



# NEWS



## News Headlines 06/27 – 29/2020

- Calif. wildfire season could be worse this year due to storm, pandemic
- Bear tranquilized, removed from tree in Lucerne Valley
- 800-ton pile of hay catches fire in Hinkley

## Calif. wildfire season could be worse this year due to storm, pandemic

Colin Atagi, Palm Springs Desert Sun / Victorville Daily Press

Posted: June 29, 2020, 5:30 AM



Officials seized roughly 4,000 pounds of illegal fireworks from a Penske rental truck Wednesday evening. (Courtesy of **San Bernardino County Fire Department**)

A late spring rainstorm and fallout from the coronavirus pandemic will likely enhance the threat of wildfires in Southern California this year, experts say.

Extra vegetation sprouted up after an April storm dropped about 3.2 inches in parts of the San Bernardino Mountains and as much as 6 inches across San Diego County, according to the National Weather Service. The vegetation helps create a “continuous bed of fine fuels,” said Bryan Henry, the National Interagency Fire Center’s national fire weather program manager.

“At this point in time, grass should be dry and crunchy and ready to go,” he said, describing the next few months as a “more active” wildfire season.

Cal Fire records show there have already been 2,721 wildfires across California this year through June 21 and they burned 18,809 acres. That’s up from 1,568 wildfires during the same period in 2019.

Matt Shameson, a U.S. Forest Service meteorologist, said the extra vegetation is more prevalent in grassy areas than forest areas.

“You definitely got a bigger grass crop. We’re seeing quite a bit of grass fires in central California,” he said.

Fallout from the coronavirus pandemic also is contributing to concerns that Southern California is in store for an active wildfire season, officials say.

The U.S. Forest Service recently reported an uptick in illegal camp fires within the San Bernardino Mountains amid a rush of people trying to escape their home confinement. Park officials have documented 87 campfires through mid-June compared to 33 fires during the same period in 2019.

“We know everyone enjoys having campfires while recreating outdoors,” San Bernardino National Forest Fire Chief Jaime Gamboa said. “However, the public needs to be mindful of the conditions and where they are wanting to have campfires, in order to be safe.”

A wildfire that broke out Friday on a hillside just north of Highway 371 in Anza scorched roughly 55 acres and threatened homes on the Cahuilla Indian Reservation before crews slowed it down thanks to help from Cal Fire aircraft.

By 6 a.m. on Saturday, the fire had covered 55 acres but was 75% contained, according to the Riverside County Fire Department.

Californians had been under stay-at-home orders for several weeks beginning at the end of March in an attempt to reduce the spread of coronavirus. There have been more than 15,000 cases in Riverside County and more than 10,000 cases in San Bernardino County.

Orders gradually lifted this month and gave rise to more outdoor activity.

Ground fires may reignite after a visitor leaves and cause underground roots to catch fire. Camp fires are only allowed in fire rings and grills provided by the Forest Service. Stoves and fire rings with fuel shut-off valves are allowed, but require permits.

Fire officials also noted they're contending with an increase in fireworks, which could be from a combination of Independence Day celebrations and people trying to have fun during the pandemic.

"I can totally see how that'll be a problem," Henry said. "Maybe they're not as cautious in their urge to get out."

Still, experts say they are less concerned about summer weather conditions than they are with what's coming in the fall.

"It's not as dry as it normally is this time of year. It has a little more moisture," said Shameson, the Forest Service meteorologist. "Right now, I'm looking at a normal fire season for July, August and September and looking for above normal for October."

Fire officials have already begun efforts to mitigate the threat of wildfires on a short- and long-term basis.

Grass and brush were removed this week along a 5-mile stretch of northbound Interstate 15 in the San Geronio Pass, where the August 2016 Blue Cut Fire charred nearly 36,000 acres.

Meanwhile, efforts to recover from another fire are ongoing.

The U.S. Forest Service also announced the San Bernardino National Forest will be reforested in parts of the area impacted by the 2018 Cranston Fire, which burned more than 13,000 acres between Hemet and Mountain Center.

According to the Forest Service, "hundreds of thousands" of tree seedlings will be planted on 741 acres beginning this winter.

"By planting these trees, it will not only address forest fire recovery, but reestablish cover for deer and other wildlife," officials wrote in a news release.

<https://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20200629/calif-wildfire-season-could-be-worse-this-year-due-to-storm-pandemic>

## **Bear tranquilized, removed from tree in Lucerne Valley**

Staff Writer, Victor Valley News Group

Posted: June 27, 2020



LUCERNE VALLEY, Calif. (VVNG.com) — **San Bernardino County Fire** assisted Fish and Wildlife with safely removing a bear from a tree in Lucerne Valley.

On Thursday, June 25, 2020, at 8:08 PM county crews from Lucerne Valley were dispatched to a public service call with California Fish and Wildlife where a bear was approximately 20 feet up in a tree adjacent to a residence in the 31000 block of Carson Street.

“After wildlife officers tranquilized the bear, fire crews made access to the bear via ladder, rigged a rope lowering system and safely removed the bear from the tree,” stated Mike McClintock, Battalion Chief. “Once on the ground a pet oxygen mask was used to administer oxygen to help the bear while crews moved them and prepared for transport.”

Fish and Wildlife officers transported the animal to nearby bear habitat in the San Bernardino Mountains, where the bear was monitored until fully recovered from immobilizing drugs.

<https://www.vvng.com/bear-tranquilized-removed-from-tree-in-lucerne-valley/>

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## **800-ton pile of hay catches fire in Hinkley**

Staff Writer, Victor Valley News Group

Posted: June 27, 2020



San Bernardino County Firefighters responded to a hay fire in the community of Hinkley. (Photo courtesy SBCoFD//Twitter)

HINKLEY, Calif. (VVNG.com) — **San Bernardino County Firefighters** responded to an 800 ton pile of hay on fire in the community of Hinkley.

It happened at about 6:30 PM on Saturday, June 27, 2020, in the 26000 block of Community Blvd.

County firefighters tweeted about the incident and said crews were working on fire attack and exposure protection. According to the tweet, a dozer hand, and additional crews had been requested to assist with the hay fire.

Officials said the fire was contained to two large hay piles and crews would remain on scene for extended mop-up. County fires response included five water trucks, three engines, two Chiefs, a dozer and hand crew also remained committed to the incident.

No injuries were reported and the cause of the fire is under investigation.

<https://www.vvng.com/800-ton-pile-of-hay-catches-fire-in-hinkley/>