



# NEWS



## News Headlines 09/26/2019

- San Bernardino County narrows focus on replacing fire tax
- San Bernardino County Supervisor Dawn Rowe announces 2020 re-election bid
- With strong winds possible, Southern California Edison warns 90,000 customers they could lose power

## San Bernardino County narrows focus on replacing fire tax

Sandra Emerson, The Sun

Posted: September 24, 2019, 7:49 pm

A future tax measure to help pay for fire services would apply only to San Bernardino County's unincorporated communities, including San Antonio Heights.

On Tuesday, Sept. 24, the Board of Supervisors agreed to consider tax measures to replace a \$157-a-year parcel tax associated with the October expansion of a fire protection zone known as FP-5. Helendale, which first approved the tax in 2006 when it was \$117 a year, San Bernardino, Twentynine Palms, Needles and Upland will continue to pay the tax.

In June, supervisors asked county officials to come up with options to replace the tax, including possible tax measures that could be put before voters by January 2021, as well as an expiration date for the tax.

Tuesday's decision to only focus on the newly expanded area, plus San Antonio Heights, an unincorporated community north of Upland, means county officials will need to find a way to make up about \$27 million in the fire district's budget.

Supervisors directed County CEO Gary McBride and Interim Fire Chief Don Trapp to return by Nov. 19 with more information on impacts to the fire district's budget and potential tax measures that could go to voters next year. Chairman Curt Hagman also asked for an update on the county's search for a new fire chief.

Supervisor Janice Rutherford, who represents San Antonio Heights, asked that they be given a chance to vote.

The community was brought into the zone as part of Upland's annexation into **county fire** to save money.

In 2016, Upland applied for annexation into the county fire district to save money. The Local Agency Formation Commission voted to also include San Antonio Heights to the north, but Heights residents sued over the annexation. In February, a San Bernardino County Superior Court judge tentatively ruled that LAFCO did not have the authority to annex the community into service zones, improperly imposing a \$150 annual tax. The county appealed and a hearing is set for November.

"By throwing the Heights in with the Upland annexation, the residents of the Heights were not given adequate time or notice to come talk to this board or LAFCO about being included," Rutherford said. "I need to go back and remedy that."

In October, the supervisors approved extending the fire protection zone known as FP-5 to all unincorporated county areas, and some cities, as a way to create a steady revenue stream for the district and address a \$29 million budget shortfall. At the time of approval, the expansion came with an annual \$157.28 parcel tax that could be increased by up to 3% every year.

The expansion added about \$26.3 million to the district's budget, which is around \$201.7 million.

Cutting the funding completely from the fire district's budget could lead to fire station closures, staffing cuts and higher response times, fire officials said.

McBride outlined a few options to replace the funding, including property taxes and sales taxes, which all require a vote of the public.

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

"We were literally begging for our existence every year," said Jim Grigoli, president of the San Bernardino County Professional Firefighters Local 935.

After five years considering their options, Grigoli said the tax is the most fair and equitable way to provide a stable funding source for the district and alleviate its burden on the county's General Fund, which is estimated to be about \$13.7 million this year.

"These costs cannot bear the general fund," Grigoli said. "If you're going to give us General Fund money you're going to have to take it away from somebody else."

<https://www.sbsun.com/2019/09/24/san-bernardino-county-narrows-focus-on-replacing-fire-tax/>

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## **San Bernardino County Supervisor Dawn Rowe announces 2020 re-election bid**

Staff Writer, News Mirror

Posted: September 24, 2019



Dawn Rowe  
Angie Whitaker

San Bernardino County Third District Supervisor Dawn Rowe announced today that she will seek re-election to her seat on the Board of Supervisors in the March 3, 2020 Primary Election. Rowe's sprawling district encompasses the cities of Barstow, Big Bear Lake, Colton, Grand Terrace, Highland, Loma Linda, Redlands, San Bernardino, Twentynine Palms, Yucaipa and Yucca Valley.

Appointed to the Board of Supervisors in December 2018 to complete the remainder of former Supervisor James Ramos' term, Rowe has already cemented her status as a strong advocate for rural communities and lowering property taxes.

"I applied for appointment to the Board of Supervisors because I was frustrated with the business-as-usual approach that hurts the bottom line for families and job creators," said Rowe. "The feedback I've received from Third District residents is that they find it difficult to access county services in rural areas, and I've been working hard the past eight months to make sure my constituents understand they have an advocate on the Board of Supervisors."

An outspoken critic of the controversial FP-5 parcel assessment that was expanded into nearly all unincorporated communities of the county last year, Rowe voted to end the tax and put an alternative funding mechanism up to a vote of the people.

"If you go out and talk to people who are working hard to make ends meet, they will tell you that the way the FP-5 tax was implemented and expanded was wrong, and I wholeheartedly agree with them," said Rowe.

Despite her recent appointment to the Board of Supervisors, Rowe is no stranger to challenging the status quo. Following the death of her husband, Marine Corps Capt. Alan Rowe, during combat operations in Iraq, she attempted to develop property in her hometown. However, after experiencing a number of project delays related to onerous building regulations, Rowe ran on a platform of streamlining government and was elected to a seat on the Yucca Valley Town Council.

“I’m not afraid to stand up and fight for what I believe in. Some candidates are attracted to public office because of the accolades and attention, but I’m here to get things done on behalf of my constituents,” added Rowe.

Rowe’s campaign has already garnered the support of numerous local elected officials, including San Bernardino County Sheriff John McMahon and U.S. Representative Paul Cook.

For more information, visit her campaign website at [RoweforSupervisor.com](http://RoweforSupervisor.com).

[https://www.newsmirror.net/news/politics/san-bernardino-county-supervisor-dawn-rowe-announces-re-election-bid/article\\_14e411b2-db04-11e9-9079-0bc06e401ef9.html](https://www.newsmirror.net/news/politics/san-bernardino-county-supervisor-dawn-rowe-announces-re-election-bid/article_14e411b2-db04-11e9-9079-0bc06e401ef9.html)

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## **With strong winds possible, Southern California Edison warns 90,000 customers they could lose power**

Josh Cain, Daily Bulletin/Los Angeles Daily News

Posted: September 24, 2019, 12:28 pm

Utility workers were keeping a close eye on potential danger spots along thousands of miles of Southern California Edison electric lines in preparation for potentially powerful winds Tuesday evening and into Wednesday morning.

In Riverside County, officials announced the utility shut off power for some unincorporated areas between Beaumont and Banning, affecting 85 customers, said Mary Ann Milbourn, an SCE spokeswoman. With no estimated time when power would return, Milbourn said weather conditions were expected to improve overnight.

Riverside County’s Emergency Management Department said on social media it was notified of Tuesday’s shutdown at 2:46 p.m.

The utility company more than doubled the number of warnings issued since Monday — to about 90,000 customers total who live in mostly foothill areas who could see their power cut off if hot and windy conditions get bad enough.

That’s the largest number of the company’s customers ever to get a warning in advance like this, Milbourn said. She said nearly one-quarter of the utility’s service area is showing conditions ripe for large and dangerous wildfires — low humidity levels, dry vegetation and high temperatures.

Winds strong enough to damage power lines or send trees tumbling down on them could spell disaster.

“It’s not just that we’re seeing a big breeze — these are winds that are threatening our equipment,” Milbourn said.

In Los Angeles County, about 9,000 people living in Acton, Agua Dulce, Altadena and other communities were given shutoff warnings.

In Riverside County, warnings were issued to about 35,000 people. Communities there included Banning, Calimesa, Hemet, Moreno Valley, Perris and San Jacinto.

The most customers with warnings were in San Bernardino County — about 42,000 people in Apple Valley, Big Bear, Fontana, Highland, Rancho Cucamonga, Redlands, the city of San Bernardino, Rialto and Yucca Valley.

SCE issued the warnings to communities where winds would be strongest Tuesday. The National Weather Service said winds could reach 20 to 30 miles per hour along the coasts and in valleys, but could be as strong as 30 to 40 miles per hour in the mountains.

Milbourn said the utility has always had the ability to turn off their customers' power, but the use of it has increased in recent years as pressure from state regulators has grown amid wildfires that are more intense and frequent.

SCE has its own meteorologists and fire scientists tracking local conditions immediately surrounding their equipment. The utility's workers observing equipment in these areas will be the ones to make the call if things get dangerous enough.

The utility is estimating the shutdowns could last anywhere between 24 and 30 hours as workers go out to inspect equipment, but the timing when power could return is uncertain.

Some of the power lines are in remote areas that are difficult to reach. Crews can't operate in these areas at night. And workers will have to "wait until the weather calms down" before they risk turning the electricity back on, Milbourn said.

If Edison ultimately does shut down power to any neighborhoods, the company will send alerts through emails, texts and phone calls.

Milbourn said customers must opt-in to get the alerts — privacy rules prevent Edison from sending out the alerts automatically to customers who have already provided their contact information. Many other customers have not submitted email addresses or cell phone numbers to the company.

It's not clear how many of Edison's five million customers have signed up for the alerts from the utility. Milbourn said that effort is a "work in progress." The company will also communicate with emergency services, local cities and county governments if any of their communities are going to be affected by shutdowns. Edison customers who want to sign up for alerts from the utility can call 1-800-655-4555 or go to [www.sce.com/mysce](http://www.sce.com/mysce).

Staff writer Jonah Valdez contributed to this story.

<https://www.dailybulletin.com/2019/09/24/with-strong-winds-on-the-way-southern-california-edison-warns-90000-customers-they-could-lose-power/>