



# NEWS



## News Headlines 08/08/2019

- 'Fire Ops 101' program gives officials first-hand fire and rescue experience
- Flames destroy 25 acres of desert land
- State fines Apple Valley firefighters union \$13,000 for violating state election law

## **‘Fire Ops 101’ program gives officials first-hand fire and rescue experience**

**James Quigg, Victorville Daily Press**

Posted: August 7, 2019, 5:59 PM



Participants in the Fire Ops 101 program enter a fire and smoke-filled container. Hosted by the San Bernardino County Fire Protection District and Professional Fire fighters IAFF Local 935, the program simulated firefighting and life-saving situations. [James Quigg, Daily Press]

**SAN BERNARDINO** — Local government officials and news media representatives felt the heat on Wednesday.

“Fire Ops 101,” held at the Richard Sewell Training Center in San Bernardino, was aimed at showing them what it’s like to walk in the boots of a firefighter on duty. The daylong program was sponsored by Professional Fire Fighters IAFF Local 935 and the **San Bernardino County Fire** Protection District.

Under the supervision of professional paramedics and firefighters, participants were able to experience first-hand fire and rescue operations. Simulations included using the same equipment and gear that county firefighters use in their job, such as a self-contained breathing apparatus.

Participants battled a live fire, and learned how to handle various aspects of a fire, such as flashover.

Fire Ops 101 also included an introduction to technical rescue operations and a lesson in advanced life support to a victim of a heart attack.

“We got to experience some amazing things today,” said Adelanto Mayor Pro Tem Steevonna Evans. A highlight of the day, she said, was actually going into “a burning building and putting out that fire.”

1st District Supervisor Robert Lovingood said the exercise was “an incredibly intense, eye-opening experience. One that no one will understand until you’re in it. It’s stress, fear and adrenaline, all at once.”

Evans said the program emphasized the role firefighters play in public safety.

“We have to make sure we have enough firefighters for our population,” she said, which may include re-evaluating the city budget.

<https://www.vvdailypress.com/news/20190807/fire-ops-101-program-gives-officials-first-hand-fire-and-rescue-experience>

## Flames destroy 25 acres of desert land

Stacy Moore, Hi-Desert Star

Posted: August 7, 2019



A fixed-wing aircraft from Cal Fire drops retardant on homes as a brush fire burns nearby Saturday. "Cal Fire on top of it!" wrote photographer Mike Marks.

**YUCCA MESA** — A fire destroyed 25.6 acres of desert vegetation off Old Woman Springs Road and La Brisa Drive Saturday afternoon.

Battalion Chief Scott Tuttle from **San Bernardino County Fire** said crews were called just before 2 p.m.

The first to arrive found a well-established fire driven by winds, he said.

Cal Fire took command of the incident and county fire engines from Yucca Mesa, Yucca Valley, Joshua Tree and Twentynine Palms as well as the Wonder Valley engine crew now stationed in downtown Twentynine Palms all responded.

The Bureau of Land Management and National Park Service joined the fight under their mutual aid agreements.

"The fire was threatening structures in the Flamingo Heights area, so we used Cal Fire aircraft — the fixed-wing tankers dropping retardant and helicopters doing water drops," Tuttle said.

It took about an hour and 15 minutes to get the fire under control.

Cal Fire investigators are trying to determine what cause the blaze.

[http://www.hidesertstar.com/news/article\\_0af4ccd0-b969-11e9-a4ea-37d6e8f82db3.html](http://www.hidesertstar.com/news/article_0af4ccd0-b969-11e9-a4ea-37d6e8f82db3.html)

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## State fines Apple Valley firefighters union \$13,000 for violating state election law

Garrett Bergthold, Victorville Daily Press

Posted: August 7, 2019, 8:27 PM

**APPLE VALLEY** — The state's political watchdog agency said the town's firefighters union violated state election law during its 2016 efforts to support a ballot measure aimed at increasing funding for the fire district.

The Fair Political Practices Commission fined the Apple Valley Professional Firefighters Association Local 4742, plus two current battalion chiefs that led union operations as captains at the time, \$13,000, citing four violations of the Political Reform Act.

"We're firefighters, not professional politicians," said Shane Simpson, union president. "Now we know that when you support a candidate or committee you have file certain paperwork."

The union pushed to continue, and increase, a parcel tax on Apple Valley property owners that at the time made up 30% of Apple Valley Fire Protection District revenues, the Daily Press reported. Proponents said ballot Measure A was necessary to speed up response times.

With 77% of the vote, Measure A easily passed.

But on Monday, the FPPC said in a stipulated agreement that two past members of union leadership, and the 42-member union itself, were responsible for evading election law overseeing campaign finances and advertising disclosures.

Along with the union, two battalion chiefs at the helm of district leadership today, Larry Soper and James “Buddy” Peratt, are named as responsible parties by the FPPC. Neither could immediately be reached for comment.

At the time, Soper and Peratt were fire captains. Peratt was union president, and Soper was treasurer.

The FPPC found the political committee formed by the union failed to file certain campaign finance documents before the election, including disclosing more than \$20,000 in donations and \$32,000 in expenses.

The union’s committee instead filed the campaign finance forms late, between 75 and 103 days after the election, missing two separate deadlines.

The committee also fed money to the reelection campaigns of Apple Valley Council members Larry Cusack and Art Bishop without disclosing the donations before the election. Cusack and Bishop retained their seats.

In September 2016, the town council voted to formally support Measure A, with Bishop, a retired fire chief formerly with the district, saying the town would be in “dire straits” without it.

More than 70% of the committee’s cash was spent on Measure A, according to the agency. After exceeding this threshold, state law requires the committee to reconfigure and change its name.

The union’s use of campaign yard signs supporting Measure A was also found to be unacceptable.

The signs read “Paid for by the Citizens Supporting Apple Valley Emergency Services Measure A,” at the bottom. But because the union’s political action committee actually paid for the signs, the FPPC fined the union \$3,500 for improperly disclosing the origin of the funds.

The Daily Press previously reported that Citizens Supporting Apple Valley Emergency Services Measure A failed to submit financial documents before the election. The FPPC later fined the committee \$1,233.

The investigation stemmed from a 2016 sworn complaint filed by an Apple Valley resident alleging the union was attempting to conceal its connection to the ballot measure.

The complainant said the firefighters union “had a direct interest in the outcome of the ballot Measure A,” and was not being transparent about who was funding the campaign.

FPPC investigations said they found no evidence that the union, Soper or Peratt “intended to conceal, deceive, or mislead the public. Further, Respondents do not have a prior history of violations,” the agreement said.

Since Measure A's passage, the district's response times have dropped as two new stations and 15 additional firefighters have been added, according to Simpson. Next election, the union will hire an outside firm to handle its political activities, he said.

While the fine has already been paid, FPPC spokesman Jay Wierenga said the payment is "in escrow" until the commission meets on Aug. 15 and formally accepts the stipulation. Both sides have agreed to the statement of facts, he said.

"The vast majority of pending settlements are approved as proposed," Wierenga said.

<https://www.vvdailypress.com/news/20190807/state-fines-apple-valley-firefighters-union-13000-for-violating-state-election-law>