



NEWS



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2 dead after fiery crash in Phelan Sunday night

Staff Writer, VVNG

Posted: July 23, 2018



Two people died following a fiery three-vehicle crash on Palmdale Road in Phelan. (Gabriel D. Espinoza, VVNG.com)

Two people died following a fiery three-vehicle crash on Palmdale Road in Phelan. (Gabriel D. Espinoza, VVNG.com)

PHELAN, Calif. (VVNG.com) — Two people were killed and three others were injured in a fiery multi-vehicle crash on State Route 18 Sunday night.

California Highway Patrol Officers along with deputies from the Victor Valley Sheriff's Station and firefighters from **San Bernardino County Fire** responded to crash that was fully engulfed in fire at about 10:04 pm, on State Route 18 (Palmdale Road), west of Wilson Ranch Road.

“Upon arrival on scene we made the determination that there were two fatalities involved as well as some major injuries to some other parties,” CHP Officer Travis Chapman told Victor Valley News in a video interview.

According to Chapman, a 2004 Lexus was traveling eastbound on State Route 18, made an unsafe turning movement onto the right shoulder and then traveled across all lanes back into oncoming traffic. The Lexus then struck a blue Hyundai Elantra traveling westbound on State Route 18.

After striking the Hyundai Elantra, the Lexus spun 180 degrees and got hit by the second vehicle which was a 2018 black F150, Chapman confirmed.

“As of right now, the party in the Hyundai Elantra and the party in the Lexus are both confirmed fatalities,” Officer Chapman stated.

Three occupants from the F-150 were transported to various hospitals with unknown injuries.

Linda Brodie Manning told Victor Valley News that several Good Samaritans, including herself and her friend Michael Estrella, assisted the injured occupants of the crash and controlled traffic until First Responders arrived.

“Everyone came together and offered a hand and did what they could do, it was just a sad and horrible situation for those involved.” Brodie Manning said.

State Route 18 was closed between Monte Vista and Johnson Roads as officials investigated.

The crash remains under investigation by the Victorville California Highway Patrol.

<https://www.vvng.com/2-dead-after-fiery-crash-in-phelan-sunday-night/>

Forest Service closes big portion of San Gorgonio Wilderness

Jim Matthews, Daily Press

Posted: July 22, 2018, 6:32 p.m.



The San Bernardino National Forest has closed over half of the San Gorgonio Wilderness to public use, ostensibly because of threats to the public from the Valley Fire, which has not grown an acre in over a week. The area outlined in red is the closure area. The fire perimeter is on the left side of the map outlined in black. [Jim Matthews, Outdoor News Service]

The San Bernardino National Forest management has closed the about half of the San Gorgonio Wilderness. This closure impacts the most popular trails in the wilderness, including the trails that lead to Mt. San Gorgonio. The closure began this past Saturday, and the press release from the USFS says the area has been closed “due to hazards presented by the Valley Fire near Forest Falls.”

The Valley Fire has only burned about 1,350 acres as of Friday, not growing an acre in size over the past week. While the USFS says it is only 29 percent contained, the fire is not going anywhere. Most of the fire is located on the far west edge of the wilderness, and very little of it in the wilderness itself. The fire has burned in steep, rugged terrain adjacent to Highway 38, literally miles from most of the area that has been put off limits to public users.

The closure is sheer lunacy and continues the San Bernardino National Forest’s legacy of public land closures using fire as an excuse to keep people out of vast areas. The bulk of the area closed this week just reopened last July because it was burned in the Lake Fire in 2015. Yes, that closure lasted two years for “public safety” and “resource” concerns. The U.S. Forest Service can’t document any greater public safety concern right after a fire as before a fire. Resource issues are no greater after a fire than before a fire because it takes illegal activity for resource damage to occur in either case.

Yet, we have been conditioned to having these closures take place for increasing durations of time after fires. This is simply wrong and wrong-headed management. Any fire closure lasting more than a couple of weeks

past when the fire is completely contained is an affront to public recreation users that have a great track record of caring for our public land.

It is the forest service that is failing to take care of our lands with policies and poor management decisions that have increased the duration and size of the fires throughout the system. They blame long-term drought and a lack of budget. In reality, it is a lack of active forest management and fire prevention or containment actions before the blazes start. When you add in the costs of fighting fires, the amount of money spent by the U.S. Forest Service is higher than it has ever been.

But we yawn, and let the bureaucrats keep us off our public lands without real justification. This closure — if no one complains or threatens a lawsuit — could drag on for the rest of the summer or longer. It could be the Lake Fire closure all over again.

For hikers familiar with the area, this latest needless closure includes all the trails in the area, including extremely popular Vivian Creek Trail, Momyer Trail, San Bernardino Peak Trail, Forsee Creek Trail, South Fork Trail, and the Aspen Grove Trail.

The fire itself has been no joke. Nearly 650 firefighters from the U.S. Forest Service, CAL FIRE, **San Bernardino County Fire** and other cooperating agencies worked to slow the fire's spread over the last two weeks and accomplished that goal. However, extremely steep terrain and difficult access prevented crews from achieving full containment. There are currently 174 personnel assigned to the incident, down from nearly 500 from a week ago. The containment figure has changed little over the past week, but thanks to thunderstorms and little fuel at the edges of the fire in the steep terrain, the fire has not grown.

Bottom line: It is not a threat to the public in the vast closure area. With the weather we are having, hikers climbing San Gorgonio or Scouts going up to Poop Out Hill face a greater threat from a thunderstorm starting a fire or getting hit by lightning than the Valley Fire presents to them.

The public needs to let the San Bernardino National Forest brass know they are not happy about this closure. Jody Noiron, Forest Supervisor, can be reached by phone through the main office in San Bernardino at 909-382-2600, or you can post her a message via the website on the “contact us” page at this direct link:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/contactus/sbnf/about-forest/contactus>.

Think about this. The San Gorgonio Wilderness is about 95,000 acres and the USFS has closed nearly half of the wilderness to public use because of the Valley Fire, a 1,300 acre wildfire on the far western edge of the wilderness that has not grown in over a week. Many of the trails and the bulk of the area closed are more than five miles from the fire perimeter. We can drive on Highway 38, which is right on the edge of the fire, but we can't hike five miles away to San Gorgonio Peak.

Does this make sense to you?

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/sports/20180722/forest-service-closes-big-portion-of-san-gorgonio-wilderness>

Hesperia Mayor Bill Holland seeks re-election in city's first by-district election

Rene Ray De La Cruz, Daily Press

Posted: July 22, 2018, 7:16 a.m.



Hesperia Mayor Bill Holland, 55, will look to represent District No. 2 in the city's first by-district election in November. Holland his re-election bid for a continued seat on the City Council will run on the platform of "faith, family and city" [James Quiqq, Daily Press]

HESPERIA — After serving two terms on the dais, Mayor Bill Holland is ready to tackle a third, saying he looks forward to leading the Gateway City to the High Desert "into the future."

The 55-year old Holland, who will look to represent District No. 2 in the city's first by-district election, said his re-election bid for a continued seat on the Hesperia Council will run on the platform of "faith, family and city."

"I'll be emphasizing public safety, pro-business and safe access through good roads," Holland said. "I've spent most of my life in public service because it's part of my DNA and I want to continue serving the people of Hesperia."

Holland points to the unexpected passing of former Mayor Russ Blewett in May as the "pivotal point" in his decision to run for another term, adding that he wants to "continue the work" he began with Blewett.

"Russ Blewett and I were both elected in 2010 and we accomplished a lot in those eight years. I'm the last of that Council and I want to carry on the work," Holland said. "For the most part, we've always had a strong and unified Council that has done a great job moving the city forward."

The future of Hesperia also involves providing a "variety of housing options," which include single-family dwellings, apartments and senior-living communities, "something the entire High Desert is lacking," said Holland.

"Nearly 70 percent of our local population commutes down the hill, so we need to provide businesses that will provide living-wage jobs and benefits," Holland said. "The plan to bring in these businesses and housing units needs to be done intelligently and with the understanding that the market drives reality."

"Hesperia has the lowest crime and homeless rate in the High Desert. Our sheriff's deputies do a fantastic job, but the public safety contract continues to increase with no increase in manpower. We need to address that issue."

With a total of nearly \$16 million, the city's contract with the San Bernardino Sheriff's Department takes up a quarter of the yearly budget. The Hesperia Fire Protection District has a budget of \$12 million, the Daily Press previously reported.

"This year's fire budget was prepared before the Hesperia Fire Protection District was annexed into (**San Bernardino County Fire**)," Holland said. "The annexation isn't complete, but when it happens we'll have additional services, with no additional fire tax to the residents."

To emphasize his point on "planning intelligently," Holland cited last year's city denial of a San Bernardino County Behavioral Health Facility slated for Main Street and a second convenience store on Rancho Road that would have served alcohol.

"Both those projects didn't fit into the city's scheme and we definitely don't need another liquor store in that area," said

Holland said the approval of cannabis delivery businesses and the establishment of the city's green zone came with the Council's desire to help patients benefit from obtaining medical cannabis.

"The success of the green zone depends on those business owners," Holland said. "But like anything, they'll be people who won't obey the cannabis laws by coloring outside the lines. When that happens, I promise you the city will step in and take care of it."

With both Blewett and Councilman Paul Russ facing health issues for the majority of 2018, Holland, who faced scrutiny in 2016 over his involvement in a nationally publicized hazing investigation at Oak Hills High School, said leading the city during the first half of 2018 was one of the most "turbulent" periods in the city's history.

"I was mayor pro tem at that time, but I had to play the role of mayor while Russ and Paul were both away recovering," Holland said. "That was challenging for me and for (Councilman) Larry Bird and (then-Councilwoman) Rebekah Swanson, who had just completed their first year on the Council."

Candidates who have committed to running in the November Hesperia by-district election include Russ in District No. 3 and Holland in District 2.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20180722/hesperia-mayor-bill-holland-seeks-re-election-in-citys-first-by-district-election>

‘This community is tired’: Amidst growing criticism, Barstow Council moves forward with general tax measure

Paola Baker, Daily Press

July 20, 2018, 9:30 a.m.



BARSTOW — As the city faces declining assets with a struggling fire district, skyrocketing pension costs, and sluggish revenues, the council is looking to the ballot — again — to decide whether or not to apply a one-cent local sales tax here.

City officials have continuously stressed their wishes to keep fire services local. Last year’s narrow defeat of Measure J, a similar sales tax, have only galvanized officials who attributed the loss to the difficulty of gathering the two-thirds majority needed for it to pass.

“We needed a super-majority and we were just short,” councilman Timothy Silva said during the July 16 meeting, where the council approved a resolution to add a new general sales tax to November’s ballot. “But we do have a majority of residents that want to save the fire district. So when a majority of people want something, that’s what we’re trying to do.”

The new measure would effectively raise Barstow’s total sales tax rate from 7.75 percent to 8.75 percent, according to figures from the California Board of Equalization. As a general sales tax, it would require a majority vote, and revenues would go directly into the city’s General Fund.

City officials say the revenues will fund operating expenses for the Barstow Fire Protection District, including salaries, debt repayment, equipment purchase and maintenance and capital expenses. Funds will also be used to improve 911 response times, bolster police services, maintain streets and parks and provide senior and youth programs.

Yet as the meeting progressed, it quickly became evident that the council and the public’s vision did not completely mesh.

Public comments grew heated as residents took the council to task over various issues — including a rumor that the city was filing for bankruptcy — and their apparent willingness to push another tax on an already hard-up city with a council steadily facing more and more disapproval.

“You’re asking for a one-percent sales tax but I’m against it — I don’t think you’ll use it fairly, I really don’t,” longtime resident Nathaniel Pickett said.

Pickett’s statements seemed to resonate with the crowd. Former mayor Lawrence Dale said he “adamantly opposed this measure” while local businessman and BCC trustee Paul Courtney called it “a farce,” joining several others who apparently resented the implication that funds could be used for anything the council sees fit.

“Last year, you asked for a half-cent, now you’re asking for a whole cent,” Dale said. “You, the city, feels like you’re free to do whatever you want to do.”

“It’s obvious our community is in disarray,” resident Bennie Federick said. “You guys all need to be replaced, straight up. You have no respect to your community. This community is tired.”

The upcoming midterm elections also seemingly cast a shadow on the current council, which will have two seats opening up in its first district-based election this fall. The official filing period began July 16, and potential candidates wasted no time in expressing why they might be a better fit than the persons currently on the dais.

“I spoke to a family that moved from Barstow to Apple Valley and they said the difference between the two cities was like night and day,” Brianna Martinez, who plans on running in District 2, currently occupied by Merrill Gracey, said. “Night and day. Let that sink in.”

Yet the council struck a defiant tone back, starting with both Silva and councilman Rich Harple flatly denying the bankruptcy rumors — “if we were declaring bankruptcy, I’d be the first one talking about it,” Harpole said — and ending with Mayor Pro Tem Carmen Hernandez rebuking residents for their lack of interest in city proceedings before now.

“I think you, the voters, should decide, but you know what my frustration is? Where were you the last four years?” Hernandez said. “Election years are different, but where have you been? You have no issue coming up to me in public and asking me questions.”

Silva also made sure to discuss the formation of an oversight committee if the tax measure passes to ensure “future councils administer these funds right.”

The committee would be comprised of members appointed to two-year terms, would meet at least once a year to review how the funds are spent and report back to the city council, officials said, drawing some derision from the crowd.

“That’s not enough. Once a year? Please. Go give that to someone else that don’t give a darn,” Pickett said.

“Thanks for admitting you guys wouldn’t give it real oversight,” Courtney said.

The resolution to add the measure to the ballot was approved by the council with a unanimous vote. Residents will get to vote on its approval Nov. 6, along with making a decision on two council seats.

The next city council meeting is scheduled for Aug. 4. Visit www.barstowca.org for more information and to watch archived meetings.

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20180720/this-community-is-tired-amidst-growing-criticism-barstow-council-moves-forward-with-general-tax-measure>

2-Year-Old Girl Dies After Being Shot by 4-Year-Old in San Bernardino: Sheriff's

Heather Narvarro, Tony Shin, NBC News

Posted: July 20, 2018

A 2-year-old girl died after she was accidentally shot by her 4-year-old cousin in Muscoy Friday, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department said.

The child's grandfather, Cesar Lopez, 53, was arrested on suspicion of child endangerment after investigators allege he left the weapon in a place where the child could grab it. He was also arrested on suspicion of being a felon in possession of a firearm.

Neighbors said they heard screams coming from the home early Friday.

"When they brought her out, they had a patch here over her chest," said neighbor Bubba Macbeth.

The **San Bernardino County Fire** Department responded at 9 a.m. to a call of a 2-year-old girl suffering from a gunshot wound in the 2700 block of Duffy Street in the Muscoy area. A 4-year-old boy, the victim's cousin, was found with the handgun, investigators said. The boy was crying as deputies took him away in a sheriff's vehicle, neighbors said.

She was taken to the hospital, but did not survive. Family members identified her as Alia.

Adults were inside the home at the time of the shooting, and were cooperating with the sheriff's department for the investigation.

The boy's mother was also questioned in the shooting, clearly overwhelmed by emotion as she sobbed outside her home.

"That was her only daughter. She was a good mom," neighbor Citlao Plascencia said.

Neighbors also said it was a horrible reminder about gun safety.

"Have a gun safe, if not a strong-armed box, with a lock on it so this type of situation won't ever happen again," neighbor Tywana Macbeth said.

<https://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/california/Toddler-Shot-Dies-San-Bernardino-488748171.html>