



# NEWS



## News Headlines 06/01/2022

- Fire at massive composting facility blanketing High Desert with smoke, foul stench
- Motorcycle Rider Transported To The Hospital After Crash On I-15 before Hwy 138

# Fire at massive composting facility blanketing High Desert with smoke, foul stench

By Charlie McGee, VVDAILYPRESS.COM

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The Nursery Products Hawes Composting Facility, permitted to handle 400,000 wet tons of waste per year just west of Hinkley, is the site of a days-long fire that could be seen from Barstow and began May 28, 2022. The fire near the small town of Hinkley could last up to a week, **San Bernardino County Fire** Department officials said.

A fire at a massive compost facility that processes sewage and grass clippings from San Bernardino County and Southern California has blanketed nearby small High Desert communities with smoke and stench.

**San Bernardino County Fire** Battalion Chief Mike McClintock told the Daily Press that the fire could last a week. The department was first dispatched to the fire on Saturday.

The compost-facility operators are now leading the handling of the blaze while the fire department monitors the fire-fighting efforts, McClintock said.

“The hard part is they have acres and acres of this compost that’s a deep-seated fire, and it’s been very windy,” he said. “Just putting the fire out is easier said than done, so the facility on site is going to be handling the suppression efforts. They’ve got to disassemble and break apart the piles.”

The Nursery Products Hawes Composting Facility sits less than a dozen miles west of the unincorporated town of Hinkley near Helendale Road and State Route 58. The facility is owned by Baltimore, Maryland-based Synagro Technologies Inc., which in late 2020 was acquired by an arm of investment-banking giant Goldman Sachs Group Inc., per a report by Global Legal Chronicle at the time.

Multiple surrounding High Desert community residents posted about the fire’s effects in private Facebook groups for locals over Memorial Day weekend.

“Could somebody please tell me what that awful smell of something burning has been going on for a few days I smelt it out here off the grid by Fort Irwin?” one resident posted Sunday afternoon in a group for Barstow locals.

A Hinkley resident responded that the plant between Harper Lake and Hinkley “apparently (is) on fire and will take days to put out. The wind is making worse... I had wondered if you guys in Barstow could smell it too. It’s awful!”

Another group member responded to clarify: “is that the plant that has the dry human waste.”

“Yes, it is,” the Hinkley resident responded. “Call air quality control.”

A Barstow resident posted in a different private group Monday evening: “Is there a fire somewhere — it’s 8:33, and I smell a fire near the Rite Aid area!”

“It’s the poop farm please call and complain,” one resident responded, adding a screenshot of the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District’s website page for complaints.

The fire “jumped into other large piles” of waste Saturday due to complications including extreme winds and a lack of a residential hydrant system in the area, meaning firefighters were relying on their water tenders and fire engines to carry water from off-site to the compost facility, McClintock said.

“To continually flow high amounts of water is very difficult, and then couple that with the crazy winds that we had up there during that period, the suppression efforts were futile,” he said.

County firefighters remained on-site until Sunday morning.

People have continued calling in to report the flames for days, the battalion chief said, adding that the property operators are working as fast as they can to mitigate the fire in tough conditions.

“They’re managing the fire in their piles, and they’re working with their heavy equipment and their folks to manage the fire on the property,” he said. “If it escapes or threatens to escape it, we’d respond out there and activate suppression efforts from the county side.”

County Fire is aware of previous fires it has responded to at this facility, but McClintock said he didn’t have the dates in front of him, adding that this fire is the largest to date.

Synagro spokesman Richard Ruberti told the Daily Press he hadn’t heard about a fire at the facility until the Daily Press called to inquire about it Tuesday.

The High Desert facility handles waste for all of San Bernardino County and behemoth neighboring regions as far as the City of Los Angeles.

“Permitted to manage 400,000 wet tons of material per year, we are the closest and largest biosolids recycling option for the five largest counties in California,” Synagro stated in a 2018 fact sheet about the facility.

The site spans about 160,000 acres and is permitted by California to take in up to 2,000 tons per day of biosolids, or what the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency dubs “sewage sludge” and green waste. This solid waste is delivered to the facility by trucks from outside facilities such as wastewater treatment plants to compost it into useful resources like fertilizer.

<https://www.vvdailypress.com/story/news/2022/05/31/fire-composting-facility-blankets-high-desert-smoke-stench-erin-brockovich/7460395001/>

## Motorcycle Rider Transported To The Hospital After Crash On I-15 before Hwy 138

By Staff Writer, PAININTHEPASS.COM

Posted: May 31, 2022



CAJON PASS, CA. (Pain In The Pass) >> A wreck on southbound Interstate 15 on Tuesday morning sent a motorcyclist to the hospital via ambulance.

California Highway Patrol and San Bernardino County Fire Department responded to the traffic collision involving two vehicles. The accident was reported at 9:30am, Tuesday May 31, 2022. Just before Highway 138 exit on southbound I-15. Two vehicles were involved in the collision were a silver Toyota Corolla and a unknown type of motorcycle. The rider landed in the center divider and was reportedly moving and talking to witness.

Emergency crews said the rider with unknown injuries was transported by ambulance to a local hospital. The driver of the sedan was not injured. The incident will be under investigation by the California Highway Patrol Inland Office. CHP said additional information will be updated as it becomes available. Details were limited at this time.

<https://paininthepass.info/2022/05/31/motorcycle-rider-transported-to-the-hospital-after-crash-on-i-15-before-hwy-138/>