



NEWS



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‘Recipe for disaster’: Wet winter, lush vegetation concern County Fire officials

Jose Quintero, Desert Dispatch

Posted: May 8, 2017, 4:13 PM



San Bernardino County Fire Chief Mark Hartwig addresses the media during the annual Wildfire Preparedness and Arson Awareness press conference in the Cajon Pass on Monday. [James Quigg, Daily Press]



Members of the Old Cajon Hand Crew begin a demonstration during the San Bernardino County Fire Department’s annual Wildfire Preparedness and Arson Awareness press conference in the Cajon Pass on Monday. [James Quigg, Daily Press]

CAJON PASS — The Cajon Pass is looking as green as it has in recent memory thanks to a wet winter, but the lush vegetation is raising concerns for local firefighters.

“People always ask if the rains make it easier or harder for firefighters,” **San Bernardino County Fire Department** Chief Mark Hartwig said during a press conference Monday held in the Cajon Pass as part of Wildfire Preparedness and Arson Awareness week.

“The rain helped combat the bark beetle infestation in our local mountains; however it also causes growth of light, flashy fuels. These flashy fuels, mixed with high temperatures and winds, are a recipe for disaster.”

The light fuels have a whole summer to dry out just in time for the most dangerous time of the year for firefighters — hot and dry summer days coupled with with strong and gusty Santa Ana winds.

“The fuels that we are seeing are fuels that we don’t normally see. We call those latter fuels,” Hartwig told the Daily Press after the conference. “Those are fuels that get a fire going nice and hot before going into the heavier fuels and really taking off. That’s really what we are seeing here with these fuels.

“What we are seeing in the Cajon Pass is heavy dry fuels, along with more moist greenery due to the recent rains. These light fuels are also very tall this year and as abundant as I’ve ever seen in my 25 years here. We typically don’t see that.”

County Fire spokeswoman Tracey Martinez emceed the event and said the world of fire suppression is changing, with fire seasons growing longer and fire behavior becoming more extreme.

Hartwig said that was evident during last year’s wildfires in the Cajon Pass.

“Seasoned professionals tell us they have not ever seen the type of fire activity with the Pilot and Bluecut fires that they have seen in the past,” Hartwig said.

Glenn Barley, Cal Fire’s San Bernardino Unit Chief, said this year’s fire outlook is characterized by abundant moisture. But the reality is, according to Barley, California “burns on a regular basis regardless of how much or how little moisture we have.”

“Coming out of five years of drought, the vegetation that has been drying out there is ready to burn and the grasses behind us are growing and are dangerous,” he said.

Horton provided statistics showing fire investigators, along with local authorities, are working “diligently” on arson suspected fires in the county.

“Some recent statistics from County Fire include that we have responded to over 465 suspected fires,” Horton said. “Out of those, 40 percent were determined to be incendiary and 25 percent were determined to arson.

“Over the last year we’ve made nine arrests and have had a 33 percent conviction rate on arsonists in our county. That’s not to include the efforts of Cal Fire and San Bernardino Forest Service on recent fires, such as the Bluecut Fire, which is still under investigation.”

The San Bernardino County Fire Department’s Old Cajon hand crew also gave a demonstration on how fire containment lines are created while combating a wildfire.

For more information on wildfire preparedness or volunteer opportunities with County Fire, visit www.sbctfire.org.

<http://www.desertdispatch.com/news/20170508/recipe-for-disaster-wet-winter-lush-vegetation-concern-county-fire-officials>

How you can protect yourself and others from the dangers of wildfires

Neil Nisperos, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

Posted: May 8, 2017, 11:24 PM



San Bernardino County Fire firefighters from the Old Cajon station demonstrate cutting a fireline as the department holds a Wildfire Awareness Week press conference in the Cajon Pass near Devore on Monday. Officials from multiple agencies were on hand to inform the public about how to help protect themselves and their homes from wildfires. Jennifer Cappuccio Maher — Staff Photographer

SAN BERNARDINO >> This being wildfire and arson awareness week, the **San Bernardino County Fire Department** and its partners held a kickoff event in front of the burn-area of last year's Blue Cut fire in the Cajon Pass on Monday to share these five things you should know about protecting life and property from the devastation of a wildfire:

- Wildfire season is year-round.

The landscape in California burns on a regular basis, regardless of how much moisture we have, according to Glenn Barley, unit chief for Cal Fire in San Bernardino. While the fire season is year-round, it does peak, according to San Bernardino County Fire Department spokeswoman Tracey Martinez, around the end of September and the beginning of October, when the Santa Ana winds pick up.

- The recent rains were a double-edged sword.

Despite bringing needed moisture, the recent rains created more fuel for fires to burn by replenishing chaparral bushes, which are highly flammable, and then allowing finer fuels, such as smaller hillside grasses, to grow, officials said.

“Light fuels have a whole summer to continue to dry before the hot weather comes in the fall with the Santa Ana winds,” said San Bernardino County Fire Chief Mark Hartwig.

- If you live in wildfire country, make a defensible space.

Fire agencies say people living in areas prone to brush fires should maintain a defensible space around their property, meaning that flammable vegetation should be cleared away from the home. Hard surfaces, such as concrete, stone and brick, should be used in landscaping, and grass should be trimmed to 4 inches in height, except where soil erosion is an issue. Tall shrubs, small trees and low-hanging branches should be eliminated.

- If authorities tell you to go, get out.

After a home is prepared, residents should be on alert for red flag warnings from authorities via media or social media and should leave immediately when told to evacuate by the authorities, officials say.

“When you don’t go, you not only put yourself at risk, you put firefighters at risk,” Hartwig said. “When you’re asked to evacuate, we ask you to go.”

- There’s an app for all of this.

State fire officials designed a new smartphone app called Ready for Wildfire to provide critical wildfire information. The app provides checklists for users that allow homeowners to track progress on creating defensible space, improving their homes with fire-resistant construction, assembling an emergency supply kit and creating a family communication and evacuation plan, officials said.

Users also will be able to receive notifications through the app that will alert them to wildfires in their area, officials said.

People can go to the App Store or Google Play Store and search for Cal Fire to download the app.

Information: <http://www.sbcfire.org/Programs/ReadySetGoFire.aspx>

<http://www.dailybulletin.com/general-news/20170508/how-you-can-protect-yourself-and-others-from-the-dangers-of-wildfires>

SBCoFD Emphasize Wildfire Preparedness and Arson Awareness

Victor Valley News Group

Posted: May 8, 2017



(photo SB County Fire via Twitter)

We may have received an above average amount of rain this winter, but the risk of wildfire has not washed away. On Monday May 8, fire agencies gathered to stress the current risk of wildfire in our region and highlight the importance of being prepared.

San Bernardino County Fire along with CalFire, US Forest Service, law enforcement and Fire Safe Councils continue to work together to make wildfire safety a priority for our region as a year-round reality.

Contrary to belief, with an increase of rain, an increase of wildfires also exists. San Bernardino County Fire Chief Mark Hartwig explained how we will continue to see wildfires spread this season with high intensity. “The rain helped combat the bark beetle infestation in our local mountains; however it also causes growth of light flashy fuels. These flashy fuels mixed with high temperatures and winds are a recipe for disaster.” The Blue Cut Fire of last August, which burned 36,274 acres, is an example of the type of fire behavior our region can continue to expect.

Fire Chief Mark Hartwig emphasized the urgency to prepare in advance for wildfire season, by local fire agencies as well as by residents. San Bernardino County Fire’s Red Flag Warning Program warns citizens when conditions for extreme fire danger arise by flying a Red Flag below the American Flag at all County Fire Stations.

Residents are included in fire prevention by clearing vegetation and debris from around the home, creating a wildfire preparedness plan, and reporting suspicious fire activity. “We are already seeing vegetation fires this year grow at a rapid rate; now is the time to start preparing,” stated Fire Chief Mark Hartwig. SBCoFire also encourages residents to get involved in one of 4 community volunteer programs, as part of the newly implemented Emergency Support Services.

May 7-13 is Wildfire Awareness Week, which provides important information to help local communities stay informed about protecting their families and homes from wildfires and other disasters. SBCoFire reminds residents to do their part in understanding fire danger by exercising extreme caution around dry, flammable vegetation. Wildfire safety isn’t limited to those who live near wild lands; it’s for anyone camping or spending time in these locations as well.

May 7-13 is also Arson Awareness Week, where residents are reminded of the adage, “If you See Something, Say Something.” More than half a million wildfires are set by arsonists each year in the U.S., resulting in over \$3 billion in damages (National Institute of Standards and Technology and U.S. Department of Agriculture). “Reporting suspicious fire activity immediately can save your life and the lives of others,” said San Bernardino County Fire Marshal Mike Horton. Report tips anonymously through We Tip at (800) 47-ARSON or online at www.WeTip.com.

We invite you to join forces with SBCoFire and all fire agencies this year in saving lives by preventing wildfires and reporting arson activity. Be vigilant in wildfire preparedness, and help reduce risking the lives of firefighters by evacuating when asked to by law enforcement.

San Bernardino County Fire Department has resources available 24/7, including fire, rescue, EMS service, hand crews, dozers, and aircraft. One spark is all it takes to start a devastating wildfire, but preparedness is how we defend ourselves.

For more information on wildfire preparedness or volunteer opportunities in your community, visit our website at www.sbcfire.org. Download our Ready, Set, Go! Guide at www.sbcfire.org/ReadySetGo.aspx.

<http://www.vvng.com/sbcofd-emphasize-wildfire-preparedness-arson-awareness/>

Wildfire and Arson Awareness Week Is May 7-13

Susan A. Neufeld, *Rim of the World News*
Posted: May 9, 2017, 5:01 AM

Mountain Communities – May 7 through May 13 is Wildfire and Arson Awareness week. A press conference was held in Devour, CA, sponsored by **San Bernardino County Fire**, CalFire, US Forest Service, law enforcement and Fire Safe Councils.

In spite of all the rain we’ve received this winter, the temperature will rise and the vegetation will begin to dry out.

Residents are encouraged to help these agencies by clearing vegetation and debris from around the home (defensible space), creating a wildfire preparedness plan, and reporting suspicious fire activity.

Fire Chief Mark Hartiwg, of SBCo Fire, also encourages residents to get involved in one of 4 community programs as part of the newly implemented Emergency Support Services.

We invite you to join forces with SBCoFire, and all fire agencies, in saving lives by preventing wildfires and reporting arson activity. Be vigilant in wildfire preparedness, and help reduce risking the lives of firefighters by evacuating when asked by law enforcement.

One spark is all it takes to start a devastating wildfire, but preparedness is how we defend ourselves. **IF YOU SEE SOMETHING SAY SOMETHING!**

For more information visit SBCo Fire web page <http://www.sbcfire.org> and download their Ready Set, Go! Guide.

<http://rotwnews.com/2017/05/09/wildfire-and-arson-awareness-week-is-may-7-13/>

Police, school officials review San Bernardino school shooting to be better prepared

Beau Yarbrough, The Sun

Posted: May 8, 2017, 8:57 PM



San Bernardino City Unified Dale Marsden speaks at an “after action review” meeting Monday night intended to look at lessons learned from the North Park Elementary School shooting on April 10. PHOTO BY BEAU YARBROUGH

SAN BERNARDINO >> Should another school shooting occur, like the one at North Park Elementary on April 10 that left a teacher and student dead, San Bernardino City Unified wants to be better prepared.

“The process isn’t about pointing blame,” San Bernardino City Unified Superintendent Dale Marsden told the more than 100 people in attendance. “It’s about getting better, so we’re better next time we go out.”

First responders, school staff, parents and community residents gathered Monday night to look back on the shooting at North Park Elementary in an “after action review,” similar to one that took place after the Dec. 2, 2015, San Bernardino terrorist attack.

“The community that plans together, stands together,” Marsden said. “We found this to be true after Dec. 2.”

The review was intended as an initial discussion of how the shooting could have been prevented and how the response could have been improved. Cameras at schools in the district are a result of the review after the 2015 terrorist attack, Marsden said.

Although Marsden and others praised how well the district worked together after the North Park shooting, parents at Monday’s meeting said communication problems were frustrating for them.

“As parents, we didn’t have that cohesive information that employees had,” parent Stella Malone said. “It seemed confused, it seemed disorganized.”

Parents asked for active shooter training for themselves, so they could know what to expect in the event of a crisis.

“Speaking as a parent, if each school had a place they always evacuated to, that would help,” parent Mark Green said.

North Park was closed for a week after the April 10 shooting. Riverside resident Cedric Anderson, 53, entered the special education classroom of his estranged wife, Karen Smith, and opened fire, killing her and 8-year-old student Jonathan Martinez and wounding student Nolan Brandy, 9.

At the time of the shooting, Smith, 53, was inside her classroom with two aides and 14 special needs students between first and fourth grades.

Anderson and Smith had been married Jan. 28, but had separated in March, police officials said. Smith had apparently not told anyone at the school about the separation.

Anderson reportedly signed-in at the front desk and told office staff he was there to drop something off for his wife. Once inside the classroom — without a word — he pulled out a six-shot .357 Magnum revolver and started firing, striking Smith. Anderson then reloaded using a speed-loader, firing a total of 10 bullets. Students Jonathan and Nolan were struck in the exchange. Anderson then turned the gun on himself.

About 150 police officers from the San Bernardino Police Department, San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department, San Bernardino City Unified school police, Rialto Police Department and California Highway Patrol responded to the shooting, along with the **San Bernardino County Fire Department**.

North Park students were evacuated to Cal State San Bernardino and then shuttled to Cajon High School after their parents arrived and showed proof of identification.

The district made its share of mistakes, Marsden said.

“We were tweeting a lot of things via Twitter, but we forgot that Twitter and social media are shut down during (standardized) testing,” he said.

On Monday, some parents expressed frustration with how long it took to pick up their North Park students at Cajon High School after they were evacuated.

“Our goal was to make sure each child was released to the appropriate parent,” Marsden said. “That took longer than we wanted.”

The district stepped up security measures at North Park in anticipation of the students' return, including the installation of a camera alert system that will allow someone in the front office to see a visitor before allowing the person access to the school. Other security upgrades are also in place, officials said, but those details would not be made public. On the day the school reopened, North Park also had 10 additional teachers from other district schools and crisis counselors on hand for students who needed additional support.

“Amidst it all, there was a strong sense of coming together as a community,” said April Clay, who works as a contracted counselor for the district.

Suggestions coming out of Monday's meeting, as well as others held with North Park parents and district employees, will show up as ideas brought before the San Bernardino City Unified school board for improvements and changes to facilities and processes as soon as June, Marsden said.

<http://www.sbsun.com/social-affairs/20170508/police-school-officials-review-san-bernardino-school-shooting-to-be-better-prepared>