



NEWS



News Headlines 12/30/2016 - 1/3/2017

- New Year's Eve crash leaves 2 pedestrians injured
- Three Injured In New Years Eve Vehicle Versus Pedestrian Collision
- Helicopter makes hard landing on Mt. Baldy
- UPDATE: Helicopter crash in Mt. Baldy leaves 3 injured
- Helicopter Crash In Mount Baldy Area Injures 3; Prompts Rescue Operation
- Injured woman rescued in Wrightwood
- Don't Trash The Mountains
- Train crashes into stuck pickup truck near Yermo
- Fiery Rollover Crash on I-15 Freeway Thursday Night
- Firefighting blamed for 'megafires' ravaging US forests
- California Counties Use New Policy to Get Ambulances in Service Faster San
- Fires dominate news: Pilot, Bluecut blazes are biggest local stories of 2016
- 1 dog killed, 2 rescued from Rialto house fire
- Blaze near Apple Valley fire station reveals break-in plot
- Dog killed, Family Displaced by Barstow Apartment Fire
- Man Rescued When Car Skids Off Road Into Water-Filled Ditch In Yucca Valley
- Man Rescued After Fall In Joshua Tree National Park

New Year's Eve crash leaves 2 pedestrians injured

Paola Baker, Hesperia Star

Posted: January 1, 2017, 12:57 PM

VICTORVILLE - Authorities said a man and a woman were injured after they were struck by a vehicle late Saturday.

The incident was first reported at 10:33 p.m. near the intersection of Mojave Drive and Condor Road. Specifics on the crash are not yet known, but **San Bernardino County Fire Department** spokesman Ryan Vaccaro said witnesses reported that two people were struck by a vehicle in front of Mojave Market & Liquor Store on Mojave Drive.

San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department spokeswoman Jodi Miller said the pedestrians were not using a crosswalk when the collision occurred, which involved a Nissan Versa. The driver of the Versa was also injured during the crash. A passenger in the Versa escaped injury.

Several County Fire paramedics and two AMR ambulances responded to the incident. CPR was initiated at the scene for the woman, who was in critical condition, Vaccaro said. Airships were also initially requested but were unable to make the trip due to inclement weather.

Miller said the driver of the Versa remained on scene and was cooperative with deputies during the incident. She suffered minor injuries and was treated at a local hospital. The pedestrians were each taken to a trauma center for treatment. They were both in stable condition as of Sunday afternoon, Miller said.

No other injuries were reported and the cause of the crash remains under investigation.

<http://www.hesperia.com/news/20170101/new-years-eve-crash-leaves-2-pedestrians-injured>

Three Injured In New Years Eve Vehicle Versus Pedestrian Collision

Christie Martin, 24/7 Headline News

Posted: January 1, 2017



Update: (1-1-17) The man and woman both remain hospitalized and in stable condition.

VICTORVILLE – A man and woman sustained major injuries after being hit by a vehicle on Mojave Drive near Condor Road in the City of Victorville Saturday night.

At around 10:30 p.m. deputies from the Victorville Station and **San Bernardino County Fire Department** medics were dispatched to the scene of the collision. When they arrived they located a 55-year-old female in full arrest and a male who was conscious and breathing.

Victorville station Sergeant Jason Rosenbaum told a 24/7 Headline News reporter that CPR was performed on the female. “The female was breathing and had a heartbeat when transported,” said Sergeant Rosenbaum. “The male was also conscious and breathing when transported.”

Two air ambulances were requested near the scene, of the collision, but declined due to weather conditions. Both immediate patients were transported by ground ambulance to Victor Valley Global Medical Center (VVGMC). Due to the extent of her injuries, the staff at VVGMC determined that the injured female should be transported to Loma Linda Medical Center for the treatment of her injuries. The male patient was also transported to a trauma center for the treatment of his injuries.

According to witness statements, the driver of the Nissan Versa was traveling in the eastbound lanes of Mojave Drive when the two pedestrians walked into the roadway, outside of the crosswalk. The driver did not have sufficient time to stop and struck both pedestrians.

Mojave Drive was closed to traffic from Village Drive to Topango Road. The driver remained at the scene and was cooperative throughout the investigation. Alcohol and/or drugs are not believed to be a factor in the collision. The driver was transported by ground ambulance to Victor Valley Global Medical Center for the complaint of pain.

<https://247headline.com/three-injured-in-new-years-eve-vehicle-versus-pedestrian-collision/>

Helicopter makes hard landing on Mt. Baldy

Beatriz Valenzuela, San Bernardino Sun

Brian Day, San Gabriel Valley Tribune

Posted: December 29, 2016, 12:11 PM

Mount BALDY >> Three people were injured following a helicopter “hard landing” at Mount Baldy Thursday, Los Angeles County sheriff’s officials reported, while one refused medical treatment.

Federal Aviation Administration spokesman Ian Gregor said a Robinson R-44 helicopter made a “hard landing” on Mount Baldy for unknown reasons. The crash was first reported just before noon Thursday about 1,000 feet below the summit.

The Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department issued a new release Thursday evening, describing the crash site as 100 yards west of the Los Angeles-San Bernardino County line. It will be overseeing the investigation.

The sheriff’s department reported that all the injuries were considered minor.

“The helicopter’s tail boom was significantly damaged,” Gregor said.

The FAA also has launched an investigation, Gregor said.

FAA records indicate the helicopter had a valid flight status and was registered to November Alpha LLC, based out of Newark, Delaware.

Hikers near the crash site reported the occupants of the helicopter were awake and talking, according to **San Bernardino County fire** officials, who were the first responders on scene.

Fire Department spokesman Eric Sherwin said the helicopter did not appear to be leaking any fuel.

Anyone with information about this incident is encouraged to contact the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department’s Aero Bureau at 562-421-2701. Anonymous tipsters can call 800-222-TIPS or going online to lacrimestoppers.org.

EDITOR’S NOTE: This article has been edited to correct an earlier version which misstated the age of one of the helicopter’s occupants.

<http://www.dailybulletin.com/general-news/20161229/helicopter-makes-hard-landing-on-mt-baldy>

UPDATE: Helicopter crash in Mt. Baldy leaves 3 injured

Paola Baker, Daily Press

Posted: December 29, 2016, 3:21 PM

MOUNT BALDY - Authorities said 3 people were injured following a helicopter crash near Mount Baldy summit early Thursday.

San Bernardino County Fire Department personnel responded to reports of a helicopter crash west of Mount Baldy summit just before noon Thursday. The aircraft was carrying 4 passengers and hikers at the site reported that all 4 were awake and talking, according to County Fire officials.

Federal Aviation Administration spokesman Ian Gregor said the aircraft was a Robinson R-44 helicopter with a tail number of N324RS that made a hard landing on Mount Baldy "for unknown reasons." The helicopter's tail boom was significantly damaged from the crash.

The site of the crash was 1000 feet below the summit and was inaccessible to ground units, prompting a response from County Fire's Air Rescue 07 helicopter. They arrived a few minutes after noon, officials said, and all passengers were out of the aircraft.

The rescue team made contact with the passengers at 12:16 p.m. and all passengers were loaded into Air Rescue 07 for transport. They were removed from the crash site by 12:49 p.m, officials said.

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department officials said the three injured parties suffered minor injuries and were taken to a local hospital for treatment. One person refused medical treatment, officials said. No other injuries were reported.

The FAA and Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Aero Bureau are continuing to investigate the crash.

Anyone with information about this incident is encouraged to contact the Aero Bureau at 562-421-2701. Callers wishing to remain anonymous can call "Crime Stoppers" at 800-222-8477 or online at <http://lacrimestoppers.org>.

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/news/20161229/update-helicopter-crash-in-mt-baldy-leaves-3-injured>

Helicopter Crash In Mount Baldy Area Injures 3; Prompts Rescue Operation

Posted: ABC7 News

December 29, 2016 07:48 PM



A helicopter crashed in the snow-covered Mount Baldy area on Thursday, Dec. 29, 2016. Three people were injured, officials said. (KABC)

MOUNT BALDY, Calif. (KABC) --

A helicopter crashed Thursday morning in the snow-covered Mount Baldy area, prompting a rescue operation by the **San Bernardino County Fire Department**, officials said.

The incident occurred west of and 1,000 feet below the Mount Baldy summit, the fire department said on Twitter shortly before noon. According to the agency, hikers at the scene initially reported the helicopter's occupants were "awake and talking."

Four people were in the Robinson R44 when it made a "hard landing," leaving its tail boom significantly damaged, said Ian Gregor, spokesman for the Federal Aviation Administration's Pacific Division.

A fire department helicopter was dispatched to the crash site, which was inaccessible to ground units, officials said.

That chopper landed "offsite" and rescuers made contact with the crashed helicopter's four occupants, the fire department said. Three people were taken to the hospital to be treated for minor injuries, according to officials with the sheriff's department.

After being escorted onto the agency's Air Rescue 7 helicopter, the individuals were flown to a landing zone at Cow Canyon Saddle.

<http://abc7.com/news/1-injured-after-helicopter-crashes-in-mount-baldy-area/1678107/>

Injured woman rescued in Wrightwood

Terri Hill, Mountain Progress

Posted: December 22, 2016

On Monday, December 19 at 5:15 p.m., San Bernardino County Fire received notification of a woman calling for help from a hillside on the north side of the 1900 block of Highway 2 in Wrightwood.

Fire personnel responded and with the sheriffs, accessed the woman's location. Originally unable to locate the woman, first responders saw her tumble down the side of the hill, and were able to reach her. The unidentified woman was not speaking, and did not give rescuers any details about her identity or circumstances.

According to County Fire Public Information Officer, Eric Sherwin, personnel on the ground determined that due to her injuries, a hoist rescue would be most efficient, and safest for the victim.

Air Rescue 7, carrying personnel from County Fire and Sheriff, performed the hoist rescue, and transported the patient to Arrowhead Regional Medical Center.

Authorities are attempting to identify the woman, possibly in her late 30s/early 40s, who was not dressed for a hike in cold temperatures. It is still unclear whether she is a Wrightwood resident, or a visitor.

<http://mtprogress.net/home/newsdecember222016.html>

Don't Trash The Mountains

Steve Cassling, KBHR Big Bear News

Posted: December 29, 2016



Big Bear, CA, December 29, 2016 – Hundreds of thousands of visitors will travel to San Bernardino Mountain resorts this winter for recreation. The California Department of Transportation released survey data in June 2016 that shows nearly half of all motorists surveyed admit to sometimes littering along the state's highways.

Yesterday, the Director of Caltrans District 8 joined San Bernardino County Supervisor (Second District) Janice Rutherford, the California Highway Patrol, the California Department of Forestry with support from the United States Forest Service, **San Bernardino County Fire**, Sheriff's Department and County Public Works for a news conference to urge the public to keep trash inside their vehicles and dispose of it in the proper place – NOT along mountain roadsides or on private property. Hundreds of pounds of litter and debris was collected along State Routes 18, 38, and 330 after the Christmas holiday and snow storm.

The CHP and Sheriff Departments will be looking for litter bugs while on patrol. Fines for littering can cost up to \$1,000, but the long-term damage to the forest and waterways can last a lifetime. Please help keep the mountains beautiful and stop litter before it happens! Here are some ways you can help:

- Bring trash bags with you and keep litter and cigarette butts in your car until you can dispose of them properly.
- Recycle bottles and cans and take them with you.
- Don't leave broken snow toys behind.
- Never throw anything in lakes, streams or waterways.
- Use the restroom before traveling – traffic congestion and long delays are in store during high volume weekends. It might be awhile before you can get to a public restroom.
- Discard dirty diapers in trash receptacles.
- Don't play in the snow on private property or non-designated areas – use the designated snow play areas provided – get the USFS Adventure Pass to play in the forest.
- Don't block snow plows or travel lanes with your vehicle to put chains on or park. It adds to congestion and emergency vehicles and work crews need access to keep everyone safe!

Travelers are encouraged to visit the mountains during winter months and Caltrans encourages you to be the example to keep litter in its place. Please be courteous and concerned for the environment and the future we leave our children.

<http://kbhr933.com/current-news/trash-mountains/>

Train crashes into stuck pickup truck near Yermo

Paola Baker, Desert Dispatch

Posted: December 30, 2016, 8:54 PM

YERMO - Authorities said no one was injured after a train collided with a vehicle stuck on railroad tracks near Yermo on Friday evening.

The crash, which was first reported at 6:38 p.m., involved a 4-door Toyota Tacoma pickup truck and a Union Pacific train. While an extrication was initially requested, **San Bernardino County Fire Department** Captain Jeff Allen said the extrication wasn't needed and no injuries were reported.

California Highway Patrol logs reported that the train collided with the Tacoma about 2 miles east of Alvord Mountain Road and Yermo Road. The incident prompted a response from various units in the area, including County Fire, the Yermo Fire Department and the Marine Corps Logistics Base in Barstow.

Scanner traffic reported at 7:15 p.m. that all occupants were out of the Tacoma and appeared to be uninjured. However, the Tacoma remained stuck on the railroad tracks, prompting officials to request equipment to pull the truck out.

Authorities remain on scene as of 8:45 p.m. and a Union Pacific technician is reported to be heading out to the incident.

The cause of the collision is not yet known.

This story is developing and more information will be updated as it is received.

<http://www.desertdispatch.com/news/20161230/train-crashes-into-stuck-pickup-truck-near-yermo>

Fiery Rollover Crash on I-15 Freeway Thursday Night

Victor Valley News

Posted: December 30, 2016



Gabriel D. Espinoza, Victor Valley News

VICTORVILLE, Calif. (VVNG.com)- A traffic collision on the southbound 15 freeway resulted in one vehicle landing on its roof before catching on fire.

The crash occurred just after 11:00 p.m., on Thursday, December 29th between D Street and Mojave Drive.

San Bernardino County Fire arrived and located a Scion TC on its roof with smoke coming from the engine along the shoulder of the freeway. The occupants had safely exited the vehicle prior to their arrival.

A red Nissan Rogue was also involved in the collision. No serious injuries were reported by any of the involved parties.

The no.3 & 4 lane were temporarily closed while authorities cleared the scene.

The cause of the crash is currently under investigation by the California Highway Patrol.

<http://www.vvng.com/fiery-rollover-crash-on-i-15-freeway-thursday-night/>

Firefighting blamed for 'megafires' ravaging US forests

BBC News

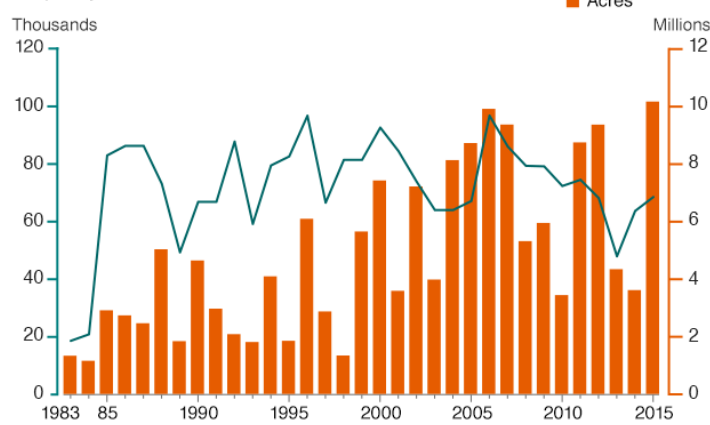
Posted: December 30, 2016



Image copyrightGETTY IMAGES

Wildfires in the US (1983 - 2015)

Frequency and size of blazes



Source: National Interagency Fire Center

BBC

They're known as "megafires", and they're becoming increasingly common and destructive in the wildlands of the western United States. Could overzealous firefighting itself be to blame? BBC North America Correspondent James Cook investigates.

In a quarter of a century as a firefighter, Mark Hartwig has seen more than a few wildfires.

But as the years roll by, the **San Bernardino County** fire chief says the blazes are becoming tougher to tackle.

"There is no doubt that fire intensity is increasing in Southern California," Mr Hartwig says as he heads out to inspect the front line of yet another inferno that has taken hold in the mountains east of Los Angeles.

"We used to have a thing called fire season," he says.

Now, "fire season is year round".

The results are devastating. The amount of land laid waste by wildfires, not just in California but across the United States, is rising.

From 1983 (when modern records began) to 1999, the total area burned annually by wildfires exceeded five million acres just three times.

But at the turn of the century, the destruction accelerated, with wildfires scorching more than five million acres in 11 out of the 15 years between 2000-2015.

In 2015, the figure topped 10 million acres, a record in recent history.

The challenge this poses, and the near constant battle against these blazes, makes it difficult to pause and take stock.

Fires make for dramatic television pictures, and reports on the evening news focus on the human tragedy of lives and homes lost, and the bravery of the men and women trying to bring them under control.

There is much less public discussion about what is driving these towering, terrifying conflagrations. But many scientists, foresters and firefighters think they know what is going on.

One cause of major wildfires is obvious - rising temperatures have resulted in tinderbox conditions across much of the American west, not least in California, now five years into a punishing drought.

When fire breaks out, whether through lightning, accidents or arson, it races through the parched passes and canyons at deadly speed.

However, another possible cause is far more surprising - it turns out that firefighting itself may be to blame.

"We are caught in this vicious circle," says Tom Fry, western conservation director for the American Forest Foundation, a non-profit group which seeks to represent some 11 million private and family landowners whose holdings cover an estimated 56% of all US forest.

"The forests need fire," he insists.

"Fire is as natural to a forest as sunshine and rain, and yet we can't have fire in our forests because of the population pressures and the unhealthy condition of the forest."

Mr Fry is standing in the middle of a landscape which makes his point for him, in a giant scar which cuts through the middle of the Pike National Forest in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, south west of Denver, Colorado.

Twenty years ago, the Buffalo Creek wildfire raced through here, the result of an unattended campfire driven by fierce winds.

It was a crown fire, meaning it burned ferociously to the very tips of the pines, sending flames hundreds of feet into the air, the blaze itself leaping from crown to crown of the trees.

The Buffalo Creek fire consumed nearly 12,000 acres in under five hours. There was little firefighters could do but watch it burn.

The intense heat baked the soil, leaving it slick and unable to absorb moisture from a huge thunderstorm that followed two months later.

The result was deadly flooding, catastrophic damage, and mountains of silt and debris washing into a reservoir which supplied much of Denver's drinking water, dramatically reducing its capacity.

War with wildfires

The city is still counting the cost of dredging the reservoir, which ran into many millions of dollars.

"It will take centuries for this burn scar to heal over," says Mr Fry.

He believes Buffalo Creek shows the folly of attempting to eliminate one of nature's elemental forces, and the importance of thinning out America's overgrown forests.

From its very early days at the dawn of the 20th century, the US Forest Service, the main federal wildfire-fighting agency, embraced the idea of fire suppression: preventing or immediately extinguishing all wildfires.

The concept was not without its critics, but suppression became the dominant approach after the Big Blowup of 1910 when hundreds of fires ravaged three million acres of Washington, Idaho and Montana in just two days, killing more than 85 people and leaving entire towns in ruins.

From that moment on, the Forest Service went to war with wildfires on federal land.

In 1935, the service introduced a "10am policy". The goal was to extinguish every fire by mid-morning on the day after it was reported.

This meant forcing ranchers and other stewards of the land to stop the practice of carrying out controlled burns, something Native Americans - and nature - had been using for centuries to manage the environment.

In the 1960s and 1970s, some scientists began to argue that fire suppression was causing more harm than good, stressing the crucial role fire plays in forest ecosystems.

But to this day the desire to allow certain fires to burn is tempered by the importance of preserving human life and settlements in the now rather-less-wild lands of the west.

"Today we have 44 million homes that are close to our national forest," points out Tom Tidwell, chief of the US Forest Service, which today manages 154 national forests and 20 grasslands across 44 states and Puerto Rico.

This human encroachment into the wilderness "has significantly reduced our ability to manage fire" he says.

A century of fire suppression has allowed the forests to become more dense and more combustible. Add the combined effect of drought and bark beetles that have left an estimated 66 million dead trees in the southern Sierra Nevada alone, and the burn is long from over.

"The number of megafires that we're seeing, that is the new norm," warns Mr Tidwell, who has previously described the policy of fire exclusion and suppression as "disastrous".

Still, the chief proudly points out that his teams manage to snuff out 98% of wildfires, which they decide to tackle at an early stage.

Doing so is not cheap. The Forest Service reports the proportion of its budget dedicated to firefighting has risen dramatically from 13% in 1991, to 56% today.

This in turn means federal foresters have far fewer resources to invest in thinning out forests and preventing devastating fires in the first place.

Of course the problem does not just extend to federal land. States, rural communities and individual home owners pay a heavy price, too.

Due north of Pikes Peak, 8700ft (2652m) above sea level, Nancy Zorensky looks out from her ranch on a view which would have a real estate agent in palpitations. It is a wild, isolated and beguiling place.

"When we first moved in, we looked out over that and thought, 'This is the most beautiful carpet of trees,'" says Ms Zorensky.

But all was not well in paradise. There are now no fewer than five big burn scars to be seen from her home, including a streak of pale green which marks the path of the Buffalo Creek wildfire.

The Zorenskys watched the wildfires race towards their property with terror. They had several uncomfortably close calls.

"We started seeing these fires and something was wrong. These crown fires just ate up the landscape very quickly."

With help from the American Forest Foundation, Ms Zorensky and her husband began to investigate what was going on. It turned out that the thick forest on their doorstep was not as wild and natural as it seemed.

Before the West was settled, say foresters, this area was made up of meadows and clusters of trees, with greater biodiversity and a preponderance of fire-resistant Ponderosa pine trees, rather than tightly packed, and in many cases dead or dying, Douglas Firs.

And so the Zorenskys set loggers to work restoring some 230 acres around their property to its previous state, better able to withstand fire and also, they hope, to make it healthier and more sustainable.

Such treatment is expensive but the costs, say its advocates, are a fraction of dealing with the fall-out of megafires laying waste to the land, claiming lives and property, and turning forests into prairie.

The US Forest Service has also been using logging to thin out the forests. Chief Tidwell says between 2009 and 2015, the Forest Service treated around 12 million acres - all close to communities in order to reduce the hazard of wildfire.

However, the agency is hampered by the budgetary squeeze and the pressure to keep fighting fires. Mr Tidwell reckons another 50 million acres is in urgent need of treatment.

He is calling for a radical rethink of funding for megafires, arguing that they should be treated like other natural disasters such as hurricanes, volcanoes or floods.

The "worst case scenario", he says, would be to "continue the status quo".

Doing so would mean continuing to lose homes and "as hard as it is for me to say", continuing to lose firefighters.

Mr Fry would agree with that sentiment. He argues that people need to allow fire to do its natural job of managing the environment.

"No one ever lost their job for fighting a fire as a fire manager or a policy maker," he says. "The far more difficult decision is to allow a fire to burn."

But he has a word of caution about the dangers of doing nothing.

"Mother Nature," he says, "bats last."

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-37171390>

California Counties Use New Policy to Get Ambulances in Service Faster San

Bernardino and Riverside counties work to cut patient transfer time

Anne Millerbernd, Press Enterprise via Firefighter Nation

Posted: December 30, 2016

The 911 system was devised as a safe, rapid way to help people in an emergency. But in the Inland Empire, it can take more than an hour for a patient to be transferred from an ambulance into a hospital's care.

Those waits have been a significant issue for years in San Bernardino and Riverside counties, which suffer from a doctor shortage and a population that over-uses the 911 system, county and hospital officials say. Ambulance crews here spend tens of thousands of hours each year waiting to move patients into an emergency department.

Starting Dec. 15, both counties will wipe clean a slate of previous attempted fixes and implement a policy that will allow paramedics to drop off patients more quickly.

The policy is expected to reduce offload delays - cases in which ambulances wait more than about 30 minutes to turn over responsibility for a patient - in both counties. It's also essentially a job description for both hospital staffs and paramedics.

"You've got to get everybody speaking the same language before you put actions in place," said Riverside County EMS Administrator Bruce Barton, who helped spearhead the effort along with his counterpart at the Inland Counties Emergency Medical Agency, which serves San Bernardino, Inyo and Mono counties.

The policy is designed only to reduce the time ambulance crews have to spend with patients so they can get back into circulation sooner; it won't necessarily reduce the amount of time patients wait before a doctor sees them.

Under the new policy, paramedics who note an ambulance shortage during an offload delay will be able to leave certain patients in a waiting room instead of waiting until hospital staff are available to take the patients.

A problem with deep roots

A survey in a 2014 report from the California Hospital Association asked 33 local emergency medical services agencies how significant an issue offload delays were. Inland Counties Emergency Medical Agency and Riverside County EMS were among 10 that responded "extremely" or "very" significant.

Patients are considered delayed after they've waited for 25 minutes in San Bernardino County, or 30 minutes in Riverside County. The data the two counties collect on offload delays do not include ambulance transports that are completed within those time frames.

Between 2013 and 2015, about 35 percent of ambulance transports were delayed in San Bernardino County, and about 22 percent were delayed in Riverside County, according to data from the counties' emergency medical services agencies.

Desert Valley Hospital in Victorville had the highest percentage of delays of any hospital in the two-county area during those years. Almost 60 percent of patients taken there by ambulance were considered delayed; on average, those delayed patients waited an hour to be offloaded.

The longest average delays came for patients at Corona Regional Medical Center, the data show. Among the approximately 40 percent of delayed patients, the average wait was 72 minutes.

Riverside University Health System-Medical Center, the county's public hospital in Moreno Valley, is just below the county average when it comes to offload delays. However, the percentage of delayed ambulances has risen in recent years, reaching about 20 percent in 2015.

The emergency department's nursing director, Keven Porter, attributes that in part to the abuse of the 911 system: "They scrape their toe and they call an ambulance," he said of some patients.

Greg Christian, Kaiser Permanente's San Bernardino area manager, referred to it in an email as the "911 for everything" phenomenon. He said it's on the rise.

Limited access to physicians plagues both counties and plays a major role in the offload delays, said Tom Lynch, administrator of Inland Counties Emergency Medical Agency.

There were 182 medical doctor licenses per 100,000 people in San Bernardino County in 2012, according to the California Hospital Association report. That number in Riverside County was 128 - less than half of the state average of 272.

Not a panacea

The new ambulance offloading policy solves none of those underlying issues.

Emergency department crowding is a complex web of issues, and almost none can be solved with a simple policy change. Ambulance delays are one small string in the web that can be isolated and fixed.

So that's where Lynch and Barton decided to start.

While the new policy outlines the standard for offloading a patient, paramedics and hospital staff will have to decide case by case whom paramedics need to stay with - often as the patient waits on a gurney in a hospital hall - and who can be put in a wheelchair, waiting room or bed so the ambulance can leave.

To be offloaded, a patient must meet criteria, including that paramedics haven't needed to perform lifesaving measures on the patient, and the patient has to be stable.

"Stable" is commonly used among medical staff to describe a patient's condition, but Christian said Kaiser would have preferred the policy include a more solid way to identify a patient as stable. Still, he's optimistic about the change.

Hospitals had a chance to look over the policy and request changes. Christian said a lot of those suggestions were implemented.

Under the old policy, ambulances delayed more than 90 minutes at a hospital would contact other ambulances and tell them to avoid that hospital.

Barton said that method worked, but it bothered patients who could not be taken to their hospital of choice.

This effort is different, Barton said, because everyone is willing to work together to solve the problem.

"I think we have all the hospitals' attention, and it didn't always feel like we had that," he said.

Lynch and Barton both said the new policy is just the beginning of their efforts to mitigate delays.

Working 'at their max'

Hospital crowding that leads to ambulance delays is not specific to the Inland Empire, nor to the state.

American Medical Response, an ambulance provider that serves swaths of both counties, experiences offload delays everywhere, said spokesman Jason Sorrick.

"That said, because of California's size and the volume of patients moving through the emergency system, the cost and impact that these delays place on our operations is significant," he wrote in a statement.

It's easy to blame hospitals for the wait because they are where the bottleneck happens.

But BJ Bartleson, vice president of nursing services for the California Hospital Association, said area hospitals have taken big steps to reduce the delays.

Some hospitals have added technology in the emergency department, she added, and some have begun to track ambulance wait times as they sit at the hospital.

The real blame sits on those systemic issues that aren't so easily solved, she said.

"I guarantee in Riverside and San Bernardino counties, the (local EMS agencies) are working at their max," Bartleson said.

"So now we've got to look at the community to help us."

<http://www.firefighternation.com/articles/2016/12/california-counties-use-new-policy-to-get-ambulances-in-service-faster.html>

Fires dominate news: Pilot, Bluecut blazes are biggest local stories of 2016

Daily Press

Posted: December 31, 2016, 11:24 AM



The Blue Cut Fire burns a mountain side where structures and vehicles were burned on August 17, 2016. David Pardo, Press Dispatch
There was a wealth of big news locally in 2016, but nothing could top the two major wildfires that broke out in a one-week span in August.

No sooner had firefighters contained the Pilot Fire that broke out near Silverwood Lake than they were confronted with a monster blaze, the Bluecut Fire that started in the middle of the Cajon Pass. The latter forced authorities to issue evacuation orders for more than 82,000 High Desert residents, including the entire community of Wrightwood.

Here's a look at the top 10 local news stories of 2016:

BLUECUT FIRE

The 36,274-acre Bluecut Fire, which began Aug. 16 and quickly grew, was the fifth largest wildfire reported in the state in 2016. The blaze erupted in the Cajon Pass just hours after fire officials announced the Pilot Fire had been fully contained.

Firefighters made aggressive attacks, including using 241,414 gallons of fire retardant on the first day. But erratic winds spread the fire quickly and carried embers up to 2 miles away, touching off new fires. By the end of the first day, authorities had shut down Interstate 15 in both directions and issued mandatory

evacuation orders for over 82,000 residents, including those in West Cajon Valley, Wrightwood, Phelan, Oak Hills and southwest Hesperia.

The blaze destroyed an estimated 105 homes, 213 outbuildings and more than 200 vehicles, mostly in the West Cajon Valley, and was declared fully contained on Aug. 23. At the peak of the battle to control the Bluecut Fire, 2,684 personnel were actively involved. The Bluecut Fire saw 499,336 gallons of retardant used. Last estimates showed more than \$18 million was spent fighting the blaze. Fire officials say investigators still have not determined its cause.

PILOT FIRE

Firefighters had their hands full in August battling various wildfires in the region. The first was the Pilot Fire, which burned 8,110 acres in the San Bernardino Mountains and Summit Valley. The Pilot Fire began on Aug. 7 near the Miller Canyon off-highway vehicle area off of Highway 138. The California Highway Patrol, for some time, had rolled the wildfire into an earlier incident logged as a "car fire." But CHP officials were not able to confirm whether the two incidents were connected.

By the end of the first night the blaze spread to 1,500 acres, prompting a massive firefighting response from local and regional agencies. The blaze quickly resulted in over 5,300 evacuation orders for homes in the southeast Hesperia, Lake Arrowhead, Lake Gregory and Crestline.

Firefighters made aggressive attacks, including using 312,000 gallons of fire retardant on the first day. The Pilot Fire was not officially contained until Aug. 16. Fire officials reported no structures were damaged or destroyed. One firefighter suffered minor injuries. The last estimates available from the San Bernardino National Forest Service show the cost at more than \$16 million. The Pilot Fire was listed as the 10th largest wildfire in California in 2016. Fire officials say investigators still have not determined its cause.

CAJON PASS CONSTRUCTION

After nearly three years of construction on Interstate 15 in the Cajon Pass, Caltrans held a May ceremony to declare both the \$324 million Devore Interchange and \$121 million Cajon Pass Rehabilitation projects complete - under budget and ahead of schedule.

High Desert commuters had to endure lane closures, bypass lanes, reduced speed limits and limited shoulder access while Caltrans' contractors worked on the projects. The Devore Interchange Project added lanes and created truck bypass lanes on both north and southbound I-15 at the Devore curve, while the Rehabilitation Project removed and replaced badly worn pavement up and down the Cajon Pass.

The result of the construction is pavement that should last at least 40 years and additional lanes that should eliminate one of the five worst traffic bottlenecks in the nation.

MURDERS OF APPLE VALLEY COUPLE

The murders of an elderly Apple Valley couple sent shock waves through the community - with the lack of information initially available keeping residents on edge for weeks. Louis and Rose Giuntini, longtime Apple Valley residents, were found dead inside their home on Highway 18 on Feb. 29. Sheriff's officials classified their deaths as homicides but remained tight-lipped on details, prompting concerns from neighbors fearful that a killer may be in their midst.

Officials finally broke their silence on March 9, naming a Lancaster man recently released from state prison, Keon Bailey, as a "person of interest" in the slayings. However, it wasn't until more than two months after the murders that DNA evidence positively identified Bailey - who was killed in a robbery in the South Bay before being identified as the sole suspect in the Giuntinis' slayings.

Bailey was also connected to three other crimes in the Apple Valley area that occurred before and after the murders, and another robbery in Long Beach during a crime spree he began just days after he was released from prison.

The Giuntinis were recently honored by the Town of Apple Valley with the dedication of a bench installed at the Apple Valley Golf Course in late November in the couple's memory.

HESPERIA COUNCIL APPROVES TAPESTRY

After almost a year of discussion where many residents expressed outrage and concern over the proposed Tapestry housing project in southeast Hesperia, the City Council approved the project in January.

Approval of the 30-year build out project, which will bring 16,196 homes to Hesperia in multiple phases, was quickly met by a several lawsuits against the Terra Verde Group and the city of Hesperia. The Crestline Sanitation District and a coalition of public-interest groups, including the Center for Biological Diversity, the San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society and the Sierra Club, filed lawsuits.

Although public discussion has ended on the Tapestry project, many residents told the Daily Press they will remember the seated Council members who approved Tapestry should they choose to run for re-election.

DEMISE OF MOJAVE ALUMINUM PLANT

The \$120 million, 500,000-square-foot aluminum remelt and casting house plant proposed to be built in Lenwood met its demise in 2016. Developer Eric Shen had said the plant would employ up to 450 people and would be a scaled-down version of one the Barstow City Council approved in March 2014.

Shen sent a letter to the city saying his Mojave Aluminum Company would not proceed with the building of the smaller plant. He blamed the project's demise on a Dupre Analytics report released in August. The online report accused China Zhongwang Holdings Limited of fraudulent market practices. Shen was named as a "key player" for China Zhongwang's Chairman Liu Zhongtian in the report. Shen's attorney, Dean Kajioka, of Kajioka & Associates in Las Vegas, denied any wrongdoing by his client.

THE MAVERICKS STRIKE OUT

When the High Desert Mavericks won the California League championship in September, the team was playing for a bookend of titles for the franchise, which won its first championship in its inaugural 1991 season.

A month before, the California League announced it would dissolve the Mavericks and Bakersfield Blaze at the end of the year and downsize the league to eight teams. For the Blaze, failures to command a new stadium appeared to seal its fate, while the Mavericks became the second team - the odd man out - in part because of a tense feud that had been stirring for months.

The Adelanto City Council voted in January to tear up the \$1 annual stadium agreement inked with the team four years earlier, saying it violated the state Constitution and was tantamount to a gift of public funds. The team sued, the city sued, but the damage was done. The lawsuit brought by Mavericks ownership, which has won battles in court so far, is expected to enter mediation as early as the fall.

GREEN TREE EXTENSION GETS FUNDED

San Bernardino Associated Governments approved a \$12.5 million loan for Victorville's Green Tree Extension project in October, securing a much-needed funding source for the city's most significant infrastructure undertaking since the Nisqualli Interchange. Until the loan agreement, the project's financial viability had often been met by skepticism.

The city, town of Apple Valley and San Bernardino County later approved the loan as project partners. The loan was widely seen by officials as a signal of inclusiveness within the Victor Valley and it allowed Victorville to project that construction could start in late 2018.

The \$45 million extension, the final leg of the Yucca Loma Corridor, will stretch Green Tree Boulevard about a mile from Hesperia Road to Ridgecrest/Yates roads, includes a bridge over BNSF railroad tracks and will ultimately create a third arterial connection from Apple Valley to Interstate 15 via the recently completed Yucca Loma Bridge.

ELECTION OUSTERS

Two councilman in the High Desert who had both served as mayor of their respective cities at some point were ousted from the dais during the November general election: Victorville Councilman Ryan McEachron finished fifth in a race for three seats; Hesperia Councilman Eric Schmidt came in third in a contest with two seats open.

The outcome in races in both cities altered the dynamic of the councils and acted as a referendum for change.

McEachron, who may have been hurt by his support of toll lanes on Interstate 15, had served on the Council since 2008. Schmidt, who stood behind the unpopular Tapestry master development housing project, was first elected in 2012.

Both are well-known businessmen in the region with strong connections to civic, business and community groups. During their final council meetings, both were praised by colleagues and each expressed gratitude for having been given the opportunity to serve.

OAK HILLS HIGH HAZING CLAIMS

In September, a second former Oak Hills High freshman football player sued the school and Hesperia Unified School District, alleging he was subjected daily to hazing during the 2012-13 football season. It was the second civil complaint filed in two years accusing officials of creating a culture where systemic sadomasochistic sexual hazing occurred.

But the alleged issues hit a crescendo when they were exposed to a national audience as part of ESPN's "Outside the Lines" program, which aired in September and highlighted claims by a first plaintiff who filed suit in 2014. That case is expected to go to trial as early as mid-February, while the later case has a trial setting conference scheduled for April, court records show.

While the district and school have denied the claims, the attorney representing the former freshman football players has suggested there are likely other purported victims.

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/news/20161231/fires-dominate-news-pilot-bluecut-blazes-are-biggest-local-stories-of-2016>

1 dog killed, 2 rescued from Rialto house fire

Ryan Hagen, The Sun

Posted: December 31, 2016, 2:57 PM

RIALTO >> A house fire Saturday killed one dog, but firefighters saved two other dogs from the single family home.

The occupants weren't home, and no civilians or fire personnel were injured.

Rialto firefighters assisted by the **San Bernardino County Fire Department** responded shortly after 9 a.m. to a fire on the 200 Block of North Larch Avenue, according to a news release.

Seeing heavy smoke and fire coming out of multiple windows, firefighters reportedly attacked aggressively and ventilated the roof, stopping the fire from spreading to any other rooms.

Fire officials say they are still investigating the cause and origin of the fire.

<http://www.sbsun.com/general-news/20161231/1-dog-killed-2-rescued-from-rialto-house-fire>

Blaze near Apple Valley fire station reveals break-in plot

Daily Press

Posted: January 2, 2017, 2:24 PM



Reported at 4:30 a.m. Monday, the fire started in a small outbuilding on Apple Valley Fire Protection District property at Central Road and Highway 18. Photo courtesy of AVFPD

Reported at 4:30 a.m., the fire started in a small outbuilding just north of a Chevron gas station at Central Road and Highway 18, awakening firefighters that slept less than 100 feet away at the fire station on Headquarters Drive.

APPLE VALLEY - A blaze to an outbuilding on Apple Valley Fire Protection District property Monday morning revealed a plot to break into the station and other structures and steal a district vehicle, AVFPD officials said.

Reported at 4:30 a.m., the fire started in a small outbuilding just north of a Chevron gas station at Central Road and Highway 18, awakening firefighters who slept less than 100 feet away at the fire station on Headquarters Drive.

Crews extinguished the blaze, but further investigation "showed multiple attempts to enter the station as well as outbuildings," officials said. "One Fire District vehicle was broken into and attempted to hot wire."

One suspect was taken into custody, officials said in an early afternoon statement, although the investigation remained ongoing at that time.

Three fire investigators, Fire Marshal Jason Nailon and Fire Chief Sid Hultquist had responded to the scene, as did a detective from the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Bomb and Arson Division.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20170102/blaze-near-apple-valley-fire-station-reveals-break-in-plot>

Dog killed, Family Displaced by Barstow Apartment Fire

Hugo C Valdez, Victor Valley News Group

Posted: January 3, 2017



Firefighters had a near miss when a portion of an apartment complex collapsed during a fire. (Gabriel D. Espinoza, Victor Valley News)



The family was able to make it out safely but were distraught over the loss of their dog. (Gabriel D. Espinoza, Victor Valley News)

BARSTOW, Calif. (VVNG.com)- A Barstow apartment fire killed a dog and displaced a family Monday night, according to officials.

Crews responded to the fire in the 1100 block of Deseret Avenue near Barstow Road just after 10:14 p.m. on January 2nd, to a report of a car fire under a carport.

“First arriving units found the fully involved carport and a fire that had spread into the first floor of the rear set of apartments,” said Chief Jamie Williams of the Barstow Fire Protection District.

The flames made its way into the attic of the complex which triggered a third-alarm response team and required resources from neighboring areas, including Victorville and Hinkley.

Chief Jamie Williams said the family was able to exit safely, however, the family dog was unable to be rescued and died in the fire.

Firefighters narrowly avoided injury after the second-story carport section of the unit collapsed.

Over a dozen personnel at the scene finally snuffed the blaze just after 11:30 p.m., authorities said.

Investigators are working to determine the cause of the incident, although, according to a witness at the scene, it began after a mattress was set on fire near the carport.

The Red Cross is assisting the family who was home at the time of the blaze, Williams said.

Chief Williams reminds the public to start off the new year by ensuring all smoke detectors are working, and Christmas trees have been appropriately discarded, as well as removing holiday decorations.

<http://www.vvng.com/dog-killed-family-displaced-by-barstow-apartment-fire/>

Man Rescued When Car Skids Off Road Into Water-Filled Ditch In Yucca Valley

Z107.7 News

Posted: January 3, 2017



A man escaped injury, but his car is totaled, when his car skidded off the roadway and landed in a water-filled ditch in Yucca Valley early New Year's Day. Swift water rescue personnel were called about 3:30 a.m. to Kickapoo Avenue and Yucca Trail where they found the gray, four-door sedan submerged up to its windows. The male driver was assisted out of the vehicle; he was uninjured. **County Fire** Battalion Chief Mike Snow said signs warning of flooded road conditions were in place. It's unknown if alcohol was a factor.

<http://z1077fm.com/man-rescued-when-car-skids-off-road-into-water-filled-ditch-in-yucca-valley/>

Man Rescued After Fall In Joshua Tree National Park

Z107.7 News

Posted: January 3, 2017

A man was rescued in Joshua Tree National Park Friday after he fell from rocks. According to **County Fire** Battalion Chief Mike Snow, the unidentified man was scrambling on rocks near the Hidden Valley campground when he fell from an undetermined height and suffered a possible broken shoulder and leg. The Sheriff's Department Air Rescue helicopter was called in to hoist the victim out of the rocks, and he was subsequently taken to Desert Hospital in Palm Springs.

<http://z1077fm.com/man-rescued-after-fall-in-joshua-tree-national-park/>