



# NEWS



## News Headlines 3/01/2018

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## County Fire's final offer doesn't budge Victorville officials

Shea Johnson , Daily Press

Posted: February 28, 2018, 5:35 p.m.



San Bernardino County Firefighters battle a blaze in October in the 16200 block of Pepper Tree Drive in Victorville. [Daily Press file photo]

Two-fifths of the Council continue to have major concerns about the switch, which has been cast as a financial remedy and not an indictment on **County Fire's** performance.

VICTORVILLE — County Fire Chief Mark Hartwig recently said the department was “discouraged” over the city’s seemingly unstoppable course toward an in-house option. It’s a route, now, with little to no room for re-direction.

“We have been most recently, I would say, discouraged that the conversations seem to tend more towards transition than partnership,” Hartwig said during the Feb. 20 Council meeting. “We’re still optimistic that there is a partnership to be worked out.”

But under intense pressure to supplement fire services previously rendered by the county before a 10-year contract expires June 30, city officials have been making headway on hiring top personnel and interviewing others for a city fire department.

Last week, the Council approved procurement of five command and two paramedic squad vehicles.

Hours before the Feb. 20 meeting, County Fire did submit a “best and final offer” that Mayor Pro Tem Jim Cox said he understood to contain figures similar to the city’s. Interim City Manager Keith Metzler noted that the offer did nothing, however, to re-think the current trajectory.

Metzler also warned that the Council must not vacillate plans as it could hamper the city’s ability to establish its department under a tight timeline.

“Anything that creates a sense of wavering in the decision, I think will have pretty meaningful consequences to our recruitment efforts,” he said, “and could negatively impact those recruitment efforts as we’re trying to get the best and most qualified candidates for the job.”

For Cox, the county’s final offer came a month too late, well after the Council had requested it. While suggesting the time had passed for further talks, particularly at the expense of forward movement on a city-run department, he also criticized any “purely political” efforts that could be abound.

But two-fifths of the Council continue to have major concerns about the switch, which has been cast as a financial remedy and not an indictment on County Fire’s performance. Rising public safety costs, largely due to the Sheriff’s Department’s budget, have outpaced city revenues, officials say.

Negrete wanted a side-by-side, 10-year projection between County Fire and a city department, which Metzler said the city's consultant would likely be unable to provide. Negrete also sought further examination of "more lasting impacts" like pension liability, saying it was important to consider fluid information that continued to trickle into their purview.

"We had a great working relationship for the last 10 years that did not include pension liability," he said. "I mean, what's wrong with another 10 years of the status quo and then looking at future mechanisms to increase funding?"

Gomez said she empathized with County Fire, and requested that the Council seriously review the final offer — one which Hartwig had described as a "shot in the dark" because he said County Fire was unclear what the city wanted.

Metzler said it was "surprising" to hear from Hartwig that County Fire hadn't reviewed studies by two consultants over the past year, because they were available in public agendas. He also said the studies essentially had validated the city's decision to move toward its own department, which had disbanded in 2008.

City officials have said a reactivation will reduce spending by 5 percent annually and equate to a \$3.8 million savings in the first five years. But County Fire has extolled the nature of the regional approach that only it can offer as a significant cost-saving measure.

If there was any doubt that elected officials were averse to continuing conversations with County Fire, at least formally, Negrete's recommendation to host a presentation from the agency at the next Council meeting was nixed 3-2.

Negrete had suggested it would have been a "final look" for officials as he lamented what he believed was a lack of comprehensive dialogue in the past year.

"The fact that people move here and continue to move here, and we have no way to address the increase in public safety services and the demand that we have, is maddening," he said, "when we keep focusing on things that are in the weeds instead of the big-picture issue."

<http://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20180228/county-fires-final-offer-doesnt-budge-victorville-officials>

## This San Bernardino ‘plane crash’ wasn’t real, but emergency workers’ preparation was

Brian Whitehead, San Bernardino Sun

Posted: February 28, 2018, 4:37 p.m.



Firefighters bring out “victims” during the East Valley Multi-Agency Multi-Casualty Incident Drill on Wednesday, Feb. 28. In the simulated emergency, an Airbus carrying 64 victims crashed at the San Bernardino International Airport. Photo by Jennifer Cappuccio Maher, The Sun/SCNG

An Airbus A320 carrying 60 passengers and four crew members crash lands at San Bernardino International Airport. Airport firefighters arrive first and get to work removing survivors from the plane.

What happens next?

Organized mass chaos.

On Wednesday, Feb. 28, the airport, **San Bernardino County Fire**, San Manuel Fire and Cal Fire officials collaborated on a drill aimed at testing the emergency readiness of their teams and those of at least 20 other area agencies. About 300 first responders took part. EMT and paramedic students from Crafton Hills and Victor Valley colleges portrayed injured passengers.

San Bernardino County Fire Assistant Chief Dan Munsey likened the exercise to batting practice. Emergency personnel must train under stressful circumstances, with realistic carnage, to prepare themselves for the real thing, he said.

“Our crews have mastery of the daily, high-risk, low-frequency events,” said Michael J. Smith, San Manuel’s fire chief. “What’s so important here is they’re using the skills they don’t get to use every day.”

An exercise such as Wednesday’s gives neighboring agencies the chance to burnish their respective crafts and build relationships, said Mark Gibbs, the airport’s aviation director. Familiarity with other emergency crews ensures organization amid mass chaos, he said.

The Federal Aviation Administration requires triennial training exercises to test the capabilities of airport and community emergency response staff. East Valley agencies host such exercises annually, and on a variety of emergencies.

Teamwork between fire and rescue personnel was apparent in the aftermath of Wednesday’s simulated crash. Actors playing passengers who were able to walk out of the plane were led by airport firefighters to a triage area for “treatment.” First responders re-entered the plane to rescue those with more severe “injuries.” As more agencies arrived, officers at a makeshift command center disseminated duties.

Passengers – with realistic lacerations, scrapes and burns – were “evaluated” by medical staff and taken by ambulance to hospitals. One man even appeared to have lost half his hand.

“You can never have too much training,” said Tracey Martinez, a county fire spokeswoman. “You can never exercise your emergency skills too often.”

In coming days, each agency will dissect what went smoothly and what skills could be improved.

Emergency readiness is vital, said Cal Fire spokesman Henry Herrera, who added that agencies may often need to work together as in Wednesday’s simulation.

“For all of us to be available and ready to respond to a situation like this and be able to provide that emergency response to the public and prevent further injury from occurring is extremely important.”

<https://www.sbsun.com/2018/02/28/this-san-bernardino-plane-crash-wasnt-real-but-emergency-workers-preparation-was/>

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## **Man working on car dies after vehicle falls on him in Muscoy**

Beatriz E. Valenzuela, San Bernardino Sun

Posted: February 28, 2018, 9:52 a.m.

A man working on a car was killed when he was pinned beneath the vehicle Wednesday morning in Muscoy, authorities said.

A 911 call came in just after 8 a.m. that the vehicle fell on the man in the 2600 block of North State Street north of the 210 Freeway, according to California Highway Patrol Officer Marcelo Llerena.

CHP officers and San Bernardino County sheriff’s deputies both went to the scene to give aid, but **county fire** paramedics pronounced the unidentified man dead at the scene.

The death will be investigated by the Sheriff’s Department, spokeswoman Jodi Miller said

<https://www.sbsun.com/2018/02/28/man-working-on-car-dies-after-vehicle-falls-on-him-in-muscoy/>

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## **2 critically injured in Wednesday night crash on Highway 395**

Staff Writer, VVNG

Posted: March 1, 2018

**VICTORVILLE, Calif. (VVNG.com)** — Two men were critically injured during a Wednesday night crash that shut down Highway 395 for several hours.

It happened at about 8:30 p.m., in the 11800 block of Highway 395, just north of Sycamore Street in Victorville.

For reasons still unknown, a small gold-colored sedan and a black SUV collided causing both vehicles to sustain major damage and one to overturn.

When firefighters from **San Bernardino County Fire** arrived, they located two occupants trapped, one patient in each of the involved vehicles. The Jaws of Life were used by firefighters who successfully extricated both patients.

A medical helicopter was requested to land near the scene of the crash. One patient was flown to a trauma center and another was rushed by ground ambulance to a local hospital. Updates on their US Highway 395 was closed in both directions for approximately two hours as officials conducted an investigation.

The cause of the crash remains under investigation. Information will be updated as it is made available.

<http://www.vvng.com/2-critically-injured-wednesday-night-crash-highway-395/>

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## **California fire chiefs seek money to prepare for wildfires**

**Jonathan J. Cooper, Associated Press**

Posted Feb 28, 2018, 9:18 a.m.

SACRAMENTO — California fire chiefs said Wednesday that reinforcements were too slow to arrive in last year’s ferocious firestorms and asked lawmakers for \$100 million to call in extra firefighters when weather conditions are ripe for a conflagration.

The fire chiefs said drought and climate change will cause longer, more severe fire seasons, and the state’s “mutual aid” system for sharing resources across departments can’t keep up.

It took 12 to 24 hours before fire crews began arriving from outside the area when a series of fires swept rapidly through Sonoma and Napa counties, Santa Rosa Fire Chief Tony Gossner said. Have extra firefighters and engines in place before the blazes broke out might have allowed them to keep the fires small, he said.

“We need to be more nimble in the first few hours of these incidents,” Gossner said. “Prepositioned engines, that would have helped. It wouldn’t have solved everything but it would’ve helped.”

Those fires killed 44 people in several counties north of San Francisco and destroyed 8,900 buildings.

Chiefs from across the state spoke in a Senate hearing a day after state emergency management officials released a report saying officials in Sonoma County were ill-prepared, disorganized and lacked sufficient training. They did not address the report, which found that multiple alert systems, overlapping responsibilities and a failure to map out roles appear to have created inconsistent and sometimes confusing messages to the public.

In addition to overtime for firefighters during periods of danger, the chiefs also want to smooth out the bureaucratic process for requesting help from other agencies and reimbursing those who answer the call. They also want to outfit fire engines with global positioning satellite trackers so emergency managers know at a glance where engines are located.

Still, they acknowledged that more firefighters can’t stop a blaze fueled by the fierce winds and hot temperatures. Mark Lorenzen, chief of the Ventura County Fire Department said his team had staffed up by 87 percent before a fire broke out in December and eventually became the largest in state history. But he said the extra firefighters were assigned to the rescue people.

The request becomes part of the state budget negotiations. Gov. Jerry Brown has projected a surplus of more than \$6 billion but has urged lawmakers to devote most of it to paying down debts or one-time projects, like building offices, that don't carry long-term costs. Money could also come from the state's tax on carbon emissions.

“Over the last 36 months, every time we say it's an unprecedented wildland fire it gets worse,” said Sen. Mike McGuire, a Democrat from Healdsburg who represents areas devastated by the fires in Sonoma County. “I think we need to stop and saying that this is unprecedented and prepare for what our new reality truly is.”

<http://www.vvdailypress.com/news/20180228/california-fire-chiefs-seek-money-to-prepare-for-wildfires>