls for help was at 11:30 p.m. Friday at Hillview and Highway 62 in Joshua Tree for a red Volkswagen Beetle that had become trapped in the mud flow, with mud up to the car's windows.

A Morongo Basin Ambulance sent out on a water rescue also got stuck.

Tuttle said all the occupants from all the stranded vehicles managed to get out safely. Highway 62 was covered with mud and debris up to four to five feet deep near Hallee Road.

The California Highway Patrol shut down Highway 62 in Joshua Tree about midnight due to the flash flooding, and the highway remained closed until about 5:15 Saturday evening as Caltrans brought in a skip loader to move the mud off the highway.

Managing editor Tami Roleff says the storm disrupted more than just roads, though...

More than 2300 customers of Southern California Edison were without power Friday night and Saturday due to the storm. And Friday's storm also interrupted the water supply to some customers of Joshua Basin Water District. The water district was able to restore water service Saturday evening.

The water is safe to drink and no special precautions are needed.

Friday's storm also caused major road damage in Joshua Tree National Park.

Power and internet services are out in many park buildings and multiple closures are in effect due to severe flood damage.

Rangers will be on duty to answer questions, but some visitor services facilities will be closed until power is restored.

All dirt roads in the park are closed. In the Cottonwood area, inbound and outbound roads, the visitor center and campground are all closed. Rangers anticipate that the Cottonwood area will be closed for clean-up for several days. The park's Twitter feed will provide ongoing updates.

The Twentynine Palms High School football team, returning from its victorious game against Desert Mirage High School, spent the night at Denny's Restaurant before moving to the Yucca Valley High School multi-purpose room for breakfast.

County Fire Battalion Chief Scott Tuttle and park rangers remind residents to "turn around, don't drown." Don't attempt to drive through flowing water, as there's no way to know if the road may have been washed out, or drive through mud and debris flows.

<http://z1077fm.com/storm-causes-major-havoc-in-morong-basin/>

Homicide: 1 killed, another critically injured in Hesperia double shooting

Staff Writer, Victor Valley News

Posted: October 14, 2018



(Hugo Valdez, Victor Valley News)

HESPERIA, Calif. (VVNG.com) — Authorities are investigating a fatal double shooting that left one man dead and the second fighting for his life Saturday night.

It happened on October 13, 2018, at about 9:00 pm, when Hesperia Sheriff's Station deputies were dispatched to an apartment complex in the 11500 block of Hesperia Road in Hesperia reference a shooting and located two gunshot victims.

Firefighters with **San Bernardino County Fire** responded and pronounced one male victim deceased at the scene. A second male victim was found suffering from a gunshot wound to his chest, radio traffic reported.

The surviving victim was transported by ground ambulance to the helipad at Desert Valley Hospital and subsequently airlifted to an out of area trauma center via helicopter H325. His condition remains unknown at this time.

Residents who live in the area said they heard several gunshots followed by a helicopter and multiple police units surrounding the apartment complex.

By the time deputies arrived at the incident the suspect had already fled the location.

A sheriff's officer at the scene told Victor Valley News no arrests have been made but they know who the suspect is. However, additional details regarding the shooting are unknown at this time.

Detectives with the Sheriff's Specialized Investigations Division-Homicide Detail responded and continue to remain at the scene conducting the investigation as of 10:00 am, Sunday, October 14, 2018.

A stretch of Hesperia Road between Sycamore and Eucalyptus Streets will remain closed for an unknown amount of time.

The name of the deceased has not been released, however, the family told Victor Valley News he was a hard-working father who leaves behind two young children, one born just 2-weeks ago.

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

<https://www.vvng.com/homicide-1-killed-another-critically-injured-in-hesperia-double-shooting/>

Hesperia veteran welcomed to new 'Home for Hero'

Rene Ray De La Cruz, Daily Press

Posted: October 12, 2018, 3:11 pm



Members of the **San Bernardino County Fire** Department congratulate Army veteran Mitchell Melott, who was gifted with a new home in Hesperia courtesy of Building Homes and Chase bank. [Rene Ray De La Cruz, Daily Press]

HESPERIA — A giant American flag swayed in the breeze over one neighborhood as a Purple Heart recipient and his family received a new mortgage-free home.

Hesperia Mayor Bill Holland and Mayor Pro Tem Rebekah Swanson joined dozens of community leaders on Wednesday as the nonprofit Building Homes for Heroes and Chase bank surprised former Army Sgt. First Class Mitchell Melott and his family with the home.

Building Homes for Heroes, in partnership with J.P. Morgan Chase & Co., gifted the two-story dwelling to the Melott family as officials of the City of Hesperia, local contractors and members of the **San Bernardino County Sheriff's** and **Fire** departments joined in the celebration that began on the driveway and spilled onto the cul-de-sac.

Melott's wife, Brandi, and their children, Malori and Samuel, were surprised when they were driven to their home, which was surrounded by an army of well-wishers and an aerial ladder fire truck that suspended a large American flag over their home.

Special Assistant Don Holland with First District Supervisor Robert Lovingood's office said those gathered "really don't know what soldiers" go through when they are deployed overseas, "particularly in combat zones."

“Our attempts to say thank you are so genuine and heartfelt,” Holland said. “It’s so wonderful that we have so many companies, corporations and individuals who supported Homes for Heroes. So this is a small way for the community and the country to say thank you for your sacrifice and service to this country.”

“Thank you for coming out,” said Melott, who described himself as a low-key guy before introducing his immediate family and family that was seated in the audience. “Julius is my other son who is in the Army in Korea.”

During the event, Melott shared his story of being severely wounded while deployed in Iraq nearly 10 years ago. While en route to a patrol base, Melott’s armored vehicle stopped in Mosul to check the location of a previous IED blast.

When Melott dismounted, an IED exploded, resulting in multiple traumatic injuries, including collarbone fractures, a severe facial laceration and his left leg being crushed under the weight of his vehicle. After several failed attempts to salvage his leg, Melott would later undergo two surgeries that resulted in an above-the-knee amputation.

Melott was later awarded the Bronze Star Medal, a Purple Heart and many other honors and accolades. He served for over 17 years before honorably retiring.

During the ceremony, Melott received the keys to his new home, along with a special ceremonial door knocker from the City of Hesperia.

“This is truly remarkable, your service is not unknown and not unrecognized and most certainly appreciated,” Holland told Melott. “Rather than a plaque or certificate, what we wanted was for your home to have a little personalization so we have an engraved door knocker for you to let everyone know you’re now in Hesperia.”

Wearing leather vests arrayed with military-themed patches, veterans Luis Ranero, 39, and Robert Tolliver, 69, with the Combat Vets Association embraced Melott before entering his house for the first time.

Built in 2006, the family’s new 3,500-square-foot home includes new landscaping, appliances, new flooring, a backyard rock fountain and an indoor elevator.

Building Homes for Heroes is a national nonprofit that builds and modifies homes to gift mortgage-free to wounded veterans and their families. Since 2006, the nonprofit has given homes and new opportunities to more than 150 families across the nation.

Since 2011, Chase has donated over 980 mortgage-free homes to veterans and their families through the Home Awards Program partnership with nonprofits such as Building Homes for Heroes.

To learn more about Building Homes for Heroes, visit www.buildinghomesforheroes.org.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20181012/hesperia-veteran-welcomed-to-new-home-for-hero>

Brush Fire Burns Through 50 Acres Just North of CSU San Bernardino; No Structures Threatened

Marissa Wenzke, KTLA 5 News

Posted: October 12, 2018, 3:58 p.m.

A brush fire that broke out just north of the California State University, San Bernardino campus burned through 50 acres Friday afternoon as two people were detained in the area, according to authorities.

At 2:23 p.m., **San Bernardino County fire** officials said the blaze had burned through just 3 acres. About 40 minutes later, fire officials announced the fire had grown to 50 acres and was 0 percent contained.

Just before 6 p.m., officials said the blaze — dubbed the North Park Fire — had reached 25 percent containment. Two hours later, it was 48 percent contained.

Two people were detained as the wildfire continued to burn, according to CSU San Bernardino police. But the individuals were released after being questioned, officials with the San Bernardino National Forest said.

CSU San Bernardino officials said there was no threat to the campus and the fire was located behind Murillo Family Observatory, a teaching and research observatory of the college that sits on Badger Hill in a northern area of campus.

While officials said the wildfire was also not a threat to nearby structures, they said it was spreading at a "rapid rate" as it continued to travel north. It was burning through medium to heavy vegetation that's extremely dry, officials said.

The cause of the blaze remains under investigation as more than 150 personnel battled it on the ground, fire officials said. Two helicopters and two air tankers were also being used to assist their efforts.

Officials with the San Bernardino National Forest and San Bernardino County Fire Department were both taking part in the firefighting efforts.

<https://ktla.com/2018/10/12/brush-fire-burns-through-50-acres-just-north-of-csu-san-bernardino-2-people-detained/>

FP-5 fire tax tops agenda at MAC meeting

Staff Writer, Daily Press

Posted: October 15, 2018, 8:49 am

The Lucerne Valley/Johnson Valley Municipal Advisory Council will vote at its Thursday meeting to approve a letter to the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors opposing the FP-5 fire tax, which **County Fire** is proposing for parcel owners in all unincorporated parts of the county.

The Mac Board is unanimous in its opposition to the annual tax of \$157.26 per parcel. In the letter, the board calls FP-5 an "unfair tax" and said it could lead to more distress for residents in regions like Lucerne and Johnson valleys.

"The consensus here," said the board in the letter: "You promote more reduction of property values, more abandonment of properties, an intolerable burden on many of our neighbors, and for what?"

MAC Board members also will ask the Supervisors if an audit has been conducted of the Fire Authority's budget and how its funds are spent?

There is only one other action item that will be up for a vote at the MAC Board meeting, which is set for 5 p.m. Thursday at the Lucerne Valley Community Center, 33187 Highway 247 East, Lucerne Valley. The Board also will vote on whether or not to endorse the Community Plan letter submitted to the Planning Department by a coalition of organizations and people.

Also on the agenda are reports from representatives of San Bernardino County Sheriff John McMahon, San Bernardino County Fire Department Chief Mark Hartwig, as well as from representatives of Third District Supervisor James Ramos, CALFIRE, and CSA 29.

MAC Chair Roger Peterson will provide an update from the Land Use Committee, while MAC member Jean Fuqua will provide an update on the Cemetery Committee.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20181015/fp-5-fire-tax-tops-agenda-at-mac-meeting>

COUNTY SUPERVISORS TO HOLD FP-5 HEARING TUESDAY

Staff Writer, Z107.7 FM

Posted: October 15, 2018

While the deadline for property owners to mail their protest vote for the proposed expanded fire protection district, FP-5, has passed, there remains one last opportunity to have your voice heard. Reporter Mike Lipsitz tells us how...

The last item of business at tomorrow's 10 a.m. meeting of county supervisors in San Bernardino will be a public hearing on the proposed expansion of fire protection zone 5 to include Yucca Valley and most of the county's unincorporated areas. The proposal includes a \$157 fee on each parcel within the zone. Opposition to the fee has been widespread because it disproportionately affects property owners on fixed and low incomes, and because the proposal appears to skirt the state's constitutional requirement that such tax initiatives be put before voters at the polls.

Positioning the annual charge as a fee the county opted for a convoluted process to protest the proposal. And while ultimate decision may be left up to the courts, county supervisors will hold a public hearing tomorrow where protest forms may be submitted in person and where property owners will have an opportunity to voice their opinions.

Tomorrow's meeting and public hearing will stream live to the first-floor teleconferencing room in the County Government Center on White Feather Road in Joshua Tree. Public comment may be made from that location via live video link. In addition, grass roots organizers have arranged carpools for those wishing to attend Tuesday's hearing in person. They plan to leave from the Yucca Valley Park and Ride on the Highway at Kickapoo at 7:30 a.m. Tuesday.

<http://z1077fm.com/county-supervisors-to-hold-fp-5-hearing-tuesday/>

LAWSUIT FILED AGAINST COUNTY FIRE AGAINST FP-5 FIRE TAX

Staff Writer, Z107.7 News

Posted: October 15, 2018

A new lawsuit was filed on Friday, October 12 against the **San Bernardino County Fire** Protection District concerning the FP-5 fire tax. The lawsuit argues that the expansion of Fire Protection zone FP-5 violates the “Right to Vote on Taxes Act,” articles 8C and 8D of the California constitution. The lawsuit has a trial date set for December 19. The lawsuit was filed on the same day that a San Bernardino County judge denied an injunction to halt the expansion of Fire Protection Zone-5.

<http://z1077fm.com/lawsuit-filed-against-county-fire-against-fp-5-fire-tax/>

JUDGE DENIES INJUNCTION FILED AGAINST EXPANSION OF FIRE PROTECTION ZONE 5

Staff Writer, Z107.7 News

Posted: October 13, 2018

A San Bernardino County judge denied an injunction on Friday, that had been filed on Thursday, to halt the expansion of Fire Protection Zone-5. The injunction was filed by the non-profit Red Brennan Group, which says the expansion is “illegal, unfair, and symptomatic of the county’s lack of respect for its citizens that own property” in the county. The Red Brennan Group proposes that the fee should be a sliding scale fee that is based on the value and use of each property, so that a vacant parcel would not pay as much in a fire fee as a developed parcel. Red Brennan spokesman Tom Murphy said the group plans to go forward with a lawsuit to halt the county’s expansion, and he urges everyone to participate in the board of supervisors’ meeting Tuesday morning. The meeting, which starts at 10 a.m. will be streamed via a live video link at the government center in Joshua Tree.

<http://z1077fm.com/judge-denies-injunction-filed-against-expansion-of-fire-protection-zone-5/>

Property owners sue San Bernardino County over proposed fire protection zone expansion

Sandra Emerson, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

Posted: October 12, 2018, 3:56 pm

Property owners in unincorporated San Bernardino County are suing to block a proposal to expand the **county fire** agency’s coverage area and the \$157 a year parcel tax that would come with it.

On Thursday, Oct. 11, residents, along with The Red Brennan Group and the Lucerne Valley Economic Development Association, filed a lawsuit and a request for a temporary restraining order against the Board of Supervisors and the county fire protection district over the proposed expansion.

On Friday, Oct. 12, San Bernardino County Superior Court Judge Brian McCarville denied the injunction request, which means supervisors can go through with a plan to hold a public hearing on the issue on Tuesday, Oct. 16, according to Tracey Martinez, public information officer with county fire. However, the property owners will continue to pursue their lawsuit.

“We’re trying to stop the county from moving forward with what we feel is an unconstitutional tax,” said Sean Wade, attorney for the property owners.

The property owners contend that the process through which the county is pushing to expand fire coverage violates the equal protection rules of the 14th Amendment. They also argue that the property tax — which could be implemented without a vote — violates the California Constitution.

Wade said under California's constitution, the tax requires a two-thirds majority vote of the people subject to that tax before it can be implemented. He said the current approval process, which calls for property owners to protest in writing, also violates federal law.

In September, San Bernardino County's fire agency mailed notices to more than 368,000 property owners outlining their proposal to expand fire coverage. That letter also included information about how to submit written protests of the plan.

The notices, however, did not include a written protest form. Instead, county fire officials directed property owners who wanted such a form to go to county fire's website or to call 211.

As a result, according to Wade, people without computers or access to the internet didn't have an easy way to obtain a protest form.

"We think that the way the protest forms are being provided is also a constitutional violation because not everyone who should be entitled to submit a protest is able to," Wade said.

In June, the board of supervisors voted 3-2 to begin the process of expanding county fire's coverage area, a move recommended by County Fire Chief Mark Hartwig to help solve a \$29 million budget shortfall.

In recent years, revenue from property taxes, contracts, and fire protection service zones have not been enough to cover the district's rising costs. As a result, the fire agency increasingly has relied on county general funds and its own reserves.

Also, the county's more populous communities, and those already paying a fee for services, are subsidizing communities that are less populated and more remote.

Regardless of how much a community currently is paying for fire services — a figure that varies by community — all property owners in communities brought into the coverage zone would have to pay \$157 annually. The tax could go up by 3 percent a year.

The expansion, if approved as proposed, would generate an additional \$26.9 million for the fire district starting next year.

Under state law, a fire protection district can expand a zone through a public hearing process. The board, however, voted to also allow property owners to submit written protests.

The proposal still could be put to a vote. In order to trigger an election, 25 percent of property owners who control at least 25 percent of the assessed land value would need to mail in their written opposition by the close of business Oct. 15, or submit a written form, in person, by the end of the public hearing Oct. 16.

To stop the tax, more than 50 percent of all property owners would have to oppose it in writing.

The county, as well as fire officials and the Local Agency Formation Commission are facing a separate fire-zone related lawsuit. Last year, the San Antonio Heights Association took the county to court following the

annexation of Upland into the county's fire coverage area and the parcel tax imposed as part of that expansion. That tax also was imposed through a written protest process, rather than a traditional vote.

Wade said the property owner's might reconsider their lawsuit if supervisors reconsider the fire coverage expansion plan, and that they'll pay attention to what happens during the Tuesday hearing.

"It all depends on what the board does," Wade said. "Maybe (the supervisors) will surprise us, but we feel confident that they'll vote three to two, just like when they adopted the resolution. If that's the case, we're chugging full steam ahead to try to get it stopped before the tax is actually collected."

The public hearing is scheduled for 10 a.m. Oct. 16 at the government center, 385 N. Arrowhead Ave., San Bernardino.

<https://www.sbsun.com/2018/10/12/property-owners-sue-san-bernardino-county-over-proposed-fire-protection-zone-expansion/>