



NEWS



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Amid thirsty bees and lightning strikes, Joshua Tree closes two popular spots

Christopher Reynolds, Los Angeles Times

Posted: August 18, 2020, 1:40 PM



The sun looms behind a Joshua tree.
(Rick Loomis / Los Angeles Times)

Thirsty honey bees, which forced closure of two Joshua Tree National Park campgrounds earlier this summer, are alarming visitors again.

This time, rangers have shut down the White Tank Campground and the popular Keys View observation point while also dealing with a summer storm.

San Bernardino County fire officials said in a tweet Tuesday that lightning from the storm has sparked numerous fires in the area, including one near Fourth Street and Cascade Road in the town of Joshua Tree, just outside the park.

Rangers tweeted the Keys View closure at noon Tuesday, saying the site would stay shut “until further notice” because of bee activity. The viewpoint offers a panorama of the Coachella Valley.

The White Tank Campground is a first-come, first-served campground with 15 sites and no water at the north end of the park. It’s popular with watchers of the night sky because there’s little light pollution in the area.

Bee activity led rangers to shut down Jumbo Rocks and Cottonwood campgrounds in early July. They reopened later that month. (Through Sept. 4, all camping in the park is first-come, first-served.)

In general, these are perilous days in the desert. On Saturday, the park put a flash-flood watch into effect, along with a poor air-quality warning. On Tuesday, rangers upgraded an existing heat advisory to an excessive heat warning, to be in place through Thursday. (Tuesday’s forecast: 100 degrees, with an overnight low of 76.)

Meanwhile, authorities recently diagnosed rabbit hemorrhagic disease in a rabbit near the park — a case that could substantially impact the area’s rabbit population.

Rangers say the rabbit virus does not infect humans, but they urge visitors not to touch any wildlife because some diseases can harm humans.

<https://www.latimes.com/travel/story/2020-08-18/thirsty-bees-at-joshua-tree-close-two-popular-spots>

Flash flood warnings issued, including in Apple Fire burn area, as summer thunderstorm hits parts of SoCal

Tracy Bloom, KTLA 5 News

Posted: August 18, 2020, 02:42 PM

Flash flood warnings were issued in parts of the Southland Tuesday afternoon, including for the Apple Fire burn scar area, as a thunderstorm moved through the region during an intense heat wave.

The first thunderstorm formed near Big Bear Lake around noon, according to the National Weather Service.

“Activity will continue to pick up over the next few hours in the mountains, and should gradually drift toward the Inland Empire later today,” the weather service tweeted.

The system moved into other parts of San Bernardino County, including Joshua Tree, where lightning sparked “numerous” vegetation fires, according to the **county’s Fire Department**. The largest blaze grew to about 150 acres before forward progress was halted.

In Los Angeles County, showers and isolated thunderstorms were initially detected in parts of the Antelope Valley shortly after 1 p.m. About an hour later, a thunderstorm began developing in the area, with activity reported “between Big Pines, Lake Los Angeles, Acton, and Palmdale,” according to NWS.

Around 3:45 p.m., additional storms formed east of the 5 Freeway near where the Lake Fire was burning in the Angeles National Forest, as well as in parts of northwest Ventura County.

A “strong” thunderstorm near Mount Pinos and south of Pine Mountain Club prompted NWS to issue a significant weather advisory late in the afternoon.

Forecasters warned the storms could bring dangerous lightning, gusty winds, brief intervals of heavy rain and even hail to the area.

Flash flood warnings have gone into effect in areas throughout Southern California, including for Oak Glen and Cherry Valley, potentially putting recent burn scarred areas from the recent Apple Fire at risk through late into the afternoon.

“Excessive rainfall over the burn scar will result in potentially deadly and destructive debris flows. The debris flow can consist of rock, mud, vegetation and other loose materials,” the weather service said.

The Apple Fire, which broke out on July 31, has burned about 52 square miles and is almost fully contained.

Hemet, San Jacinto, Valley Vista, Running Springs, Arrowbear Lake And Green Valley were among the areas under flash flood warnings during the afternoon.

Anyone who encounters flooding should immediately move to higher ground and avoid driving through floodwaters, forecasters advised.

Meanwhile, an excessive heat warning was in place throughout the region amid searing, triple-digit temperatures.

By 12:45 p.m., the heat index had already reached 119 degrees in Palm Springs, 111 degrees in Riverside and 109 degrees in Santa Ana, according to the weather service.

In San Diego County, the heat index values along the Interstate-15 corridor eclipsed 115 degrees by early afternoon, thanks to the humidity.

“These are remarkable numbers for inland San Diego County – feeling just as hot as the Coachella Valley,” NWS tweeted.

<https://ktla.com/news/local-news/flash-flood-warnings-issued-as-summer-thunderstorm-hits-parts-of-socal/>

Hot, humid weather is sticking around all week, and so are concerns about wildfires

Colin Atagi, Palm Springs Desert Sun

Posted: August 18, 2020, 11:11am

The heat and humidity kicked in before the sun had barely risen Tuesday, letting Coachella Valley residents know early on they were in store for another sweltering summer day.

Wednesday isn't expected to be much different as temperatures are predicted to hit a high of 116 in the Coachella Valley, according to the National Weather Service.

The region remains under an excessive heat warning until 10 p.m. Thursday as it, along with the rest of California, undergoes an historic heat wave that is engulfing the Golden State with triple-digit temperatures.

Tuesday's high, which was recorded at the Palm Springs International Airport, topped out at 114 for the fourth day in a row, according to the weather service. This location also broke a record for the warmest low temperature for Aug. 18 of 91 degrees. The old mark was 86 degrees, set in 2013.

Desert residents know this heat all too well, but the familiar summer temperatures are being compounded by the moisture in the air, which is making the local environment even more uncomfortable than it usually is at this time of year.

"All of California is having really excessive heat, but what's different for us is the humidity," National Weather Service meteorologist Samantha Connolly said.

Normally a dry environment, the Coachella Valley on Tuesday experienced humidity levels as high as 25%. That's higher than areas near Barstow to the north and Blythe to the east, where humidity is staying "in the teens," Connolly said.

Temperatures could hit 116 on Wednesday and Thursday before dropping down slightly to about 110 degrees by Friday. Normal highs for this time of year in the Coachella Valley are usually around 106, authorities said.

Will there be rolling blackouts?

California's power grid operators are continuing to keep an eye on the thermometer, while urging residents to conserve electricity where possible in the hopes there won't be a need for rolling blackouts to ease the strain on the state's power grid.

California Independent System Operator issued the first rolling blackouts in nearly 20 years on Friday, resulting in the state's three biggest utilities — Pacific Gas & Electric, Southern California Edison and San Diego Gas & Electric — turning off power to more than 410,000 homes and businesses for about an hour at a time until the emergency declaration ended more than 3 hours later.

A second, but shorter outage, hit Saturday evening affecting more than 200,000 customers.

By Monday, California ISO warned that as many as 3.3 million homes and businesses would be affected by an evening emergency order that would have required utilities to stage rotating, two-hour outages. But the order was never issued and the warning was canceled shortly before 8 p.m.

Coachella Valley: Extreme heat continues. These cooling centers are open

State grid: Heat wave still threatens California power grid with outages

On Tuesday, ISO President and CEO Steve Berberich attributed the cancellation to Californians limiting their electricity consumption, calling it a "dramatic flattening of the load curve like we'd never seen before."

"It was stunning, the conservation response we got," Berberich said. "We will need that (again) if we are to avoid load disruptions."

Later Tuesday afternoon, California ISO tweeted that consumer conservation was making a dent but that outages were still likely because of shortfalls.

Gov. Gavin Newsom said Californians can continue to help lower the potential need for rolling blackouts by:

Cooling homes and offices overnight and early in the morning

Setting air conditioning to 78 degrees between 3 and 10 pm

Using major appliances during off hours, when possible

Turning off all unnecessary lights.

Thunderstorms possible in area mountains

Thunderstorms may develop in area mountains through the rest of the week, according to Connolly.

The potential for storms increases the possibility of lightning strikes, which have already been identified as the causes of multiple fires across the state.

Newsom declared a statewide emergency Tuesday, saying that hundreds of wildfires are continuing to burn. "We are deploying every resource available to keep communities safe as California battles fires across the state during these extreme conditions," he said.

In Southern California, evacuations continued for a week-old fire in the mountains of northern Los Angeles County.

Also on Tuesday, lightning sparked "numerous" fires in Joshua Tree, including one that grew to 150 acres.

It burned near Cascade Road and Fourth Street, which is about 1.5 miles north of Highway 62, according to the **San Bernardino County Fire** Department.

At 2:45 p.m., the fire department announced the fire had stopped at 150 acres and firefighters would work into the evening to ensure the blaze was contained.

Shortly after 3 p.m., the weather service issued a brief severe thunderstorm warning in parts of Riverside County after a thunderstorm was spotted near Mountain Center and Anza, which authorities said appeared "nearly stationary."

Meteorologists warned that the storm could drop "nickel-size hail" and include 70 mph wind gusts, possibly affecting Anza, Highway 74 between Mountain Center and Anza, Mountain Center, Highway 74 between Hemet and Mountain Center, Aguanga, Lake Hemet, Cahuilla Indian Reservation and Sage.

The threat was lifted by 4:15 p.m.

Of the wildfires still burning in California, lightning is blamed for two of the largest ones: The 83,261-acre July Complex Fire in the Modoc National Forest and the 40,000-acre Dome Fire in the Mojave National Preserve.

On Saturday, lightning sparked the Dome Fire in the Mojave National Preserve and things got "very bad" one day later when thunderstorms produced strong winds that fueled flames, said Todd Smith, the preserve's supervisory interpretive ranger.

Dome Fire:43,000 acres burned in Mojave National Preserve

Video:Dome fire chars Joshua tree forest in California

"It was the perfect storm to really make things worse for us," Smith said. "The thunderstorm cell just right over the fire was what got everything going crazy, and that's when it spread from 100 or 200 acres to 16,000 acres."

Lightning also was blamed for eight smaller fires in the San Bernardino National Forest, including two that happened Saturday just outside the Coachella Valley, according to the U.S. Forest Service.

The Ralph Fire burned 10 acres near highways 74 and 243 in Mountain Center, and the Tip Top Fire charred 2.5 acres west of Pioneertown.

Lightning fires have been most prevalent at higher elevations and a helitack crew was expected to do a "reconnaissance flight over the entire forest" Tuesday afternoon, Forest Service Fire Information Officer Lisa Cox said.

The National Weather Service issued a flash flood warning for the northwest portion of the Apple Fire's burn area after a thunderstorm developed in the San Bernardino National Forest northeast of Redlands Tuesday afternoon

A vehicle ignited that blaze July 31 in the 9000 block of Oak Glen Road in Cherry Valley. It burned 33,424 acres through the San Geronio Wilderness and was 95% contained Tuesday.

https://www.desertsun.com/story/news/crime_courts/2020/08/18/hot-humid-weather-continues-palm-springs-area-fueling-wildfire-concerns/3392356001/

MOJAVE NATIONAL PRESERVE'S DOME FIRE AT 44,000 ACRES

Staff Writer, Z107.7 FM NEWS

Posted: August 19, 2020

The fire burning in the Mojave National Preserve, 67 miles northeast of Twentynine Palms, has scorched 44,248 acres, federal officials estimate Tuesday. Crews have 5 percent containment on the Dome fire, located about seven miles northwest of Cima, according to an update from the National Interagency Fire Center. The National Park Service is the lead agency, with the **San Bernardino County Fire** providing assistance. Flames were first reported Sunday on the national preserve, which covers more than 1.5 million acres in southeastern California.

<http://z1077fm.com/mojave-national-preserves-dome-fire-at-44000-acres/>

Dome Fire southwest of Las Vegas burns 43,000 acres, 5% contained

Matthew Seeman, Channel 3 Las Vegas News

Posted: August 18, 2020

LAS VEGAS (KSNV) — The fire burning in the Mojave National Preserve southwest of Las Vegas has scorched 43,000 acres, federal officials estimate Tuesday.

Crews have 5% containment on the Dome Fire, located about 7 miles northwest of Cima, California, according to an update from the National Interagency Fire Center.

The National Park Service is the lead agency, with the **San Bernardino County Fire** Protection District providing assistance.

Flames were first reported Sunday on the national preserve, which covers more than 1.5 million acres in southeastern California.

<https://news3lv.com/news/local/dome-fire-southwest-of-las-vegas-burns-43000-acres-5-contained>

Wildfire racing through Mojave National Preserve

Staff Writer, Inland News Today

Posted: August 18, 2020



BAKER – (INT) – A wind-fed wildfire was racing across an isolated area of the Mojave National Preserve with no containment in sight.

The National Park Service said the fire quickly grew from 5,000 to 16,000 acres in a matter of hours Sunday near the Cima Dome in extreme northeast San Bernardino County.

It poses no threat to buildings. Primitive campsites were closed along the Teutonia Peak Trail.

Dubbed the Dome Fire, it's burning near the Kelso-Cima Road.

The cause is under investigation, but there have been thunderstorms and lightning in scattered areas of the Mohave Desert.

<http://www.inlandnewstoday.com/story.php?s=60311>

Apple Fire Remains 95% Contained After Charring 33,424 Acres

Staff Writer, My News LA

Posted: August 18, 2020

Firefighters battling the Apple Fire burning in Riverside and San Bernardino counties were continuing to monitor flare-ups along the fire's perimeter and shore up the landscape Tuesday amid an excessive heat warning and a slight chance of thunderstorms.

The fire, which remained 95% contained as of Tuesday morning, has burned 33,424 acres since sparking July 31 in Cherry Valley due to a diesel vehicle malfunction, according to the U.S. Forest Service.

So far, \$51.8 million has been spent on fighting the Apple Fire, which is the largest blaze in the region in more than a decade.

The fire has injured four firefighters and destroyed four homes and eight outbuildings. An estimated 2,600 residences and 7,800 people were evacuated at the height of the blaze.

There were 248 fire personnel still on the scene Tuesday, aided by five water-dropping helicopters, according to the latest estimates provided by fire officials. All Cal Fire air tankers have left.

Remaining firefighters were focusing on monitoring and patrolling the fire's perimeter, as well as fixing up swaths of land impacted by firefighting efforts.

Officials warned that pockets of vegetation burning within the fire perimeter could generate smoke at times.

Command of the firefighting efforts was transferred Friday from the federal government's California Incident Management Team 2 to the San Bernardino National Forest, which is in unified command with Cal Fire, according to Zach Behrens, a national forest spokesman.

With fire lines holding, the Forest Service began assessing the severity of the damage in the San Bernardino National Forest last week, looking into a variety of environmental impacts caused by the fire, including watershed damage that could spur dangerous flood conditions during the Southern California wet season.

The blaze burned through federal, state and private lands, according to Cathleen Thompson of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and several governmental agencies will have to conduct their own post-fire assessments as the Forest Service is doing in the national forest.

The Apple Fire also burned through the Morongo Band of Mission Indians reservation, and the damage to the reservation will be assessed by the U.S. Department of Interior.

"Tribal lands are considered federal land as they are managed jointly by the tribes and the Bureau of Indian Affairs," Thompson said.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs falls under the U.S. Department of Interior.

The San Geronio Wilderness area — where 7,249 acres have burned — remained closed to the public.

A portion of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail was also closed to all traffic between the Cottonwood Trailhead, near the community of San Geronio, and Forest Road 1N01.

All Forest Service recreation areas in the Forest Falls area were also closed, along with those in some adjacent areas.

Additional information about these closures can be found at www.fs.usda.gov/sbnf.

<https://mynews1a.com/government/2020/08/18/apple-fire-remains-95-contained-after-charring-33424-acres/>

CASCADE FIRE IN JOSHUA TREE CONTAINED AT 160 ACRES

Staff Writer, Z107.7 FM NEWS

Posted: August 19, 2020



County firefighters were the lead agency in fighting the Cascade fire.

Keith Roleff photo

Lightning sparked a wildfire in the Sunfair Dry Lake in Joshua Tree Tuesday afternoon.

Just before 1 p.m., a San Bernardino National Forest Battalion Chief who was passing through on the way to the Dome fire in the Mojave National Preserve witnessed the lightning strike and resulting fire. The fire was burning two to three acres in light to medium vegetation. **San Bernardino County firefighters** went to work to keep the fire south of Broadway and west of Copper Mountain College.

Passing thunderstorms created strong and unpredictable winds, fueling the blaze. San Bernardino County Battalion Chief Mike McClintock said the fire had spread to 50 acres within 20 minutes, and 100 acres by 2 p.m.

Despite the erratic winds, high temperatures, and extremely dry vegetation, fire crews managed to contain the wildfire to 160 acres, and prevented the fire from spreading into BLM land. More than 40 county firefighters and BLM firefighters, along with hand crews, and water tenders worked to contain the fire.

There were no injuries and no structures were threatened by the blaze.

A few minutes before the Cascade lightning strike, lightning also hit near Quail Springs Road and Onaga Trail in BLM land in Joshua Tree. The fire, later estimated to be about one-tenth of an acre, was up in the rocks far off the road. Firefighters lost sight of the fire when a downpour doused in, but a crew from the Bureau of Land Management went back later and put a line around the blaze to make sure it didn't spread.

<http://z1077fm.com/cascade-fire-in-joshua-tree-contained-at-160-acres/>

CASCADE FIRE BURNS 160 ACRES IN JOSHUA TREE

Taylor Martinez, NBC Palm Springs

Posted: August 19, 2020, 10:00 AM

The Cascade fire in Joshua Tree burned 160 acres Tuesday evening leaving **San Bernardino County Fire** officials to mop up hot spots throughout the evening.

Crews were successful in keeping the fire to LRA lands and kept the fire from spreading to adjacent BLM land.

San Bernardino County Fire responded with (3) Medic Engines, (3) Brush Engines, (2) Water Tenders, (2) Battalion Chiefs, a Hand Crew and a Safety Officer. More than 40 #SBCoFD Firefighters worked the fire.

The fire was a result of lightning.

<https://nbcpalmsprings.com/2020/08/19/lightening-sparks-100-acre-fire-in-joshua-tree/>

Cascade Fire Burns 160 Acres in Joshua Tree on Tuesday

Staff Writer, Victor Valley News

Posted: August 18, 2020



(Photos Courtesy of Chris Nichols)

JOSHUA TREE, Calif. (VVNG.com) — A fire started by a lightning strike in Joshua Tree scorched 160 acres on Tuesday.

At about 1:00 pm on August 18th a San Bernardino National Forest Battalion Chief passing through the area witnessed a lightning strike, resulting in a fire, stated officials.

The BC reported 2-3 acres in light to medium fuels in the area of Cascade and 4th in the community of Joshua Tree.

San Bernardino County Fire responded to the incident and units at the scene reported passing thunder storms that created unpredictable strong winds which fueled the fire.

Due to the fire's rate of spread additional San Bernardino County Fire crews were quickly started.

Within 20 minutes of arrival, the fire had grown to more than 50 acres and by 2:00PM the fire spread to more than 100 acres.

“Despite the high temperatures, erratic winds and extremely dry vegetation crews managed to limit the fire’s spread to 160 acres,” stated a county fire news release. “Crews were successful in keeping the fire to LRA lands and kept the fire from spreading to adjacent BLM land.”

Officials said no structures were immediately threatened or damaged and no injuries were reported. Over 40 County Firefighters worked the incident along with (3) Medic Engines, (3) Brush Engines, (2) Water Tenders, (2) Battalion Chiefs, a Hand Crew and a Safety Officer.

*LRA – Local Responsibility Area

**BLM – Bureau of Land Management

<https://www.vvng.com/cascade-fire-burns-160-acres-in-joshua-tree-on-tuesday/>

Lightning sparks fire that burns 160 acres in Joshua Tree, other fires reported

Colin Atagi and Shane Newell, Palm Springs Desert Sun

Posted: August 18, 2020, 1:41pm



More than 40 firefighters battled the blaze on Tuesday, Aug. 18, 2020, near Joshua Tree. Courtesy of Chris Nichols/San Bernardino County Fire Department

Lightning sparked "numerous" fires in Joshua Tree Tuesday, including one that grew to 160 acres.

The largest fire, known as the Cascade Fire, burned near Cascade Road and Fourth Street, which is about 1.5 miles north of Highway 62, according to the **San Bernardino County Fire Department**.

No structures were threatened or damaged, the fire department said. No injuries to fire crews or residents were reported.

The fire was reported around 1 p.m. after a San Bernardino National Forest battalion chief was heading to the Dome Fire in the Mojave National Preserve and saw a lightning strike cause a fire, the fire department said.

The initial report was 2 to 3 acres in light to medium fuels. However, thunderstorms created "unpredictable and strong winds," which fueled the fire and prompted more crews to be sent to the blaze, according to the fire department.

By 2 p.m., the fire charred 100 to 150 acres but had a "slowed dramatically," prompting the Bureau of Land Management to cancel air support, according to the fire department.

At 2:45 p.m., the fire department announced the fire had burned 150 acres and they would spend four hours mopping up the scene. More than 40 firefighters battled the fire.

Officials on Tuesday afternoon did not specify where the other fires burned.

The U.S. Forest Service reported multiple fires have been sparked by lightning since Saturday. They included a 2.5-acre fire on Saturday near Pioneertown, which is west of Joshua Tree in the High Desert.

This is a developing story and check desertsun.com for updates as they become available.

<https://www.desertsun.com/story/news/environment/wildfires/2020/08/18/lightning-sparks-20-fire-joshua-tree-other-fires-reported/3393258001/>

Lightning Ignites 150-Acre Fire Near Joshua Tree National Park

Kat Schuster, Patch Los Angeles

Posted: August 18, 2020 2:39 pm



Firefighters were on the scene of multiple fires started by lightning in the Joshua Tree area Tuesday. (Renee Schiavone/Patch)

JOSHUA TREE, CA — As a monsoonal storm system moved through the Joshua Tree area Tuesday, lightning strikes caused multiple vegetation fires near the national park, including one that ballooned to 150 acres, according to the **San Bernardino County Fire Protection District**.

Dubbed the Cascade Fire, the blaze was reported shortly after 1 p.m. at Cascade Road and 4th Street on the northern edge of Joshua Tree National Park.

As of 2:45 p.m., the San Bernardino County Fire Protection District reported the brusher's forward progress had been halted. There were no injuries and no structure damage. Crews will be on scene into the evening for mop-up, the agency reported.

There was a severe thunderstorm warning in the area, with flash flood warnings issued across the Inland Empire.

A strong high pressure system over the southwestern states was forecast to bring scattered thunderstorms to parts of the Inland Empire Tuesday and Wednesday, according to the National Weather Service.

<https://patch.com/california/los-angeles/lightning-strikes-joshua-tree-causing-fires-over-100-acres>

Lightning starts fire in Sunfair area

Staff Writer, Hi-Desert Star

Posted: August 18, 2020, 2:37 PM



Smoke billows up from the Sunfair Dry Lake Bed area in Joshua Tree Tuesday after a fire believed to have been sparked by lightning.

Credit: Bob Deloyd photo

JOSHUA TREE — Lightning lit a fire that burned around 100 acres in the Sunfair Dry Lake area Tuesday afternoon, Aug. 18.

The fire was reported at 1 p.m. in the area of Broadway at Cascade Road after a resident said he saw lightning and then smoke, said Battalion Chief Mike McClintock, with the **San Bernardino County fire** department.

As the flames spread, a local fire chief who was driving to the Dome Fire in the Mojave National Preserve saw the smoke and diverted to start fighting the fire.

It spread quickly due to the wind and by 2:30 p.m. Tuesday was holding steady at around 100 acres, McClintock said. It appeared the flames would be stopped on some sides by natural barriers, including the hills nearby.

The fire is burning on San Bernardino County land currently. No homes are threatened.

Five fire engines are on the scene and more are on the way.

McClintock expects firefighters will be working throughout the night.

<https://hidesertstar.com/news/173751/lightning-starts-fire-in-sunfair-area/>

LIGHTENING SPARKS 100+ ACRE FIRE IN JOSHUA TREE

Taylor Martinez, NBC Palm Springs

Posted: August 18, 2020, 2:26 pm



San Bernardino County Fire officials are working to contain a vegetation fire in Joshua Tree as a result of lightening.

As of 2:05 PM Tuesday the blaze spread to over 100 acres.

At last update officials said the rate of spread had slowed and some backup units were called off.

This is a developing story. Stay with NBC Palm Springs for more updates.

<https://nbcpalmsprings.com/2020/08/18/lightening-sparks-100-acre-fire-in-joshua-tree/>

Lightning causes 150-acre fire in Joshua Tree; Forward progress stopped

Jesus Reyes, KESQ Channel 3 News

Posted: August 18, 2020, 1:37 pm



Firefighters are working to contain multiple vegetation fires burning in Joshua Tree Tuesday afternoon.

According to the **San Bernardino County Fire** Department, the fire has grown from 5 acres to 40-50 acres in the span of a couple of minutes.

As of 2:05 p.m., the fire has grown to 100-150 acres, however, by 2:45 p.m. the fire was at 150 acres and forward progress was stopped.

There was no threat to structures and no injuries reported.

As First Alert Chief Meteorologist Haley Clawson shows, there was some lightning activity in the area between 1 and 2 p.m.

<https://www.kesq.com/news/2020/08/18/lightning-causes-multiple-vegetation-fires-in-joshua-tree/>

EDITORIALS / OPINIONS / LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Karma may be coming for councilmen who imposed fire fee

Steve Spear, Twentynine Palms, Hi-Desert Star

Posted: August 18, 2020, 5:51 PM

The Twentynine Palms City Council is opposing the vote of the people. Karma is a special event and will become a reality for the city of Twentynine Palms and the council members who were in place when they performed a questionable act.

Of the five original council members, two remain from that fateful decision, one of whom is up for reelection in November.

Those two have now, along with the rest of the current council, authorized the city attorney to oppose the repeal of the fire protection fee which the county board of supervisors realized was a terrible mistake, if not illegal. It was basically a violation of the law. The law requires a two-thirds vote of the people to pass a special tax.

Instead, a devious plan was concocted to call it a “fee,” which allowed the City Council to impose on the taxpayers of Twentynine Palms a \$157 per year charge on their property taxes for fire protection only; or a special tax, known as FP-5.

These same two council members then engaged in dismantling the Twentynine Palms Fire Department, which is exactly what County Fire Chief Hartwig wanted.

Back then the city had a chance to save its own fire department, but four on the council voted to scrap it, and instead impose this “fee” on the citizens of Twentynine Palms without a vote, by following the ludicrous advice of County Fire Chief Hartwig.

Then Hartwig proceeded to do the same for the rest of the county under some dubious scheme of opposition via mail. No vote was put on the ballot, there was just a “fee” imposition scheme.

Well, the county board of supervisors realized later that Hartwig’s scheme was just that, an illegal scheme, which violated Prop 218. This November the FP-5 fee of \$157 per parcel will be on the November ballot and I believe will be voted out of existence.

Then Twentynine will be faced with no fire protection for lack of funding and because the county will, no doubt, pull resources away from Twentynine Palms and into Yucca Valley.

Mind you, the city is mandated to provide police and fire protection services or it must cease being a city and become part of the county from which it came.

The council had their chance years ago to keep public safety local and they blew it. Karma, what a very strange concept.

<https://hidesertstar.com/news/173763/karma-may-be-coming-for-councilmen-who-imposed-fire-fee/>