



NEWS



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Horse rescued by firefighters after it fell into a ravine in Apple Valley

Stephen Ramirez, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

Posted: November 27, 2017, 10:23 AM



San Bernardino County firefighters helped rescue a horse who fell with its rider into a ravine Sunday in Apple Valley. (Courtesy photo)

Horses need help, too, sometimes.

A horse, who fell with its rider 300 feet into a ravine Sunday, was rescued Monday by San Bernardino County firefighters, according to the **San Bernardino County Fire Department**.

The incident happened Sunday when the rider and horse fell into an area off Bowen Ranch Road, according to a tweet from the Fire Department. The rider was not injured and was able to walk out Sunday.

The horse wasn't so lucky.

Fire department crews checked the horse Sunday night and with the help from a Los Angeles County Fire Department helicopter unit Monday were able to use a hoist device to rescue the horse, the San Bernardino County Fire Department tweet said.

<http://www.sbsun.com/2017/11/27/horse-rescued-by-firefighters-after-it-fell-into-a-ravine-in-apple-valley/>

‘We’re not giving up’: Barstow clings to hopes of saving fire district despite tax measure’s defeat

Paola Baker, VV Daily Press

Posted: November 25, 2017 at 7:30 PM



Barstow officials are holding out hope that Measure J will pass once the election results are finalized, but they have begun discussing other options with the initiative seemingly defeated. [Kay Lovato, Daily Press]

BARSTOW — Barstow officials are reluctant to sound the death knell on Measure J, despite the tax measure’s apparent defeat during the Nov. 7 election.

City council members were adamant in stating they wouldn’t give up control of the Barstow Fire Protection District so easily during their meeting on Nov. 20, despite Measure J — a half-cent sales tax meant to bolster the struggling fire district — failing to reach the two-thirds majority needed to pass.

Unofficial election results showed almost 65 percent of Barstow voters approved the measure, in contrast to the 35 percent opposing it. A Nov. 16 update showed 1,312 “Yes” votes have now been tallied — a small, but not unnoticed gain from the original 1,276 “Yes” votes reported on Nov. 10.

“With each update, the numbers have improved. Not by much, but they have improved some, and we still have one more count to go,” councilman Rich Harpole said.

The measure would have imposed a half-cent sales tax throughout the city that’s expected to generate an estimated \$3.8 million a year, with residents paying an average of \$47 a year, according to city officials. The funds were meant to be earmarked for the BFPD. It was highly touted as a way for residents to maintain local accountability.

City and fire officials have expressed their disappointment at the measure’s apparent failure, while still holding on to hope that the final count may turn things around.

“Over 65 percent of our community came out to support us,” BFPD Fire Chief Jamie Williams said shortly after the election. “And we’re still trending in the right direction. We might still pull it off. It’s possible.” According to the County Elections Office, there were an estimated 426 uncounted votes as of Nov. 24. The election results are expected to be finalized in the next two weeks.

Yet Harpole acknowledged that the extra votes would likely not be enough to reach the threshold needed for the measure to pass. But he, along with the rest of the city council, remained steadfast in their hopes of saving the fire district.

Discussions on the measure dominated the Nov. 20 city council meeting, with all public and council comments expressed that night touching down on the issue.

“We let our firefighters down. We let our town down,” resident Billie Brown said. “If there’s anything else we can do for our firefighters, I’m happy to support it.”

With Measure J seemingly defeated, however, city officials will now be looking at a limited set of alternatives to maintain fire services.

Williams and city spokesman Anthony Riley both mentioned the possibility of new property taxes or a parcel tax on property owners, while Mayor Julie Hackbarth-McIntyre and Mayor Pro Tem Carmen Hernandez hinted at the possibility of putting Measure J, or a similar tax measure, back on the ballot in the future. “We don’t quite know yet what that’s going to look like, but you’re going to see us reach out to you again and need your help,” Hackbarth-McIntyre said.

But the most likely option would be the City Council annexing the BFPD into the **San Bernardino County Fire Department**. The region would then fall under the umbrella of County Fire’s FP-5 parcel tax, estimated to be about \$150 for every parcel in the city. That tax would increase 3 percent each year thereafter. Nevertheless, city officials have been clear in leaving that option as a last resort.

“I can assure the citizens that I am not ready to move on to the county option,” Councilman Timothy Silva said. “I think we owe it to the citizens to look at other options to keep that local control before we move on.”

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20171125/were-not-giving-up-barstow-clings-to-hopes-of-saving-fire-district-despite-tax-measures-defeat>

Acting quickly, Victorville seeks County Fire’s best offer as services set to expire

Shea Johnson, Daily Press

Posted: November 25, 2017, 7:33 PM



A San Bernardino County firefighter yells for more water while battling a fire along the Mojave River near the Stoddard Wells Road exit off Interstate 15 in April 2015. Both Victorville and Barstow are facing tough decisions in the wake of ballot measure failures that would have pumped more money for public safety services into city coffers. [James Quigg, Daily Press]

VICTORVILLE — City officials voted this week to seek a final and best contract offer from County Fire as the 10-year deal signed nearly a decade ago inches toward a June 30 expiration.

Without a definitive answer for who will provide fire services in Victorville beyond this summer, the city is scrambling to meaningfully entertain its options as quickly as possible.

As of now, those options remain identical to the choices before Measure K — the city’s proposed half-percent sales tax for public safety — was endorsed Nov. 7 by a majority of voters but, at 61.63 percent, still failed to meet the two-thirds threshold required of a special tax.

The city can sign a new contract with the **San Bernardino County Fire Department** or agree to a permanent deal with the agency, or it can re-launch its own city fire department, which disbanded in 2008.

“Effectively, you still have the same options that had been discussed,” City Manager Doug Robertson said, “but perhaps you have more clarity now that the Measure K vote has been taken.”

Feeling up against the clock, the Council also authorized Tuesday to bring on an interim fire chief to assist in vetting the framework for the possible return to a city-run department in the event County Fire conversations turn downward.

As tax income falls short to meet the trajectory of public safety costs, Measure K was expected to pump \$8.5 million yearly in supplemental revenue into city coffers and immediately enable new fire and law enforcement hires. Without it, officials had seemed to merely cement the alternative: Annexation into County Fire, the permanent deal.

But two weeks after the failed election, the supposed path forward appears murky. Complicating matters is that Mayor Pro Tem Jim Cox, an influential policymaker, is averse to forever giving up local control and bitter over the County Fire union’s opposition of the ballot measure.

“I’m not going to be an easy sale,” Cox warned from the dais, asking city staff to move fast to secure County Fire’s ultimate contractual offer without prolonged negotiations.

A renewed city-run department could be an equally hard barter, however, with strong pushback coming from at least two other Council members as well as fire officials.

“The simple cost of having your own fire department was not desirable 10 years ago,” Councilman Eric Negrete said. “It is not desirable, in my opinion, now.”

Instead he agreed to extend an opportunity for County Fire on a contractual deal while urging the city would program “some serious upgrades” into equipment at least every other year.

“This is a disappointing situation that we find ourselves in,” he said. “As a city, you can’t go from city services to county, back to city, back to county, without switching costs and other issues.”

Mayor Gloria Garcia sought to assuage any anxiety that city officials were displeased with County Fire’s performance, saying decisions ahead would come down to dollars and sense.

“The bottom line was cost,” Garcia said. “And we never did say we were not happy with County Fire. We have always praised them for the outstanding work that they do, but it’s the cost.”

According to a city staff report, a Victorville fire department, after start-up costs, would be less expensive than County Fire for personnel, “freeing up funds for fire apparatus replacement and station repairs.”

But it's unlikely there would be revenue for opening Fire Station 315 and adding a second paramedic squad, officials said.

Dan Mejia, an assistant fire chief who heads Victorville operations, noted the nuisances, such as County Fire's paramedic offerings, that the city might not be taking into account.

County Fire Capt. Travis Aguirre, a division vice president for the department's union, said he felt confident such a department was "not viable," pointing to myriad issues that led to its original break-up.

Aguirre said the relationship back then between the city and its fire agency had become stressed as the city blocked captains from being union members, driving a wedge between crews; an ordinance prevented department members, as city employees, from discussing city business with the Council; the city fire department refused to pay for travel time even for mandatory training; and the department resisted efforts to grow into a paramedic-level EMS agency.

"Even if a brand-new Victorville fire department was to re-launch and eliminate many of these issues," he said, "we all know how the city struggled financially to properly fund the department."

For County Fire officials, annexation and its accompanying no-term agreement would actually enable the kind of long-term regional approach to fire services that could drive costs down and improve performance across the Victor Valley.

But annexation would also levy a \$153 parcel tax on property owners in the city, which could rise up to 3 percent annually.

Councilwoman Blanca Gomez sought to engage the Local Agency Formation Commission in getting annexation steps started, but her push didn't receive colleague support.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20171125/acting-quickly-victorville-seeks-county-fires-best-offer-as-services-set-to-expire>

Drones becoming a threat to first-responder operations

Lea Gabrielle, Georeen Tanner, Fox News

Posted: November 24, 2017

Drones are putting lives at risk, say first responders.

There are some limited rules that govern where hobbyist drones can fly, but firefighters and local law enforcement officers tell Fox News the requirements don't go far enough because they are unenforceable in the middle of real-time operations. They say negligent operators cannot be discerned from criminals and potential terrorists, giving those with malicious motives an upper hand against those responsible for protecting the public.

This month, the Department of Homeland Security released an updated terrorism advisory bulletin stating that terrorists are pursuing the use of drones as weapons. According to Sgt. Randy Sterett, a Bomb Squad Commander in California's Orange County, this threat is real.

"Some of these drones can fly anywhere from one to 15 pounds of explosives," he said, "which is a huge, huge amount of explosives."

Firefighters and local law enforcement officers tell Fox News an even more immediate problem is drones showing up on their turf, in the middle of operations.

"There's been the SWAT operation going on and a UAV [drone] driving—flying—right into the front yard and watching as they're approaching the house, putting their safety and the safety of those who are in the community at risk," Sterett said.

Some first responders have even had to shut down operations because of an unauthorized drone getting in the way.



There are some limited rules that govern where hobbyist drones can fly, but firefighters and local law enforcement officers tell Fox News the requirements don't go far enough because they are unenforceable in the middle of real-time operations. (AP)

"Just a single drone can do significant damage or even take one of our aircraft out of the air," said Ronald Walls, assistant chief for the **San Bernardino Fire Department**.

According to the Department of the Interior, in 2016 there were over 40 reported drone incidents near wildfires. In 2015, California's "North Fire" torched nearly two dozen vehicles on a major highway in San Bernardino County. Walls says that probably would not have happened if it weren't for interloping drones.

“We had drone operations that had actually forced us to shut down all of our air operations,” Walls said. “I don’t believe we would have seen nearly hardly [sic] any vehicles be damaged if we’d had the ability to bring in aircraft and redirect the fire.”

With drones posing a larger risk, some companies are creating technology to stop them.

IXI Technology, based in Irvine, California, recently demonstrated its “Drone Killer,” a device that looks like a large plastic gun, and sends radio signals that force drones to go back to where they took off from. If that doesn’t work, the instrument can jam the drone’s GPS signal and force it to land.

With the push of a button, the Drone Killer displays a red light on the device.

“That red light means I am now disrupting all of the drones that are in about a 30-degree arc in front of my unit,” said Dan Hyman, a staff engineer with IXI Technology.

Sterett, the police sergeant, said there is a need for local law enforcement to be able to use this type of equipment. But federal regulations forbid that type of equipment without special authorization.

“It’s so unfair that a citizen, a criminal or a terrorist can use UAV technology, but we cannot use technology against them,” Sterett said.

Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, and other lawmakers have introduced a bipartisan bill called the Drone Federalism Act Of 2017, which would give local governments the power to regulate drones flying below 200 feet.



According to the Department of the Interior, in 2016 there were over 40 reported drone incidents near wildfires.

For example, the proposal would allow states and cities to pass laws that make flying drones below 200 feet on private property a trespassing offense.

“I want to make sure that, at least within 200 feet of the surface, state and local law enforcement officers, state and local governments, have authority to protect public safety and to protect the privacy of members of the public from any invasion that might come as a result of drones,” Lee said.

According to the FAA, recreational drones are allowed to fly up to 400 feet above the surface. The proposed law would still leave the space between 200 and 400 feet above the ground unregulated locally.

Federal regulations would still prevent local law enforcement from using technology like IXI’s ‘Drone Killer’ to take down drones without a waiver.

And even if this technology was legal, only three states have laws that allow first responders to disable drones - and they mostly apply to fighting fires.

Law enforcement also encounter another issue with drones – it’s almost impossible to track down their owners. Unlike manned aircraft, which must register a tail number, hobbyist drones have no such requirement. In 2015, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) attempted to require drone owners to register but courts rejected the effort, calling drones “model aircraft.”

Sterett says he’s seen several examples of the need for accountability.

“We’ve even had people thinking that they are being funny by dropping water balloons on a high school track meet, which obviously could injure somebody,” he said. “We’ve had (drones) surveilling police headquarters, and breaching security at local jails.”

Sterett said he believes most hobbyist drone operators are “good flyers” and he does not want to see them penalized.

But he said first responders need the tools to counter the ones that aren’t.

“We need the state and local and the federal governments,” he said, “to get together and give us the ability to safely protect the public without violating any laws ourselves.”

<http://www.foxnews.com/tech/2017/11/24/drones-becoming-threat-to-first-responder-operations.html>

Victorville Sheriff's deputy injured in Thanksgiving chase; suspect remains at large

Paola Baker, The Daily Press

Posted: November 24, 2017, 2:01 PM



San Bernardino County Fire Department officials treat a Victorville Sheriff's deputy injured during a chase late Thursday night. Officials said the suspect remains at large. [Submitted photo]

Paola Baker

Posted: November 24, 2017, 2:01 PM

VICTORVILLE — The search continues for a suspect accused of crashing into various vehicles during a reckless chase that left a San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department deputy injured on Thanksgiving night. Sheriff's officials said the suspect remains at large as of Friday afternoon after being involved in a chase that ended in a crash in the 14400 block of Queen Valley Road around 10:30 p.m. Thursday.

A Victorville Sheriff's deputy was injured when the suspect allegedly hit him with a heavy object, according to Sheriff's spokeswoman Cindy Bachman.

The chase was sparked when the deputy made a traffic stop near the intersection of Mojave Drive and El Evado Road at 10:23 p.m. It's unclear why the stop was initiated, but Bachman said the driver first stopped before he decided to flee.

"There was a short pursuit where the suspect vehicle crashed, and then the driver fled on foot," Bachman said. According to scanner traffic, the suspect drove through residential neighborhoods before losing control at the corner of Carter and Queen Valley roads. The suspect struck a parked pickup truck before the vehicle careened through several front yards.

It then struck an electrical box and parked minivan before coming to a stop. The suspect then fled on foot from the vehicle, with deputies close behind.

"The deputy chased him and went over a fence when the suspect hit him with a heavy object, causing an injury to his back," Bachman said. "The suspect fled and is not in custody."

The deputy was taken to a local hospital for treatment. Further updates on his condition and any other details on the incident, including a description of the suspect, weren't available Friday. No other injuries were reported.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20171124/victorville-sheriffs-deputy-injured-in-thanksgiving-chase-suspect-remains-at-large>

Two pedestrians struck in Twentynine Palms.

Jon Moreno, Kesq News

Posted: November 23, 2017, 12:11 PM

Deputies from the Morongo Basin Sheriff's station responded to the scene and found the pedestrian, described as a 49-year-old resident of Yucca Valley, was struck by a vehicle traveling southbound on Grand Avenue while he was in the roadway in his wheelchair.

Witnesses told deputies that they saw a female driving a silver SUV strike the pedestrian.

The unidentified female fled the scene before deputies arrived. Deputies located debris from the vehicle at the scene confirming driver's side front-end damage to the vehicle.

Medical personnel from the **San Bernardino County Fire Department** responded and transported the man to Desert Regional Medical Center for his injuries.

<http://www.kesq.com/news/deputies-search-for-hit-and-run-suspect-in-yucca-valley/661195931>

Firefighters battle house fire in Oak Hills Tuesday night

Staff Writer, VVNG

Posted: November 22, 2017



OAK HILLS, Calif. (VVNG.com) Firefighters battled a residential structure fire in the unincorporated area of Oak Hills Tuesday night.

At about 10:00 p.m. dispatch received reports of a home on fire in the 11000 block of Musgrave Road. When **San Bernardino County Firefighters** arrived they located the home engulfed in flames and began an aggressive attack on the fire.

It took fire crews approximately 30 minutes to knock down the fire which caused significant damage to the structure.

According to scanner traffic, one individual was detained for possible arson. However, at this time the cause of the fire remains under investigation.

<http://www.vvng.com/firefighters-battle-house-fire-oak-hills-tuesday-night/>

Man arrested after allegedly setting Hesperia home on fire

Paola Baker, Daily Press

Posted: November 22, 2017, 1:32 PM



Ariel Alonso Guzman Molina, 25, of Hesperia, was arrested after San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department officials connected him to a blaze at a home in the 11000 block of Musgrave Road late Tuesday. [Submitted photo]

HESPERIA — Authorities placed a man behind bars who allegedly set a home on fire here late Tuesday night, leaving eight residents displaced.

Ariel Alonso Guzman Molina, 25, of Hesperia, was arrested after San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department officials connected him to a blaze at a home in the 11000 block of Musgrave Road late Tuesday, according to Hesperia Sheriff's Station spokeswoman Jackie Chambers.

It's still unknown how Molina allegedly started the blaze, which was reported just before 10 p.m. Tuesday. **San Bernardino County Fire Department** spokesman Eric Sherwin said firefighters arrived and found the home engulfed in flames.

"Firefighters engaged in an interior offensive attack," Sherwin said. "There were no injuries to civilians or firefighters."

Red Cross assistance was requested for eight family members displaced by the blaze, while officials combed the scene to pinpoint the cause. While Sherwin didn't have further details, he mentioned a fire investigator remained on scene until almost 3 a.m. Wednesday.

County booking logs show Molina was arrested on suspicion of arson of an inhabited structure just after midnight Wednesday. He remains in custody at the Adelanto Detention Center in lieu of \$250,000 bail and is expected to appear in court Nov. 28.

Further details weren't available Wednesday. The incident remains under investigation.

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/news/20171122/man-arrested-after-allegedly-setting-hesperia-home-on-fire>

House fire displaces 8 residents near Hesperia

Brian Rokos, The Press-Enterprise

Posted: November 22, 2017, 9:55 am



(Courtesy of Cal Fire San Bernardino Unit)

Flames burn a home on Musgrave Road in the Oak Hills community of San Bernardino County on Nov. 21, 2017.

Firefighters were able to save a portion of a home from a fire that displaced eight people Tuesday night, Nov. 21, in Oak Hills in San Bernardino County.

Those who were displaced received assistance from the American Red Cross, **San Bernardino County Fire** Department spokesman Eric Sherwin said.

County fire and Cal Fire responded just before 10 p.m. to the 11000 block of Musgrave Road near Hesperia. They arrived to find the home well-involved in flames, Sherwin said.

The cause was under investigation Wednesday. No injuries were reported, Sherwin said.

<http://www.sbsun.com/2017/11/22/house-fire-displaces-8-residents-near-hesperia/>
