



NEWS



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COUNTY FIRE CHIEF DISCUSSED THE REPEAL OF FP-5 ON Z107-7 FRIDAY

Staff Writer, Z107.7 FM NEWS

Posted: August 31, 2020

Last year, property owners in the county's more than 19,000-square-mile Fire Protection District 5 saw the new \$157 per parcel fee added to property tax bills. First conceived of by **County Fire** administrators, the fee was to provide a steady revenue stream and bail the department out of a multi-million-dollar budget shortfall. However, angry residents have forced a referendum vote on the FP-5 fire fee this November, where they'll be asked whether it should stay or go. Fire Chief Dan Munsey, who took over as the county's fire chief last year, was on the Z107.7 Up Close Show Friday to provide perspective on what the fire fee does and what would happen if it is eliminated. Managing editor Tami Roleff has the highlights...

"The immediate effect if FP-5 is repealed would be the loss of 15 to 20 fire stations across the county."

County Fire Chief Dan Munsey says the FP-5 fire fee helps fill a \$41.5 million dollar shortfall in the fire department's budget.

He said the South Desert area—which includes the Morongo Basin east to the Arizona border—has six fire stations (Yucca Valley, Yucca Mesa, Joshua Tree, Twentynine Palms, the Parker area, and Needles.

"We will need to go from six to three fire stations.... To make this decision, we're still looking at which fire stations we would need to close. And we make a determination of where we can do the most amount of good for the most amount of people."

Munsey said the county's goal is to have a six-minute response to calls; he said if three stations are forced to close, the response time will increase.

In addition, other services, while paid for out of the county's general fund, would likely be eliminated.

"The helicopter program that we have in conjunction with the Sheriff's Department; inmate fire crews; we have specialized swift water rescue and personnel that are trained to do those rescues, or we put heavy equipment—bulldozers or front-end loaders that go into flood channels to clear them of debris while the water is running—those type of programs that the county's continually funded. With the shift of FP-5, it's very likely those programs would go away."

To listen to the complete Up Close Show podcast, go to: <https://podcasts.apple.com/podcast/id386367587>

<http://z1077fm.com/county-fire-chief-discussed-the-repeal-of-fp-5-on-z107-7-friday/>

Fire near Hilltop House Sunday in Apple Valley contained

Gabriel D. Espinoza, Victor Valley News Group

Posted: August 30, 2020



A vegetation fire near the Hilltop house was quickly contained. (Gabriel D. Espinoza, VVNG.com)

APPLE VALLEY, Calif. (VVNG.com) — A vegetation fire along Bass Hill was quickly contained by firefighters Sunday afternoon.

Apple Valley Fire Protection District personnel responded to the blaze at 2:53 p.m. with assistance from the Victorville City Fire Department, and they were able to stop the forward rate of spread by 3:35 p.m.

The fire scorched several acres before it was fully contained, according to scanner traffic reported.

San Bernardino County Firefighters were also busy working a separate vegetation fire that burned nearly 60 acres in Lucerne Valley.

Both fires remain under investigation, and no injuries have been reported.

<https://www.vvng.com/fire-near-hilltop-house-sunday-in-apple-valley-contained/>

Victor Valley residents smelling smoke from Zurich Fire in Crestline

Staff Writer, Victor Valley News Group

Posted: August 29, 2020



CRESTLINE, Calif. (VVNG.com) — A new brush fire burning in Crestline is causing Victor Valley residents to smell smoke Saturday afternoon.

At approximately 2:19 PM on August 29, 2020, **San Bernardino County Firefighters** were dispatched to a structure fire in the 23800 block of Zurich Drive.

Arriving firefighters located a fully engulfed two-story structure. The strong winds quickly pushed the flames into large pine trees near the structure.

According to a tweet from SB County Fire, crews worked on perimeter control and fire attack on the home. Additional crews including air tankers have responded to the incident and are reported to be making good progress.

The incident has been named the Zurich Fire and as of 3:30 PM., the fire was reported to be an estimated 10 – 15 acres in size.

Calfire BDU and San Bernardino County Fire are in unified command of the incident. The staging area is Lake Gregory.

Residents in Apple Valley, Oak Hills, and Hesperia are reporting seeing and smelling smoke.

This is a developing story and additional information will be updated as it becomes available.

<https://www.vvng.com/victor-valley-residents-smelling-smoke-from-zurich-fire-in-crestline/>

Situational Awareness Software Used by California Firefighters

JIM MCKAY, GOVERNMENT TECHNOLOGY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Posted: August 28, 2020



TNS

Managing resources on the scene of an emergency has been a challenge for first responders and emergency managers for decades, and that hasn't changed. But there are tools to help, and one that is being used on the California wildfire front as well as the pandemic response is the Tablet Command (TC)

The TC was developed by two firefighters in 2007 and has evolved over the years to the challenges of today.

Right now, it's in use in the fight against Northern California wildfires in San Mateo, Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco and San Joaquin counties to manage strike team resources. The teams build an incident in the TC, enter all the resources being used and create a timestamp activity record. The TC essentially creates an activity log of what is happening on the fire line.

“San Bernardino County Fire uses it in every frontline response unit to include our fire engines, squads, ambulances, chief officers, snow cat, boats and helicopter,” said Jeff Birchfield, assistant chief for Division 1 of the San Bernardino Fire Department. “We have found it to be a very effective tool with use of map layers and CAD notes, while en-route to incidents, providing situational awareness for our battalion chiefs to monitor unit status within their battalions.”

The TC also publishes Esri map data, taking an entire map and displaying it on the TC for situational awareness.

The COVID-19 response began in San Bernardino County when the county reached out to the Tablet Command people to ask about tracking resources across the county. San Bernardino sought to use the tool to track EMS and fire as they go to calls involving the coronavirus.

“There’s been a couple of different use cases for COVID,” said Van Riviere, president and CEO of Tablet Command and a former battalion chief in Stockton, Calif. “San Bernardino uses it as a resource management tool and then Marin is creating an incident in TC, and any crew interaction with someone who is potentially COVID-positive is logged and tracked,” he said.

A feature in the TC, called Real Time Sync, allows the local health officer at the health department to be privy to TC incidents involving the coronavirus to help make local public health decisions based on data in the field.

RealTime Sync also allows other commanders with TC to view the actions of another commander to act accordingly, providing a form of situational awareness. The next iteration of this situational awareness is the ability of commanders in neighboring counties to be able to share oneanother’s actions. That is coming later this year, according to Riviere.

San Bernardino County started with TC by replacing its Mobile Data Computers (MDC) with the platform and using TC as its notification and response incident management tool.

“I recently had a fire that required me to separate from my command vehicle and I had my iPad in hand and was able to manage the incident remotely,” said Jeff Chumbley, division chief of the Valley Center Fire Protection District in California. “The phone app is also favorable with all of the line personnel. I now use my iPad solely and no longer use my MDC.”

The software as a service solution is an annual subscription that starts at about \$9,000 for a CAD license and “view only” one-way solution for 10 users. For a two-way, 10-user subscription and MDC replacement, the cost is about \$13,000.

“It’s only limited by the imagination and bandwidth of the customer,” Riviere said. “It can provide access to fire plans and through our application, we’re doing integrations with staffing solutions so you can tap on an icon and see exactly who is riding on a fire [truck].”

“By the end of the year, we will have integration built to another mapping solution to allow people to annotate maps.

<https://www.govtech.com/em/safety/Situational-Awareness-Software-Used-by-California-Firefighters.html>

California's secret fire, Navy dodges questions about 80,000-acre blaze

Lauren Jennings and Jessica Weston, Daily Independent, USA Today Network / Visalia Times-Delta

Posted: August 28, 2020, 1:37pm



Four helicopters head toward a plume of smoke from a fire located within the boundaries of Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake on July 30.

While more than 1 million acres of California has been scorched, one major fire hasn't made headlines.

In fact, outside of Kern County most haven't heard of the 80,000-acre fire on one of the largest military bases in the world. Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake was struck by lightning on Aug. 19, sparking a fast-spreading wildfire — an all too familiar story for Californians right now.

The fire, among the largest in the state over the last month, was reportedly out within a week. Fire suppression was done without the help of outside state agencies that have been fighting fires across Los Angeles, Monterey, Santa Cruz, Napa and Tulare counties.

So, why is no one talking about this fire? It may have to do with an ingrained priority of protecting the mission at China Lake.

“When you work on base what you see and hear there, stays there,” Ridgecrest resident Meris Lueck said. “You don't share it in public for security reasons.”

Lueck worked for nine years as a contractor on the base at China Lake. She said the military workplace culture strongly discourages or even prohibits talking about work away from the job site.

China Lake personnel repeatedly declined to report on how many acres have burned or the containment percentages. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), however, first estimated on Aug. 21 that the “North Range Fire” had burned 50,000-plus acres and was 0% contained.

Because the BLM doesn't manage the land on the base, officials were merely estimating the damage caused by the blaze.

'We're drying the fuels':How climate change is making wildfires worse in the West

The Daily Independent reached out to China Lake twice last week in hopes of confirming the numbers provided by the BLM. There was no response, despite smoke rolling into Kern County.

Michelle Van Der Linden, a BLM spokeswoman for the California Desert District, did respond to the newspaper's request for comment, stating in an email last week that BLM lands had not been impacted and referred questions to the Navy base.

Ridgecrest Police Department Chief Jed McLaughlin said that while the city has a good working relationship with the federal government and the various agencies on the base and police will respond if asked, but no one at China Lake contacted them about the fire.

Reports of a growing fire

China Lake officials posted on Facebook about the fire at 10:30 p.m. the day it was sparked, acknowledging a brushfire in a remote northern area of the base.

Navy officials posted on social media the next day, giving no description on the size or containment.

"Emergency personnel remain dedicated in their efforts to protect the safety and security of those (who) work and live at NAWS China Lake," officials stated.

By Friday, Navy officials still hadn't responded to requests for details and posted on social media that fire crews from Naval Air Station Lemoore and Navy firefighters from across the state were helping local Navy personnel.

BLM officials said on Monday that the fire was 80,000 acres and 25% contained. By Tuesday, BLM officials said the acreage remained at 80,000 and containment had grown to 95%.

That afternoon, Margo Allen, the base's public affairs officer, contacted the newspaper, promising an official count once the fire was out but declined to provide details beyond acknowledging 50,000 acres was an early estimate by the BLM.

Firefighters have stepped in to describe the struggles that come along with remote rural fires.

Desert fires can be challenging due to strong winds that are common in the surrounding deserts, according to Michael McClintock, a **San Bernardino Fire Department** spokesman.

He explained that the monsoon season has the potential to bring lightning storms into the desert, which can cause multiple fires in a single area. If the storm brings strong and erratic winds following the thunderstorm, it can push the fire very quickly, McClintock said.

"High heat will keep fuels extremely dry and also make it challenging for our fire crews to work when it's 100-plus," he said. "Dry areas can have less fuels but make it more difficult for fire crews to work for extended periods of time."

McClintock speculated that due to the desert having little fuel sources the fire could have spread quickly, while the containment itself is dependent on the area.

NAWS China Lake falls under the Navy Region Southwest Command in San Diego, which also declined comment on the fire and redirected the newspaper back to Allen.

Up the chain, the Navy's public affairs officer in Washington DC also declined to comment.

Gov. Gavin Newsom's office was likewise mum on the North Range Fire, forwarding an inquiry to Cal OES and CAL FIRE. The governor has added regular fire updates to his routine pandemic response reports throughout the week.

The North Range Fire was not listed on CAL FIRE's incident website because it currently services 36 out of 58 of California's counties. Deputy Chief Nick Schuler confirmed the fire was technically in San Bernardino County and therefore outside CAL FIRE's jurisdiction.

McClintock said the San Bernardino Fire Department did not have any calls about a fire near the base and weren't notified by the Navy.

As the fire grew, it was also noticeably absent from the National Interagency Fire Center website.

On Wednesday morning, one week after the fire started, the BLM, again unofficially, announced that the fire had been 100% contained.

The same day, Manuel Joseph Delarosa, a Navy liaison for California, confirmed that approximately 80,000 acres were charred, and no injuries were reported. He added that there was no critical damage to the base's infrastructure.

Why so secret?

NAWS China Lake is a 1.1 million-acre installation that was founded during World War II as a remote place to test weapons in secrecy. Since then it has grown to be the Navy's premier facility for research, development, acquisition, testing and evaluation of weapons and armaments. It is also the Navy's single largest landholding, with 85% of the Navy's land.

The facility has gone through name changes through the years, and several tenants -- the largest of which is Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division -- now share the federal space. By all accounts China Lake is considered essential to national security.

The base -- like any Department of Defense or military installation -- is kept under lock and key.

So guarded are operations at China Lake that a Ridgcrest reporter was stopped from taking photos of the front gate from a vantage point "outside the fence line."

"They have all different layers of classification and activities on that base that require different security clearances to access different programs and areas," former NAWS Commander Mick Gleason said.

"Managing classified material and managing activities that have varying levels of classification is difficult and people are very careful in managing that information."

Much of the base is undeveloped wildland, and the Navy uses the undisturbed expanse for weapons testing. The fire occurred in an area which requires a security clearance to access, meaning it is not open to the public.

Sources familiar with the location say it was overgrown due to rains in recent years and that the fire would have had no trouble spreading given the overgrown conditions.

Locals know that unexplained fires in the night sky likely indicate weapons testing and not alien aircraft, but mystery still surrounds the facility.

Any suspicions the fire had another cause, such as being weapons-related, are inaccurate according to a background source who confirmed the official word that lightning caused the blaze.

Once the fire was going, the Navy may have decided it was more cost-efficient to let the fire burn itself out, according to several sources. This is common practice in fighting wildland fires that don't threaten structures or lives.

China Lake officials provided an update on social media on the fire on Friday at 11 a.m., two days after BLM announced the blaze was contained.

"Firefighting activities for a wildland fire in a remote northern area of the NAWS China Lake Installation were successful. The fire has been extinguished. No reports of injury to personnel or damage to critical assets were received. Thank you to all those who were able to answer the call and assist NAWS China Lake in response efforts."

<https://www.visaliatimesdelta.com/story/news/2020/08/28/california-wildfire-naval-air-weapons-station-china-lake-fire-information/5657462002/>

Desert Heights News, Aug. 28: Get ready, here come those colder 'ber' months

Fran Becker, Hi-Desert Star

Posted: August 28, 2020, 12:47 PM

September is upon us; it's the time of year when "ber" months arrive. With any luck, Mother Nature might be kind and add a little "burr" to our weather and finally put summer behind us. Anyone who knows me, knows that the first day of triple-digit summer heat puts me in countdown mode to the first day of autumn and the promise of cooler days. I love our desert, but our desert summers, not so much! Normal maintenance around the property goes by the wayside, the to-do list gets longer with items unchecked, all waiting for a cooler day that never seems to arrive. Even area longtimers agree it's been a few years since we've had such an uncomfortable August, without so much as a small break in the weather here and there. I'm happy to report that, according to the calendar, Mother Nature has 27 days left to put summer to rest for another year and I've put in an order for a very long and overdue balmy autumn!

With cooler autumn evenings on the way, roasting marshmallows and building s'mores over an open fire is a great way to relax, watch the night sky and still stay within social distancing parameters. Although there are no fees involved, permits are required, with the exception of fires confined to a permanent fire ring that are fueled by propane or natural gas. With California under siege with so many fires, extra precautions should be considered:

- Fuel area not to exceed 3 feet wide by 2 feet high.
- Fire must be at least 25 feet from a structure or combustible materials.
- Burn clean, dry wood or charcoal. Do not burn trash.
- Always keep a water source immediately available.

Hot embers can travel for miles with the very real possibility of igniting multiple spot fires. If it's windy, wait for a calm night and never leave a fire unattended.

More information is available at the **San Bernardino County Fire** Department website at www.sbcounty.gov. Be safe, relax and enjoy our star-filled evenings!

As much as I enjoy the return of roadrunners and cactus wrens, I have missed watching our handsome resident coyote make his desert rounds in the mornings and evenings. I saw him only once or twice last year, but this year he hasn't been around at all. In fact, the coyote population at this end of Desert Heights seems to have dwindled even more this year. I've had only one coyote sighting and have heard just two howl fests late in the spring. Which probably explains the over-abundance of troublesome jackrabbits and assorted desert rodents this summer season. It was this time last year when the mountain lions made their presence known and although we haven't seen evidence of them in the area lately, I wonder if they managed to tip the desert fauna balance a bit by sending the coyotes in search of safer accommodations?

Stay well, remember to be kind and "patience is a virtue" hugs to all!

Have questions or comments: Call Fran at (760) 362-1357 or email james29palms@aol.com.

<https://hidesertstar.com/news/176982/desert-heights-news-aug-28-get-ready-here-come-those-colder-ber-months/>