



# NEWS



## News Headlines 05/12/2021

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## Small Brush Fire Broke Out In The Cajon Pass NB 15 Cleghorn Rd.

Staff Writer, Pain in the Pass

Posted: May 11, 2021



CAJON PASS, CA. (Pain In The Pass) >> A small brush fire broke out in the Cajon Pass along Interstate 15 Tuesday morning.

This fire was reported at 11:37am Tuesday, May 11, 2020, on northbound Interstate 15 between Cleghorn Road exit and the truck scales ramp. **San Bernardino County Fire** Department, CAL Fire, and US Department of Forestry were getting calls of a small brush fire in the Cajon Pass next to the right shoulder of the 15 freeway.

US Forest Service firefighters quickly were on scene. They ask California Highway Patrol to closed the 3 right lanes as they work to extinguish the flames. Three northbound I-15 lanes closed at Cleghorn Road. Will likely persist into the evening. Also Cajon Blvd is closed between Kenwood Ave. to Cleghorn Rd.

Forward rate of progress stopped at 11 acres, 0% contained, held by retardant lines. Power and gas lines remain threatened at this time.

Fire crews will be at scene for at least two to three hours to create a barrier between the burned and unburned brush and to make sure all embers and hot spots are completely out.

The cause of the fire is under investigation, The brush fire dubbed the Blue Fire.

Update at 6pm the fire still at 11 acres. Containment has increased to 50%. All lanes reopen but fire crews will be on the shoulder. CHP still has the onramp blocked.

<https://paininthepass.info/2021/05/11/small-brush-fire-broke-out-in-the-cajon-pass-nb-15-cleghorn-rd/>

## All lanes of northbound I-15 open as crews tackle brush fire in the Cajon Pass

Brian Rokos, The Press-Enterprise

Posted: May 11, 2021 at 1:03PM



Firefighters on Tuesday stopped the spread of a brush fire in the Cajon Pass that burned 11 acres and temporarily prompted the closure of two northbound lanes of the 15 Freeway at Cleghorn Road.

The fire, reported at 11:30 a.m., was burning near the top of Cleghorn Mountain, the San Bernardino National Forest said. As of 6 p.m., fire crews had reached 50% containment, according to Zach Behrens, spokesman for the San Bernardino National Forest.

“Even when I left (the fire this evening) I never saw any flames, just more smoldering,” Behrens said.

Power and gas lines were initially threatened; however, the threat was mitigated as of the evening, Behrens said.

Frumpy Middle-aged Mom: Sometimes I probably just need to shut up  
All lanes that were previously closed on I-15 as well as Cajon Boulevard were reopened as of 8:19 p.m.

The cause of the blaze, dubbed the Blue fire, was under investigation, according to Behrens.

Some 200 firefighters from the U.S. Forest Service, **San Bernardino County Fire** Department and Bureau of Land Management were on the scene.

<https://www.sbsun.com/2021/05/11/brush-fire-in-cajon-pass-prompts-some-lanes-of-northbound-15-freeway-to-close/>

## Fire crews battling brush fire in the Cajon Pass Tuesday

Staff Writer, Victor Valley News Group

Posted: May 11, 2021



CAJON PASS, Calif. (VVNG.com) — Fire crews are fighting a brush fire on the northbound I-15 freeway near the Cleghorn exit in the Cajon Pass.

The fire dubbed the blue incident was reported at 11:37 am, on May 11, 2021, and has already scorched 15 acres.

According to initial reports, the fire started along the shoulder of the freeway and the flames were quickly pushed uphill. Air support is assisting firefighters on the ground as they work to fight the fire.

CalTrans is on scene and started a hard closure of the no. 3 and no. 4 lanes. CHP has closed the northbound Cleghorn on-ramp and northbound Cajon Blvd at Kenwood.

Traffic in both directions is slow moving as motorists travel through the area.

The cause of the fire is currently under investigation and additional information will be updated as it becomes available.

<https://www.vvng.com/fire-crews-battling-brush-fire-in-the-cajon-pass-tuesday/>

## It's 'crunch time' for California's firefighters as threat of long fire season looms

Eric Licas, Orange County Register

Posted: May 11, 2021 at 3:09PM



U.S. Air Force Major Matt Ringlein spent over eight hours hauling loads of Phos-Chek in a Hercules C-130 airtanker from San Bernardino International Airport and dumping the bright red fire retardant around the Mt. Wilson Observatory, ahead of the path of the Bobcat fire, which devoured over 113,000 acres in the San Gabriel Mountains in September.

By the end of the day, he and the entire plane reeked of the smoke that rose from 80-foot tall flames. But as exhausted as he was, he knew there were others trudging through heat, ash and flame-charred soil around the fire's perimeter who were fighting as hard, if not harder, to keep a raging inferno from spreading through the Angeles National Forest.

"Even though we might not have met those guys, there's a camaraderie between us and them on the ground," Ringlein said. "Because we know full well they are out there where it's much hotter, with less rest and less sleep."

Crews spent weeks at a time away from their families battling flames up and down the West Coast. Wildfires scorched a record 4.2 million acres in California in 2020, testing disaster management agencies to their limits. The length of the active fire season has grown dramatically over the years, leaving firefighters with less time to recover and prepare.

"It really plays into the narrative of climate change," Cal Fire Battalion Chief Jon Heggie said. "The evident facts of what we are seeing and facing are longer, hotter, drier summers."

### Crunch time

Gov. Gavin Newsom authorized \$536 million of advanced funding in April to boost efforts to get a leg up before the warmest, windiest conditions arrive this year. Early weather models predict the greatest risk of wildfires in Southern California will come in June or July. In the meantime, firefighters are conducting as much training as they can.

The state planned to hire 1,399 additional firefighters, and has already filled most of those positions, Cal Fire Capt. Alison Hesterly said Monday, May 10. The staff increase — 17.5% more firefighters vs. normal peak staffing — will cost almost \$81 million, and will be distributed evenly throughout California.

A bulldozer builds a trench to stop the spread of flames while a U.S. Forest Service firefighter supervises during a training exercise in Hesperia on Wednesday, May 5. (Eric Licas, Orange County Register/SCNG) "It's crunch time," Orange County Fire Authority Chief Brian Fennessy said. "Fire season is here. No time better than the present to get ready, because a lot of the indications are this could happen again, and it could be like 2020."

A total of 9,392 acres have been affected this year by wildfires in California as of May 9, according to Cal Fire statistics. That's an area nearly six times larger than what was scorched by the same date in 2020.

Meanwhile, the level of moisture found in vegetation across the state reached historic lows this year, and now conditions are even drier than they were in 2020, Fennessy said. Most counties in California saw less than half the amount of precipitation they would have typically received by May, compared to seasonal averages, National Weather Service meteorologist Stefanie Sullivan said. Drought conditions are worse in Northern parts of the state. But even in San Diego County, where conditions are closer to seasonal averages, more than 5,300 acres were scorched by the Southern fire this month.

Efforts to reduce the amount of dry brush available as potential fuel for wildfires are a key part of California's strategy to mitigate the chances of disaster later in the year, Heggie said. Money for things like prescribed burns and "home hardening" projects to bolster defenses around residential areas accounts for a large portion of the advanced funding package approved by the governor.

A Dozer Academy hosted by the **San Bernardino County Fire** Department in Hesperia beginning May 5 was one of many programs held this spring in preparation of potential wildfires. The prescribed burn and training camp gave firefighting bulldozer operators a chance to practice clearing brush and digging barriers around live flames in a controlled environment, before they are sent to the front lines of disaster. The event was also an exercise in coordination between drivers behind the wheel of 50,000-pound earth-movers, helicopters carrying hundreds of gallons of water overhead and hand crews guiding them to where they might be needed most.

"Wildland firefighting is dangerous work and we practice at it," San Bernardino County Fire Battalion Chief Mike Wakoski said. "A lot of it is effectively communicating together."

Personnel load a C-130 aircraft with water as the California Air National Guard's 146th Airlift Wing and the Nevada Air National Guard's 152nd Airlift Wing take part in wildland firefighting training at the San Bernardino Airtanker Base in San Bernardino Thursday, May 6, 2021. Planes were filling up with water at the base and heading out into the Angeles National Forest to make training drops.

Authorities are constantly reaching out to the public, urging those who visit or live near the wilderness to remain conscious of potential fire hazards. About 91 percent of all major fires are linked to humans, Forest Service spokesman Nathan Judy said.

The El Dorado fire devoured over 22,700 acres in the Yucaipa area, and was sparked by the use of pyrotechnics during a gender-reveal party on Sept. 5. Charles Edward Morton, a crew boss of the Big Bear Hotshots, died while battling that fire. Prosecutors are still deciding whether criminal charges might be filed in connection with the blaze.

"How many of those large catastrophic fires, under elevated conditions, are avoidable?" Angeles National Forest Fire Chief Robert Garcia said.

Others might be the result of cars, trains, electrical equipment or some other manmade device malfunctioning in an environment ripe for ignition, Garcia said. Investigators believe the Bobcat fire flared up after a tree branch made contact with Southern California Edison power lines that ran through the forest.

The utility's equipment has also been linked to other major fires, including the Woolsey fire that burned from Malibu to Thousand Oaks in 2018 and the Thomas fire in 2017. SCE has paid over \$4.6 billion to settle insurance claims and lawsuits associated with those disasters.

The power company has upgraded equipment so it's less likely to start fires, installed cameras to monitor equipment in the wilderness and provided funding that allowed the OCFA to lease the world's largest helitanker, as part of a wildfire mitigation program.

SCE and other electric utilities have also been preemptively cutting power to some areas prone to burning during periods of extreme wind, heat and low humidity. Such planned and actual SCE outages can be tracked [here](#).

The utility is working on compartmentalizing its grid, especially in fire-prone areas, so that public safety power shutoffs will affect fewer people at a time, SCE spokesman David Song said Tuesday, May 11.

"Our interest is to make sure our customers have reliable electrical power," Song said, adding SCE was reluctant to cut service to people, especially when they were stuck at home during the pandemic, "save for public safety purposes."

Officials urge people to be vigilant and report any signs of fire in the forest to local authorities immediately. If flames do break out in the wilderness, firefighters plan on responding aggressively to keep them from growing out of control.

"We've put greater emphasis on catching fires small, catching them early," Garcia said.

<https://www.sbsun.com/2021/05/11/its-crunch-time-for-californias-firefighters-as-threat-of-long-fire-season-looms/>