



NEWS



News Headlines 12/13/2016

- Woman's body found by freeway
- Jolly Parade is coming to town
- Metro Red Line bomb threat highlights vulnerabilities of rail systems to attack
- Fireplace wood-burning ban extended
- Driving tips for safe travels during this winter

Woman's body found by freeway

Fontana Herald

Posted: December 12, 2016; 7:49 a.m.

On 12/9/16, at approximately 9:20 p.m., the San Bernardino Police Department received a call from the CHP, who were out with a deceased female on the shoulder of the 210 Freeway about 1 mile east of the State Street off ramp. CHP received the call of a female down at that location by a passing motorist.

San Bernardino County Fire responded and pronounced her deceased at the scene. Investigators are attempting to determine if she was struck by a vehicle or if there were any witnesses to the incident. The cause of death is pending on the completion of an autopsy report.

The victim was identified as January Lynn Braithwaite of San Bernardino.

http://www.highlandnews.net/news/crime_and_fire/woman-s-body-found-by-freeway/article_83394d7a-c082-11e6-8234-43bb108c1462.html

Related story: <http://www.sbsun.com/general-news/20161210/woman-found-dead-by-210-freeway-in-san-bernardino>

Jolly Parade is coming to town

Rene Ray De La Cruz, VV Daily Press

Posted: Dec. 12, 2016, 5:23 p.m.

HESPERIA – Holiday cheer is expected to flow down the streets of this High Desert city as the second Annual Jolly Parade rolls through town.

Employees with the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Hesperia Station, the City of Hesperia and county fire will join Santa Claus and his merry elves as they visit with children and families at various locations in Hesperia on Friday.

The Christmas caravan will share candy canes and hot cocoa at Hesperia Civic Plaza Park, and several elementary schools including Juniper, Kingston, Mesquite, Mission Crest and Topaz, in that order.

Hesperia Station spokeswoman Karen Hunt said the caravan will stop at each location for about 20 minutes and should arrive at Juniper Elementary near 4 p.m., with the group arriving at Civic Park closer to 6:30 p.m.

Last year, the parade ended at Civic Park, where hundreds met with Santa Claus, enjoyed holiday goodies and listened to holiday music sung by students from Hesperia middle and senior high schools.

"My family attended the Jolly Parade at the park last year and we had such a great time," said Rosie Montenegro, who lives in Oak Hills. "We loved singing along with the choir and being around other people who love Christmas."

Montenegro told the Daily Press her family and a few of their neighbors plan to attend the gathering at the park this year. She added that her three children have been talking about the parade since Thanksgiving.

"The Jolly Parade was well received last year and we're hoping for bigger crowds this year," Hunt said. "This is just our way of spreading cheer throughout the city."

During a Public Safety Hero Month appreciation luncheon sponsored by the Hesperia Chamber of Commerce September, Hesperia Sheriff's Station Capt. Gregg Wielenga presented Deputy Greg Jones with Hometown Hero Award for his work with volunteers and with assisting in the creation of the Jolly Parade.

For more information, visit www.cityofhesperia.us or call 760- 947-1500.

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/news/20161212/jolly-parade-is-coming-to-town>

Metro Red Line bomb threat highlights vulnerabilities of rail systems to attack

Brenda Gazzar, Los Angeles Daily News, Steve Scauzillo, San Gabriel Valley Tribune

Posted: December 10, 2016 2:50 p.m.

Spain's deadliest terror attack occurred when shrapnel-filled bombs went off on four commuter trains in Madrid on March 11, 2004.

The United Kingdom had its bloody "7-7" terror attack in 2005, in which suicide bombers blew themselves up on three trains on the London Underground and on a double-decker bus.

The possibility of a massive attack or act of sabotage on Southern California's rail systems came into sharp focus last week after FBI officials announced that there was a specific and imminent — but unsubstantiated — warning of a bomb threat against the Metro Red Line's Universal City station in unincorporated Los Angeles County. The threat, which was to be carried out Dec. 6, never materialized.

Around the world, rail transit has been hit by terrorists and saboteurs much more often than aviation. But in the U.S., transportation experts are hard-pressed to immediately identify successful attacks on U.S. rail systems in recent decades.

"Every time someone asks me why we haven't been hit in the U.S., I say, 'we've been lucky considering how open, vulnerable, accessible'" our rail system is, said Erroll Southers, a public safety expert and the director of Homegrown Violent Extremism Studies at USC. "Security procedures (in rail) are nothing like in an airport."

THREAT MADE PUBLIC

Last week's threat against the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority or Metro Red Line's Universal City station, reported by an anonymous caller in a phone booth abroad to a public safety hotline, resulted in beefed up security at various rail stations across the vast Metro system. The FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force, along with Metro, took the rare step of making the threat public. The FBI announced Tuesday night that they had "found no evidence" the threat was credible but are continuing their investigation to identify the caller.

The potential threat was announced days after the Metro governing board postponed a decision on a new controversial policing plan that has divided local law enforcement agencies over the best way to protect its riders from overall crime.

Despite the infrequency of attacks on rail in the U.S., local law enforcement and other experts say mass transit systems are vulnerable.

“There are cells of various terrorist organizations throughout the world. To think they are not here in our backyard is naive,” said Los Angeles County Sheriff Jim McDonnell, whose agency is in charge of policing Metro’s 1,433 square miles within Los Angeles County, as well as Metrolink, a commuter rail system running through Ventura, L.A., Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and San Diego counties.

“I unfortunately don’t think it’s if it happens, it is when it happens,” he added.

Not only do rail systems have high ridership, there are “few to no security countermeasures” when it comes to passenger screening, largely because it affects how quickly passengers could get through, Southers said.

When Southers served as a security consultant for the 2008 Olympics in China, they were considering airport-style security — including metal detectors, X-ray machines and turnstiles — for boarding high-speed rail in Shanghai. But because it would have slowed down the “throughput” to almost a crawl, authorities decided against it and instead draped a heavy security presence at all of its stations, he said.

“It’s a very interesting and delicate balance that has to be reached when you talk about security countermeasures and maintaining the sustainability of the business,” Southers said.

Another vulnerability is that unlike an airplane, an ill-willed person can leave a bag or suitcase on a train carrying an explosive device and simply get off before it detonates, Southers said. Whereas “once you get on a plane with it, you’re committed,” he said.

In 1994, two trains in New York’s City’s subway system were firebombed days apart by a computer analyst who had lost his job, injuring some 50 people. And a few plots targeting U.S. rail have been thwarted in recent years, including a 2009 plot directed by the terror group al-Qaida to attack Manhattan subway lines with explosives.

CAMERAS WATCHING

A key plank in local rail agencies’ security platforms are cameras. And passengers will be under increased surveillance in the near future, with additional video cameras taping their every move.

Metrolink, perhaps a little behind Metro, is in the process of adding cameras to all of its 59 stations so that security employees can watch the closed circuit video feed from a central location for suspicious activity, said Art Leahy, Metrolink CEO.

The commuter rail system will soon install “inward facing cameras” on every train car, enabling on-board conductors to spot trouble or report a stray piece of luggage that could contain a bomb, Leahy said.

At Metro’s Rail Operations Center and at its Security Center, trained staff watch video feeds from more than 25,000 cameras 24/7, said Alex Wiggins, Metro’s chief of system security and law enforcement division.

“We have cameras on board buses and trains and platforms,” Wiggins explained. “We have staff that focus on areas of concern and help us monitor. We use special software that highlights anomalies.”

For example, that software automatically focuses cameras on a stray bag or parcel, a person jumping the turnstiles or someone acting suspicious or violently, he said.

On Wednesday, Metro and sheriff deputies used closed-circuit images to track a suspect who threw something onto the Gold Line tracks. The man was arrested at the Memorial Park Station in Pasadena on suspicion of fighting with deputies. The object turned out to be an article of clothing, authorities said.

MORE SECURITY GUARDS

In addition, Metro in September has quietly more than doubled the number of its private security guards, increasing their numbers from 150 to 330, Wiggins said. A second force, called Metro Security Patrol, has also grown during the past few months from 108 to 189 personnel, Wiggins said.

Both forces carry guns, he said, and can intervene in a life-threatening situation but do not possess police arresting authority. Wiggins said increasing the security presence at stations, on rail cars and buses and in Metro-owned parking garages will help riders feel more safe.

Heather Williams, a senior international defense policy researcher at the Santa Monica-based RAND Corp., said the planned increase in visible security personnel is prudent because it “would have a positive impact for deterrence” of overall crime, including thefts and assaults.

McDonnell said Metro is hiring more security guards and in a multi-agency plan that would cut costs proposed by staff, is asking for fewer sheriff deputies, while adding 168 Los Angeles Police Department officers and 14 Long Beach Police Department officers to patrol where trains intersect in those jurisdictions.

McDonnell said security guards do not have police powers and can mostly just call the Sheriff’s Department to report a crime, like any other rider.

“I worry for their safety,” he said of the guards, adding: “This is not an optimal model in my mind.”

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti supports the multi-agency approach, in part because he believes Long Beach PD should police the eight stations of the Blue Line in Long Beach, and argues LAPD would respond quicker to calls at L.A.-area Metro rail and bus stations.

Undercover or plain clothes officers, which are used by the Sheriff’s Department on both Metro and Metrolink systems, is also key to preventing crime, Williams said.

“We know that police and first responders are often the target of a terrorist attack so having someone who is available to observe how someone might be monitoring police, or behaving when police walk in or out of a room or in and out of a station is also really important,” Williams said.

But Southers argues the greatest security asset on any rail system is the people who ride these trains, who can report anything suspicious or anything that’s left behind.

While the slogan “see something, say something,” moved slowly at first, it really does work, he said, noting that a significant percentage of terror plots have been foiled by tips from observant members of the public.

Don Saldana, who takes the Red Line to his job in North Hollywood, says the lack of cell service on the majority of the line makes it next to impossible to report illegal activity. Once when he exited the station, he reported a person defacing a subway wall with graffiti. The operator told him to use the Metro app to file the complaint. He said the app was not user friendly and the crime never got reported.

“Shouldn’t Metro or the city of Los Angeles make it easier for the public to stay vigilant?” Saldana wrote in an email.

Metro has added cell service on the Red Line but only for a few stations. Wiggins said they are working on expanding cell service for Red Line riders throughout the line.

COORDINATION AMONG LAW ENFORCEMENT

In the event of a terrorist incident, there would have to be a coordinated crisis response, experts say.

McDonnell said Metro’s multi-agency approach should include all local police whose cities share a rail or bus line but he called for one policing agency to direct patrols.

“Public safety by committee is not the way to do it,” McDonnell said. “You need somebody in charge in a coordinated system.”

Garcetti said Metro’s model would be similar to that at LAX, where the airport police form a command authority overseeing its officers and LAPD officers. “Metro should be in charge of its own security,” he argued. “All other transit agencies have their own head of security.”

Leahy said Metrolink has not had problems with law enforcement coordination. During the Chatsworth train crash in 2008 that resulted in 25 dead and 135 injured, LAPD, county Sheriff’s Department and both city and county fire departments worked together, he said.

Williams, of RAND, said she too has a lot of confidence in the ability of relevant organizations to work together effectively in a crisis situation, partly because the region has already been the target of multiple terrorist attacks, including last year’s Dec. 2 terror attack in San Bernardino and a terrorist bombing at LAX in 1974.

It’s also important to put the terror threat into perspective: We are much more likely to be struck by lightning or slip in our bathtub than be a victim of a terror attack, she said.

“I get frustrated sometimes because America has spent a lot of money and treasure and blood in preserving the real security of the U.S. and yet Americans don’t seem to always be getting that peace of mind,” Williams said.

<http://www.sgvtribune.com/general-news/20161210/metro-red-line-bomb-threat-highlights-vulnerabilities-of-rail-systems-to-attack>

Fireplace wood-burning ban extended

InlandNewsToday.com

Posted: December 12, 2016

SOUTHLAND - (INT) - The Air Quality Management District (AQMD) has extended the season’s longest fireplace wood-burning ban through Tuesday.

The ban does not apply to mountain communities above 3,000 feet and the deserts.

This is the fourth winter since the AQMD began issuing no-burn days for Riverside, San Bernardino, Orange and Los Angeles counties.

The AQMD contends the no-burn alerts are mandatory in order to protect public health due to a high concentration of fine particle air pollution forecast for the area. The no-burn prohibition also applies to manufactured fire logs, such as those made from wax or paper.

Fine particles in wood smoke – also known as particulate matter of PM2.5 – can become embedded in the lungs and cause respiratory illnesses, increases in emergency room visits and hospitalizations.

<http://www.inlandnewstoday.com/story.php?s=44424>

Driving tips for safe travels during this winter

Victor Valley News

Posted: December 12, 2016

December through February typically marks some of the coldest winter weather months for Southern California. While the scenery can be beautiful, this time of year can also bring a variety of dangerous driving hazards on roads and highways.

San Bernardino County Fire urges county residents to stay alert and take precaution en route to your destinations this winter season in order to help keep everyone safe. The following are some winter weather driving tips to help keep residents and visitors safe on the road ahead.

Driving Tips for Safe Travels

Drive Slowly – Most winter accidents are a result of driving too fast for the current conditions. Remember to slow down on the roads and give yourself extra time to get to your destination.

Don't Tailgate – Be sure to leave at least three car lengths in between you and the driver ahead of you during icy or snowy weather conditions. It takes a longer distance to stop your vehicle on winter roads.

Turn on Your Headlights – Visibility is greatly hindered in rain, fog, ice, or snow storms so remember to turn on your low beams when in these conditions so other drivers can see you, even during daylight.

Avoid Distracted or Drowsy Driving – Limit your distractions while driving in poor weather conditions. Keep your awareness on the road. Never drive when tired and leave the cell phone alone.

Keep Up with Your Car Maintenance – Check your windshield wipers, tires, brakes, etc. on a regular basis to avoid a mishap while driving.

Make Sure You Can See Out of All Windows – Give yourself extra time before you drive to make sure your windows are defrosted and scraped clean of any ice that is obstructing your vision and ability to be an alert driver.

Check the Roadways and Traffic Ahead of Time – Winter conditions can be somewhat unpredictable so it's important to check the roadways and traffic before you head out in order to give yourself enough time to

safely arrive at your destination. Speeding in poor weather conditions puts other drivers and emergency responders at risk. Check highway conditions at www.dot.ca.gov/cgi-bin/roads.cgi

Always Carry Snow Chains – Invest in a set of snow chains for each of your vehicles and carry them in your vehicle, even if it's not snowing. Practice installing your snow chains away from busy roads and be aware of weather conditions and snow chain speed limits.

Turn Around, Don't Drown – Never cross a flooded road that you can't see because it's covered by water. It can take as little as six inches of moving water to turn a car ride into a life-threatening emergency. Be a safe driver advocate this winter! Help keep everyone safe on the road by following and sharing these tips!

(Source: San Bernardino County Fire, Public Information Office)

<http://www.vvng.com/driving-tips-for-safe-travels-during-this-winter/>
