



NEWS



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MAN SEVERELY INJURED IN YUCCA VALLEY FIRE TUESDAY NIGHT

Staff Writer, Z107.7 FM News

Posted: February 19, 2020

A man suffered severe burns from a fire in Yucca Valley last night. **County Fire** Battalion Chief Donnie Vilorio said fire crews from Yucca Valley and Joshua Tree were called to a motorhome fire in the 58000 block of Carlyle Drive at 11:37 p.m. A man, identified only as being 45 to 50 years old, was inside the trailer at the time of the fire and suffered the burns to his face and extremities as he escaped from the RV. Paramedics treated him at the scene and he was taken to the Yucca Valley airport where he was then flown to a local trauma hospital. Vilorio said the blaze was knocked down in minutes and firefighters kept the flames from spreading to a nearby house, trees, power lines, and another motorhome. Vilorio said it appears that the fire was caused by a candle; he urges residents to exercise care around any open flame.

<http://z1077fm.com/man-severely-injured-in-yucca-valley-fire-tuesday-night/>

Similar budget concerns for County, Big Bear

Judi Bowers, Big Bear Grizzly

Posted: February 19, 2020



In October 2018, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors approved an expansion of Service Zone FP-5. The Fire Department was facing a \$29 million budget deficit.

FP-5 assesses a fee of \$157.26 on properties within the unincorporated areas of the county served by the county Fire Department. In 2019, the board of supervisors voted down a 3 percent increase in the annual fee and directed staff to look for alternative funding mechanisms, specifically for the expansion area. One of the alternatives is forming a community facilities district, which is what Measure I in Big Bear would do if passed on March 3.

A presentation to the board of supervisors in November 2019, showed the Mountain Zone for **San Bernardino County Fire** budget at \$19.4 million with the FP-5 funding. Without it, the budget is \$13.4 million. The loss of FP-5 funding for the Mountain Zone would reduce staffing from 54 to 36 positions.

Big Bear Fire Department's annual budget is \$14 million. Measure I would increase the annual budget to approximately \$17 million.

Big Bear Fire Chief Willis said when Big Bear Fire began exploring the costs and options, a comparison with the Fawnskin station, which is a San Bernardino County Fire station, showed the costs to operate are the same no matter who is the provider. The cost for a three-person station in the county and Big Bear Fire is estimated at approximately \$2 million.

Measure I, if approved by voters in Big Bear, would create a community facilities district assessing improved properties 6 cents per square foot annually. The assessment would apply to residential and commercial properties.

http://www.bigbeargrizzly.net/news/similar-budget-concerns-for-county-big-bear/article_4be69b68-52bd-11ea-b97e-db7b5ba8f400.html

Fire Displaces Residents At San Bernardino Apartments Owned By Subject Of Our Landlord Investigation

Aaron Mendelson, LAist News

Posted: February 18, 2020, 4:53 pm



The burned-out units at an apartment complex in the 1300 block of North Arrowhead Ave. in San Bernardino. (Aaron Mendelson / LAist)

A fire at an apartment building in San Bernardino left seven people without a place to stay after flames drove residents from the building on Sunday morning. The complex is part of a vast rental empire I wrote about last week in our investigation: Deceit, Disrepair and Death Inside a Southern California Rental Empire.

San Bernardino County Fire officials said they sent five engines to the scene and it took firefighters about 15 minutes to put the fire out.

I went out to the location today to see what tenants had to say about the fire and conditions at the 22-unit complex. Fire officials say they have not yet determined a cause.

At the building, the windows of four units were boarded up with plywood and there was still a heavy smell of smoke more than two days after the fire was extinguished. I saw holes cut in the roof by firefighters.

The scene Sunday was harrowing, according to Marvin Lewis, a truck driver who recently moved into the complex.

"Flames, a lot of smoke, people running and grabbing their babies, I saw people tripping down the stairs," he said. "It was just a crazy scene. I saw people throwing up because of the smoke."

I looked up public records for the apartment complex and found:

- The building is owned by Group XIV Properties, LP.
- It's part of a vast real estate rental empire created by a man named Mike Nijjar.
- City violations I've reviewed from this property show the property managers received notices for:
- Debris strewn around the courtyard
- Broken windows
- Broken gates, that led to homeless people using the carport area as a bathroom
- Mold and mildew
- It's not the first fire at a property in this real estate empire. A few miles away, a fire in 2017 injured a firefighter who fell through a floor.

And as our investigation details, a deadly fire in a mobile home park in the Bakersfield area killed a baby girl in 2016. In that case, state regulators said that disregard for health and safety code led to the 5-month-old's death. They blamed PAMA Management, which did not have a permit for the mobile home, among other violations.

PAMA's corporate cousins are major landlords in San Bernardino and control an estimated 16,000 units across California. Their footprint stretches from Hemet and Los Angeles all the way to Bakersfield, Fresno and Sacramento. I found companies connected to Nijjar have been sued many times for conditions at their buildings and other business practices.

Mike Nijjar declined to speak to us about our findings. His attorney issued a statement on behalf of him and others connected to his companies, that said in part:

PAMA Management cares about the communities and the people we serve. Providing affordable housing to those who need it is our mission. PAMA has operated in Southern California for more [than] 40 years. In its years of operation, PAMA has served tens of thousands of residents of Southern California.

Very often, PAMA assumes management of multi-unit apartment complexes in the community that are subject to City and County Code enforcement violations due to years of deferred maintenance, and does the necessary to improve those properties, clear the violations, and make it possible for families to continue to occupy those buildings.

I also reached out to the attorney to ask about the fire on Sunday and will update this story if I hear back.

I talked to residents at the complex where Sunday's fire took place about conditions there.

"They're raising the rent and to me it's like if you guys wanna raise the rent, keep up with the property," said Anjeanette Oates.

<https://laist.com/2020/02/18/san-bernardino-apartment-fire-landlord-investigation.php>