



NEWS



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LIGHTNING SPARKS A SMALL WILDFIRE NEAR BURNS CANYON SATURDAY

Staff Writer, Z107.7 FM NEWS

Posted: August 17, 2020



San Bernardino Fire Battalion Chief Mike McClintock directs firefighters from this spot overlooking the Tip Top fire in the Burns Canyon area. County Fire photo

Yucca Valley firefighters responded to a small wildfire in the San Bernardino County Forest near Tip Top Mountain, west of Burns Canyon Saturday afternoon. Just before 3 p.m., witnesses in the Rimrock area north of Pioneertown and the Mountain Top area of Big Bear called to report a wildfire, sparked by lightning during a brief thunderstorm. Yucca Valley firefighters arrived to find about three acres burning well off the road in steep terrain. Firefighters called in fixed-wing aircraft from Cal Fire, which dropped fire retardant to slow the spread of the fire and keep it in check on the ridgeline. Control of the fire was turned over to the U.S. Forest Service, who remained on scene to construct containment lines and perform mop up of the fire.

<http://z1077fm.com/lightning-sparks-a-small-wildfire-near-burns-canyon-saturday/>

Mother of 5 killed in crash on Escondido Avenue in Hesperia Identified

Staff Writer, Victor Valley News

Posted: August 17, 2020



Firefighters pronounced the mother of five deceased at the scene. (Gabriel D. Espinoza, Victor Valley News)

HESPERIA, Calif. (VVNG.com) — A woman killed in a double fatal crash in Hesperia has been identified by family and friends as Darla Soto-Vargas, a resident of the Victor Valley.

Soto-Vargas was an occupant of a GMC Yukon involved in a collision with two other vehicles on Friday, August 14th, 2020, at 8:41 p.m., on Escondido Avenue near the intersection of Sultana Street.

She was pronounced deceased on scene, and her husband and daughter who were also in the vehicle, were extricated from the crash and airlifted to trauma centers with extensive injuries, VVNG previously reported.

The driver of the Acura succumbed to his injuries at the scene. The male driver of the Honda was not injured.

A GoFundMe account created for Darla by a family friend raised \$8,740 in eight hours by 124 people.

“My sister’s best friend Darla was killed in a horrific accident by a car speeding over 80 miles an hour!,” Perez wrote on the GoFundMe website.

“Her Husband Thomas Vargas, my brother-in-law’s best friend for many years, is fighting for his life at Loma Linda Hospital. My sister’s God Daughter, my sweet little silly Lilah, is hospitalized and going through surgery after surgery,” Perez updated.

Soto-Vargas leaves behind a large family, which includes 5 children, (Thomas, Dominic, Lilah, Isaac, and Joshua), her mother Irene and father Sabino, three brothers, and two sisters, according to the fundraiser account.

“Thank you all for everything and anything you can do to make this devastating situation just a bit easier to bear,” Perez stated.

The Hesperia Police Department has not released any information regarding the cause of the crash, and the San Bernardino County Coroner has not released the name of the man killed in the Acura.

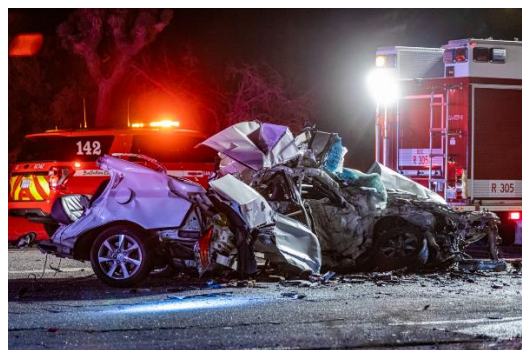
To contribute funds to the fundraiser, please visit: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/darla039s-world>

<https://www.vvng.com/mother-of-5-killed-in-crash-on-escondido-avenue-in-hesperia-identified/>

2 Killed in crash on Escondido Ave in Hesperia, others critically injured

Gabriel D. Espinoza, Victor Valley News

Posted: August 15, 2020



Escondido Avenue was shut down after two people died in a crash Friday. (Gabriel D. Espinoza, VVNG.com)

HESPERIA, Calif. (VVNG.com) — A crash in Hesperia killed two people and left two others critically injured, and one person uninjured.

On Friday, August 14th, 2020, at 8:41 p.m., **San Bernardino County Firefighters** and Deputies with the Hesperia Police Department were dispatched to a three-vehicle crash on Escondido Avenue and Sultana Street, about half-a-mile south of Walmart.

When firefighters arrived on scene they found a Honda CRV and a dark-colored GMC Yukon in the southbound lanes of Escondido Avenue with major damage. A white Acura was located in the center divider.

The force of the collision caused the Acura to split into two pieces, killing the driver instantly.

One person from inside the Yukon was declared deceased by emergency personnel, and an adult male and a teenage female were both airlifted to a trauma center for treatment of unknown injuries.

The male driver of the CRV was evaluated on scene by first responders, but he did not require medical transportation.

“I was probably the first to call 911,” stated a witness who did not want to be named. “I didn’t see much because it happened within seconds, but when I got out my car the man from the Yukon was saying his baby was still inside, but I think he was referring to his teenage daughter.”

Witnesses said the Yukon had initially caught fire but that a Good Samaritan with a fire extinguisher stopped and helped put it out.

Escondido Avenue was shut down for the landing of both helicopters and it remained shut down for several hours as the Sheriff’s Major Accident Investigation Team (MAIT) collected evidence and witness statements.

As of Saturday afternoon Sheriff’s officials have not released any details pertaining to the crash.

The identify of the deceased has not been made available.

<https://www.vvng.com/2-killed-in-crash-on-escondido-ave-in-hesperia-others-critically-injured/>

Three persons are hurt in head-on collision in Devore on Aug. 15

Staff Writer, Fontana Herald News

Posted: August 15, 2020



Two vehicles were involved in a head-on traffic collision in Devore on Aug. 15. (Contributed photo by San Bernardino County Fire Department)

Three persons were injured in a head-on traffic collision in Devore on Aug. 15, according to the **San Bernardino County Fire Department**.

Fire Department units were on scene to extricate persons involved in the two-vehicle collision, which occurred at Cajon Boulevard and Keenbrook Road, the Fire Department said on Twitter.

Both vehicles had major damage.

Two additional ground ambulances were requested for this incident, the Fire Department said.

The condition of the patients was not immediately known.

https://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/news/inland_empire_news/three-persons-are-hurt-in-head-on-collision-in-devore-on-aug-15/article_1d06102c-df2f-11ea-a194-5f8bad873862.html

Chief abruptly departs Victorville Fire Department

Martin Estacio, Daily Press

Posted: August 14, 2020, 6:01 pm



Victorville Fire Chief Greg Benson speaks during a Victorville Rotary Club meeting in October 2019. He resigned as chief this week, city officials said. [DAILY PRESS FILE PHOTO]

Chief Greg Benson has stepped down as head of the Victorville Fire Department, and a former city fire official will fill in until a replacement is selected.

City spokesperson Sue Jones said in an email that Benson gave his resignation Monday. Jones did not provide a reason for his departure, saying her response was limited because the matter was related to human resources.

Interim Fire Chief John Becker will oversee the department “until a permanent fire chief can be recruited,” the city said.

Jones said Becker comes with 36 years of fire service experience. He rose through the ranks in the VFD and served as its fire chief until 2008.

According to a previous Daily Press report, he “abruptly retired after the City Council’s decision to contract with San Bernardino County for fire services” on May 13, 2008.

“Becker stormed out of Tuesday night’s special council meeting after the vote was announced, slamming doors as he left City Hall,” the Daily Press reported at the time.

Becker criticized the Council’s decision in an interview less than two months later, saying he wasn’t allowed to speak during a closed-session workshop when the vote occurred.

“The reason I retired immediately after that was because I was not even asked my opinion at the workshop,” he said. “Certainly in such a tremendously important decision, the head of the department that represents the employees should be given a chance to speak.”

Victorville contracted with the **San Bernardino County Fire** Department until 2019 when it transitioned back to a city-run department, a move that officials said would cut costs.

Benson, a former fire chief with more than 35 years of public safety experience, was selected after a nationwide search in 2018 and oversaw the transition, which was contentious at times.

One of his long-term goals was to get VFD accredited by the Commission on Fire Accreditation International, a process that typically takes three to five years. Fewer than 3,000 fire department nationwide have achieved it.

“We’re not falling on the old, ‘This is the way we do things here because we’ve always done it that way’ mentality,” Benson said in an interview before being hired. “We want to bring in new ideas to use our resources better.”

<https://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20200814/chief-abruptly-departs-victorville-fire-department>

BETTER GOVERNMENT NON-PROFIT TAKES A QUESTIONABLE LOAN

Staff Writer, Z107.7 FM NEWS

Posted: August 14, 2020

The Red Brennan Group is the self-described social welfare organization behind two initiatives on the November 3 ballot. Its mission statement, “big-hearted communities and small government” is the motivation for almost every action of The Red Brennan Group. The 501(c)4 non-profit recently strayed from that ideal, opening the door for big trouble from big government.

Red Brennan Group’s sister nonprofit, A Better Community, Inc., was set up last November to provide labor for Red Brennan projects—ballot initiative signature gathering, community canvassing, and other boots-on-the-ground work needed to win voter approval for repeal of the FP-5 fire fee and its other initiative, which would slash county supervisors annual pay from roughly \$250,000 plus benefits to \$60,000 total, and limit supervisors to one four-year term of service.

Reporter Mike Lipsitz picks up the story from here...

While both initiatives are in line with the “small government” aspect of The Red Brennan Group’s mission statement. But the organization strayed when it applied for, and was awarded, a \$130,000 Small Business Administration loan through the Payroll Protection Plan or PPP. The \$660 billion big government program was established in April to help businesses with fewer than 500 employees retain those workers during the Coronavirus Pandemic. Thousands of small businesses found themselves eligible for the program, but excluded from it are businesses primarily involved in politics. When asked about the loan restriction, Red Brennan President Tom Murphy told Z107.7 News, that if a nonprofit entity such as theirs was to be excluded “then quite frankly we missed that,” he said.

To be clear, there is no evidence the organization attempted to conceal the nature of their work or knowingly misuse the funds, but still, the violation remains.

<http://z1077fm.com/better-government-non-profit-takes-a-questionable-loan/>

What's on the November 2020 ballot for San Bernardino County?

BRIAN WHITEHEAD, SCNG / San Bernardino Sun

Posted: August 14, 2020, 6:37 p.m.

In less than four months, voters in San Bernardino County and parts of Los Angeles County will choose who they want representing them in federal, state and local offices the next four years.

Below is a list of who has, or is expected to, qualify for the November ballot in contested races following the Friday, Aug. 7, filing deadline, according to the San Bernardino County Registrar of Voters, the Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters and city clerks throughout the region.

Other names could be added at a later date.

Uncontested city and school board races are not listed because they will not appear on the ballot.

A finalized list of qualified candidates is not expected for another few weeks.

San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors

District 5 (Colton, Fontana, Rialto, and San Bernardino as well as the unincorporated communities of Bloomington, El Rancho Verde, Glen Helen, Arrowhead Farms, Muscoy, Little Third and Rosena Ranch): Jesse Armendarez, Joe Baca Jr.

Los Angeles County

District attorney: Jackie Lacey (incumbent), George Cascón.

State Assembly

40th Assembly District (Highland, Loma Linda, Rancho Cucamonga, Redlands, San Bernardino): James Ramos (Democrat/incumbent), Jennifer Tullius (Republican)

41st Assembly District (Rancho Cucamonga, Upland, Claremont, La Verne, San Dimas): Chris Holden (Democrat/incumbent), Robin Hvidston (Republican)

47th Assembly District (Bloomington, Colton, Grand Terrace, Fontana, Muscoy, Rialto, San Bernardino): Eloise Gomez Reyes (Democrat/incumbent), Matthew Gordon (Republican)

52nd Assembly District (Pomona, Chino, Montclair, Ontario): Freddie Rodriguez (Democrat/incumbent), Toni Holle (Republican)

55th Assembly District (Chino Hills, Diamond Bar): Phillip Chen (Republican/incumbent), Andrew Rodriguez (Democrat)

State Senate

23rd State Senate District (Big Bear City, Big Bear Lake, Highland, Loma Linda, Rancho Cucamonga, Redlands, San Bernardino, Yucaipa, Banning, Beaumont, Calimesa, Hemet, Menifee, San Jacinto): Rosilicie Ochoa Bogh (Republican), Abigail Medina (Democrat)

House of Representatives

8th Congressional District (Inyo and Mono counties, Adelanto, Apple Valley, Barstow, Hesperia, Big Bear City, Highland, Needles, Twentynine Palms, Crestline, Lake Arrowhead, Running Springs, Yucaipa, Yucca Valley): Republican Jay Obernolte, Democrat Chris Bubser

27th Congressional District (Glendora, Claremont, San Antonio Heights, Upland): Judy Chu (Democrat/incumbent), Johnny Nalbandian (Republican).

31st Congressional District (Colton, Fontana, Grand Terrace, Loma Linda, Redlands, Rialto, Rancho Cucamonga, Upland, San Bernardino): Pete Aguilar (Democrat/incumbent), Agnes Gibboney (Republican)

35th Congressional District (Fontana, Rialto, Montclair, Chino, Ontario): Norma Torres (Democrat/incumbent), Mike Cargile (Republican)

City races

Chino City Council, District 1: Paul A. Rodriguez (incumbent), Christopher A. Flores.

Chino City Council, District 4: Karen C. Comstock, Anthony M. Honore.

Chino Mayor: Eunice M. Ulloa (incumbent), Christopher E. Hutchinson.

Chino Hills City Council, District 3: Art Bennett (incumbent), Tyler Francis Shields, Sabir Taqi, James Gallagher.

Claremont City Council, District 1: Corey Calaycay (incumbent), Zach Courser, Christine Margiotta, Ethan Reznik.

Claremont City Council, District 5: Michael Ceraso, Donell Clark, Silviano “Sal” Medina, Bennett Rea.

Colton City Council, District 5: Jack Woods (incumbent), John Echevarria.

Diamond Bar City Council, two seats: Jennifer Mahlke (incumbent), Ruth M. Low (incumbent), Tommy Orona, Stan Liu, William “Bill” Rawlings, Samuel Gilbert Castorena Jr., Aaron McElrea.

Fontana City Council, District 2: Jesse Sandoval (incumbent), Priscilla Linares, Sophia Holguin, Jenique Sanders, Jesse Cerda.

Fontana City Council, District 3: Amy Malone, Dawn Dooley, Erick Lopez, LaShunda Martin, Linda Richardson, Peter Garcia.

Grand Terrace City Council, three seats: Sylvia Robles (incumbent), William “Bill” Hussey (incumbent), Jeff Allen (incumbent), Jeremy Briggs, Ken Stewart, Jeffrey McConnell.

Montclair City Council, two seats: Tenice Johnson (incumbent), Robert E. Pipersky, Juliet Orozco, Ben Lopez, Oscar Medina.

Ontario City Council, two seats: Debra Porada (incumbent), Ruben Valencia (incumbent), Norberto Corona, Celina Lopez.

Ontario City Treasurer: Jim Milhiser (incumbent), Michael Fillpot.

Ontario City Clerk: Sheila Mautz (incumbent), Richard Galvez.

Pomona City Council, District 1: Virgilio P. Doniza, Geny P. Mejia, John Nolte.

Pomona City Council, District 4: Elizabeth Ontiveros-Cole (incumbent), Chará Nicole Swodeck.

Pomona City Council, District 6: Robert Torres (incumbent), Debra Martin, Sirraaj A. Muhammad, Miranda Sheffield.

Pomona Mayor: Tim Sandoval (incumbent), Gustavo Ernesto Nuñez, Mohammad H. Kamyab, Jacqueline Elizalde, Jesus Villagomez Campos.

Rancho Cucamonga City Council, District 1: Sam Spagnolo (incumbent), Jon Hamilton, Mark Rush.

Rancho Cucamonga City Council, District 4: Lynne B. Kennedy (incumbent), William James Smith Jr., Roger Wong.

Redlands City Council, District 4: Steven Frasher, Jenna Guzman-Lowery, Ivan Ramirez, Lane Schneider.

Redlands City Clerk: Jeanne Donaldson (incumbent), Roy George.

Rialto Mayor: Deborah Robertson (incumbent), Ed Palmer, Lupe Camacho.

Rialto City Council, two seats: Andy Carrizales (incumbent), Rafael Trujillo (incumbent), Andrew George Karol, Stacy Augustine, Michael Taylor, Teresa “Terrie” Schneider.

San Bernardino City Council, Ward 5: Henry Nickel (incumbent), Ben Reynoso.

San Bernardino City Council, Ward 7: Jim Mulvihill (incumbent), Damon Alexander.

Upland City Council, District 1: David Hazelton, Shannan Maust.

Upland City Council, District 3 (two-year term): Lamonta Amos, Gino L. Filippi, Carlos Garcia, Tauvaga HoChing.

Upland Mayor: Debra K. “Debbie” Stone (incumbent), Lois Sicking Dieter, Alexander Novikov, Councilman Bill Velto.

Yucaipa City Council, District 3: Bobby Duncan (incumbent), Clifford Gericke, Lee Kaberlein.

Yucaipa City Council, District 4: Justin Beaver, Stacey Chester.

Yucaipa City Council, District 5: Dick Riddell (incumbent), Patricia Elbeck, Craig Suveg, Jon Thorp.

School, college district races

San Bernardino County, Area C: Laura Abernathy Mancha (incumbent), Jessica Marie Camacho, Roman Gabriel Nava.

San Bernardino County, Area E: Alisa Clouser, Karalee Hargrove, David E. Raley, Andrea De Leon.

Alta Loma School District, Area 2: Dave Roberts (incumbent), Jessica Martinez.

Alta Loma School District, Area 4: Brad Buller (incumbent), Jason S. Roblee.

Bonita Unified School District, two seats: Brittany Allison, Krista Chakmak (incumbent), Glenn A. Creiman (incumbent), Crystal Jones-Bacon, Afshin Kaivan-Mehr, Christopher Erik Mattson, Joe Otto, Greg Palotto, Tommy Lee Randle.

Central School District, Area 1: Joan Weiss (incumbent), Mario A. Silva.

Chaffey Joint Unified School District, Area 1: Sue Ovitt (incumbent), Marisa Victoria Ortega, Elizabeth Escobar.

Chaffey Joint Unified School District, Area 5: Shari Megaw (incumbent), Stephanie Brown.

Chino Valley Unified School District, three seats: Havaughnia Hayes-White, Sylvia Cervantez Orozco, Vincent A. Coletta, Don Bridge, Andrew Cruz (incumbent), James Na (incumbent), Tony L. Flores, Jody Moore.

Claremont Unified School District, two seats: Kathy Archer, Bob Fass, Chris Naticchia.

Colton Joint Unified School District, Area 1: Patt Haro (incumbent), Carolina Verduzco, Moises Ortiz.

Colton Joint Unified School District, Area 2: Frank A. Ibarra (incumbent), Dora Marie Parham.

Cucamonga School District, Area 2: Naseem Farooqi, Eric D. Montague (incumbent).

Etiwanda School District, Area 5: Robert Garcia (incumbent), William James Smith Jr.

Fontana Unified School District, two seats: Oliver B. Christian, Jennifer Quezada, Oscar Ernesto Solis, Jason Barrett O'Brien (incumbent), Shelley C-Bradford, Angel Ramirez, Joe Armendarez.

Ontario-Montclair School District, Area 1: Flora Martinez, Chelsea M. Diaz.

Pomona Unified School District, Area 2: Alfredo Camacho, Lorena Gonzalez.

Pomona Unified School District, Area 3: Frank C. Guzman (incumbent), Arturo Jimenez.

Redlands Unified School District, Area 4: Cristina Puraci (incumbent), Davis Nesamony, Alex Vara (incumbent).

Redlands Unified School District, Area 5: Jim O'Neill (incumbent), Danielle Guillen, Mike A. Saifie.

Redlands Unified School District, Area 2 (short-term): Michele Rendler (incumbent), Scott L. McNair.

Rialto Unified School District, three seats: Nancy G. O’Kelley (incumbent), Stephanie E. Lewis, Mirna Ruiz, Abraham McNally, Joseph “Joe” W. Martinez (incumbent), Oscar S. Hinojosa Jr.

San Bernardino City Unified School District, four seats: Margaret B. Hill (incumbent), Gwen Dowdy Rodgers (incumbent), Joette Spencer Campbell, Anthony Jones, Tressy Capps, Mike Gallo (incumbent), Scott Wyatt (incumbent), Heather Johnson, Mayra Ceballos.

Upland Unified School District, two seats: Sherman R. Garnett, Denise Martinez, Jack Young (incumbent).

Walnut Valley Unified School District, two seats: Layla Abou-Taleb (incumbent), Qinglan Jiang, Larry L. Redinger (incumbent).

Walnut Valley Unified School District, Division 4: Alfred Sinclair (incumbent), Kevin T. Hayakawa.

Yucaipa-Calimesa Joint Unified School District, Area 3: Ayah Khairallah, Debbie Miller.

Ballot measures

San Bernardino County: Supervisor compensation reduction and term limits; county charter revision.

San Bernardino County Fire Protection District: Repeal Special Tax.

Los Angeles County: Charter amendment proposing that 10% of unrestricted funds be spent on community investment and alternatives to incarceration.

Chino Hills: 2% increase to transient occupancy tax, from 10% to 12%.

Montclair: 1% sales tax.

Diamond Bar: 0.75% sales tax increase.

Pomona: 0.75% utility users tax increase for next 10 years; cannabis ordinance allowing businesses downtown and other industrial areas or cannabis ordinance keeping current merit-based permit program.

Redlands: 1% sales tax.

San Bernardino: 1% sales tax.

Upland: Discontinue use of Memorial Park.

<https://www.sbsun.com/2020/08/14/whats-on-the-november-2020-ballot-for-san-bernardino-county/>

Dome Fire at Mojave National Preserve outside Las Vegas burns 16K acres

Elaine Emerson, Fox 5 Vegas News

Posted: August 17, 2020



Dome Fire at Mojave National Preserve. (San Bernardino County Fire)

LAS VEGAS (FOX5) -- A wildfire at a national preserve near the Nevada-California border has reached 16,000 acres, according to the **San Bernardino County Fire** District.

The Dome Fire at Mojave National Preserve started early Sunday morning, estimated at 500-1,000 acres, according to the Mojave National Preserve Twitter account. The fire quickly grew to 16,000 acres by late Sunday afternoon, according to SBCFD.

The vegetation fire closed roads in the area. Mojave National Preserve reported that Cima Road, Kelso-Cima Road, Ivanpah Road and Morningstar Mine Road were all closed as officials battled the fire. Fire officials are working on the ground and in the air to contain the fire.

https://www.fox5vegas.com/news/local/dome-fire-at-mojave-national-preserve-outside-las-vegas-burns-16k-acres/article_d20bc5c0-e083-11ea-97fa-4b67fc45dde0.html

Fire burns 16,000 acres in Mojave National Preserve near Las Vegas

Matthew Seeman, Channel 3 News Las Vegas

Posted: Monday, August 17, 2020

LAS VEGAS (KSNV) — A wildfire has burned at least 16,000 acres in the Mojave National Preserve south of Las Vegas, officials estimate.

The Dome Fire is burning southwest of Primm, and air and ground crews worked on suppression efforts Sunday, per a tweet from the preserve.

The National Park Service confirmed via its Fire & Aviation account that the fire grew to 16,000 acres on Sunday

The National Preserve's website says Ivanpah Road, Cima Road, Morningstar Mine Road, and Kelso-Cima Road are closed because of the fire. Travelers are directed to detour through Baker on Interstate 15 instead.

The **San Bernardino County Fire** Protection District said via Twitter it was helping with the response. There was no immediate word on a cause or whether any injuries have been reported.

The Twitter account for SoCal Air Operations, which provides information on fires in California that require air support, said the Dome Fire was more than 20,000 acres.

The Mojave National Preserve covers more than 1.5 million acres in southeastern California.

It's bounded by Interstates 15 and 40 to the north and south, respectively, and the Nevada state line to the east.

<https://news3lv.com/news/local/fire-burns-at-least-5000-acres-in-mojave-national-preserve-near-las-vegas>

DOMES FIRE IN MOJAVE PRESERVE UP TO 20,000 ACRES

Staff Writer, Z107.7 FM NEWS

Posted: August 17, 2020

A fire burning in the area of Cima Dome in the Mojave National Preserve has charred close to 20,000 acres. **San Bernardino County Fire** said Sunday afternoon that their firefighters were assisting Mojave National Preserve crews at the Dome Fire; Brush Engine 36 from Joshua Tree was at the scene assisting Sunday for about eight hours. It has since returned to service in Joshua Tree. The Dome Fire was first reported Saturday. By Sunday afternoon, the Dome Fire had burned about 16,000 acres, according to the Mojave National Preserve. Smoke from the fire is visible from Interstate 15. Crews on scene were working on the ground, they said that Teutonia Peak Trail and primitive campsites in the area were closed.

<http://z1077fm.com/dome-fire-in-mojave-preserve-up-to-20000-acres/>

Dome Fire up to 20,000+ acres in Mojave National Preserve

Jose Quintero and Matthew Cabe, Daily Press

Posted: August 16, 2020, 5:07 pm



The Dome fire burns near Cima Road in the Mojave National Preserve on Monday, August 16, 2020. The blaze charred more than 20,000 acres by Sunday evening. [PHOTO COURTESY OF SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY FIRE]

A fire burning in the northern section of the sprawling Mojave National Preserve charred more than 20,000 acres by Sunday evening, a little more than 24 hours after it started.

Southern California Air Operations, which is providing air support on the Dome Fire, provided the updated acreage in a 7:30 p.m. tweet. Just three hours earlier, **San Bernardino County Fire** tweeted that 16,000 acres had burned.

Firefighters with the county are assisting Mojave National Preserve and National Park Service Fire and Aviation crews on the blaze. County Fire reported a medic engine, brush engine, two brush patrols and one chief officer on scene.

Additionally, Southern California Air Operations said it had four “tankers” and two “copters” assigned to the fire. At least two aircraft — a tanker and a copter — arrived from Hemet-Ryan Airport in Riverside County, about 214 miles southwest of Mojave National Preserve.

By 7:30 p.m., all fixed-wing aircraft had landed for the night. A copter supported ground crews until sunset.

The agency tentatively scheduled eight aircraft, including four tankers, to assist Monday.

Crews on Monday will likely face conditions similar to the reported 115 degrees felt in the Preserve on Sunday amid a heat wave that has much of the western United States under extreme heat warnings.

The National Weather Service reported that several daily high-temperature records were broken Sunday in Southern California.

Death Valley National Park, meanwhile, recorded a preliminary high of 130 degrees at 3:41 p.m. If verified, the NWS said it will be the hottest official temperature since July 1913, also at Death Valley.

The Dome Fire started shortly before 3:30 p.m. Saturday, according to NBC4’s California fire map. It is burning in the area of Cima Dome, Preserve officials said.

Cima Dome is situated south of Interstate 15, about 26 miles east of the Mojave Desert community of Baker.

It lies about 27 miles north of the Kelso Depot Visitor Center, also in the Preserve.

The dome itself rises 1,500 feet above the desert floor. Vegetation there includes a Joshua tree forest that National Park Service officials say is the largest and densest in the world.

San Bernardino County Fire photographs from Sunday showed what looked like a wall of fire burning amid a cluster of Joshua trees near Cima and Kelso Cima roads.

On Sunday morning, the Dome Fire had burned between an estimated 500 to 1,000 acres, according to a 9:38 a.m. tweet from the Mojave National Preserve account. Crews on scene were working on the ground.

The tweet also said that Teutonia Peak Trail — northeast of Cima Dome — and “primitive campsites” in the area were closed.

All visitor centers, pit toilets, the Lava Tube and the Zzyzx area were also closed as of 4:30 p.m. Sunday, according to Southern California Air Operations.

By 1:30 p.m., Preserve officials updated the burn area to an estimated 5,000 acres.

Containment and whether any structures were threatened were unknown Sunday. Messages left with Preserve officials seeking additional information were not immediately returned.

The NWS tweeted that the blaze was “producing quite the smoke plume, now drifting” across Interstate 15. The elevated smoke was not impacting visibility, the agency said.

The Mojave National Preserve is a vast, 1.6 million-acre swath of mostly protected federal land within the NPS system. It’s sandwiched by I-15 to the north, Interstate 40 to the south and the California-Nevada border to the east.

In June, the Preserve got a new superintendent when Mike Gauthier was selected to succeed Todd Seuss, who transferred to the NPS’s Natural Resource, Stewardship and Science Program as Biological Resource Division chief in February.

Stan Austin, the agency’s regional director, announced the selection of Gauthier, who was scheduled to start the new assignment this month.

Gauthier joined the NPS in 1985. A statement described him as a veteran park ranger who has served in a wide variety of roles, including wilderness ranger, firefighter, and search and rescue coordinator.

As superintendent, Gauthier will also oversee Castle Mountains National Monument located within the Preserve near the California-Nevada border, east of where the Dome Fire is burning.

<https://www.vvdailynews.com/news/20200816/dome-fire-up-to-20000-acres-in-mojave-national-preserve>

Pilot planes lead the way in aerial firefighting

Paul Prado, Highland Community News

Posted: August 13, 2020



A lead plane flies in low laying a stream of smoke for the incoming air tanker during the Easton Fire in Highland. The lead plane lets the larger plane know when it is safe to release its payload of fire retardant. Paul Prado

Over a large wildland fire, the average bystander sees a flurry of planes and helicopters flying and buzzing overhead in a seemingly unorganized fashion.

Yet there is a small plane that seems to be present right before a long stream of reddish orange fire retardant falls from a fixed wing aircraft.

That plane is called the lead plane.

A lead plane, a Beechcraft King Air CG90, has been strategically stationed at the Air Tanker Base at the San Bernardino International Airport.

It has been deployed at many of the recent wildland fires in the region.

This plane had a role during the Easton and Apple fires.

The lead plane can be an underappreciated performer in the aerial assault that takes place when fighting a wildland blaze.

The lead plane can be seen flying low and fast over foothills or mountainous terrain.

Sometimes the lead plane appears to be circling as if it is looking for something.

In previous articles, we learned that the lead plane is mindful of what type of activity is going on the ground with the Hotshot crews and other equipment.

If you have ever watched a wildland fire, you might see a stream of white smoke appear before an air tanker flies in low to lay a line of fire retardant.

That stream of smoke came from a lead plane.

According to Assistant **Fire Chief Kathleen Oplinger**, the lead plane will make a dry run to make sure that the air tanker can make an effective drop.

“The lead plane has to assess the terrain to determine if the air tanker can perform their drop safely,” said Oplinger.

“After one or two passes, the last pass will usually be live or hot.”

The way the fire retardant is dropped is critical according to Oplinger.

“The air tanker has a belly full of retardant,” said Oplinger.

“You will usually not see an air tanker dropping fire retardant going uphill. It’s full. It is usually going downhill when it drops the retardant.

“The lead plane will determine if that plane can make that drop and pull out of it safely to go back and reload.”

“Basically, the lead plane determines if the performance of the aircraft can withstand the topographical and the aerodynamic conditions to drop the fire retardant.”

The smoke also comes as a warning, according to Oplinger.

“Firstly, the smoke is telling the air tanker pilot the trajectory that it will be following to drop its payload.

“Secondly, the smoke stream tells the people on the ground to get out of the way.”

The discreet twin-engine fixed wing aircraft will lead the large DC-10 tankers, the smaller and maneuverable S-2T aircraft and other planes to drop thousands of gallons of fire retardant to their designated targets.

With a trail of smoke, the lead plane will continue to be an unobtrusive player in the field of fire suppression.

Where it leads, the air tankers will follow.

https://www.highlandnews.net/news/public_safety/pilot-planes-lead-the-way-in-aerial-firefighting/article_22e23f40-dd84-11ea-9bb3-e30d2d4360db.html