



# NEWS



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## More than 12,000 pounds of illegal fireworks were confiscated in S.B. County

By Staff Writer, FONTANAHERALDNEWS.COM

Posted: July 13, 2022



The San Bernardino County Fire Department

The **San Bernardino County Fire** Department reported that a total of more than 12,000 pounds of illegal fireworks were confiscated this year. Thomas Strong, the interim deputy fire marshal, said that interdiction resulted in 11,572 pounds being confiscated. There were 77 citations and three warning citations issued.

In addition, patrols resulted in 928 pounds being confiscated. There were 23 citations and one warning.

[https://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/news/inland\\_empire\\_news/more-than-12-000-pounds-of-illegal-fireworks-were-confiscated-in-s-b-county/article\\_d3a2e972-02be-11ed-a79a-7bbe3e4a768d.html](https://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/news/inland_empire_news/more-than-12-000-pounds-of-illegal-fireworks-were-confiscated-in-s-b-county/article_d3a2e972-02be-11ed-a79a-7bbe3e4a768d.html)

# Rialto taps Brian Park to lead Fire Department; The 25-year veteran has served as chief in an acting role the past three years

By Brian Whitehead, SBSUN.COM

Posted: July 13, 2022



Rialto appointed Brian Park fire chief, effective July 27, 2022. (Courtesy of the city of Rialto)

Brian Park has been appointed Rialto fire chief, effective July 27, city officials announced Wednesday, July 13.

The 25-year veteran has served as acting chief since 2019, when his predecessor, Sean Grayson, assumed city manager duties in town. Grayson has since become a city manager in Nevada.

Park, whose career includes stints as captain, battalion chief and division chief of operations, has spent most of his service years with the Rialto Fire Department..

A full-time firefighter/paramedic locally since 1999, Park is one of the few fire chiefs in the state to hold both a California State Fire Marshal Executive Chief Fire Officer certificate and a Chief Fire Officer credential from the Center for Public Excellence, according to a news release.

He presently is president of the **San Bernardino County Fire Chiefs Association**.

“I am honored to have the opportunity to serve as chief,” Park said in the release, “and am grateful to the mayor, City Council and city manager for their support and confidence. My approach is one of collaboration, communication and community service, and I look forward to working with all stakeholders to ensure the city’s public safety mission.”

Mayor Deborah Robertson touted Park’s experience, leadership and local knowledge in a statement, adding how excited she was to work collaboratively “to further establish Rialto as a model for public safety.”

Councilman Ed Scott was similarly enthusiastic about the hire.

“Brian has distinguished himself as a leader and dedicated community servant,” Scott said in the release. “His decades of service to Rialto have been exemplary, and we are confident that he will continue to provide our great Fire Department with the leadership we’ve all come to expect.”

<https://www.sbsun.com/2022/07/13/rialto-taps-brian-park-to-lead-fire-department/>

## Calif. county EMS providers will soon get 4% more pay plus 2 raises in 2 years; The San Bernardino County agreement also adds two more steps to workers' salary cap

By Beau Yarbrough, SBSUN.COM

Posted: July 13, 2022



The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors approved the raises for EMS providers and Sheriff's Department deputies by a 4-0 vote without discussion at its July 12 meeting. (Photo/San Bernardino County Fire)

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. — **San Bernardino County Fire** Protection District EMS providers and Sheriff's Department deputies are getting raises.

The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors approved the raises by a 4-0 vote without discussion at its July 12 meeting. Supervisor Dawn Rowe was absent.

Park, whose career includes stints as captain, battalion chief and division chief of operations, has spent most of his service years with the Rialto Fire Department.

In a deal worked out between the county fire district and the firefighters' union, the county will pay employees in the Ambulance Operators Unit an extra 4% as of July 30. That will be followed by a 3% raise on Feb. 25, 2023 and another 3% raise starting Feb. 24, 2024. The new agreement also adds two more steps to the salary cap for EMS providers.

The county estimates this will cost an extra \$425,000 this fiscal year, another \$880,000 in the 2023-24 fiscal year and \$1,141,000 more every fiscal year after that.

And in a deal worked out with the Sheriff's Employees' Benefit Association, the county will pay employees in the Safety Unit, along with the Safety Management and Supervisory Unit, an additional 1% starting on July 30. There will be another 1% raise on July 29, 2023 and a 3% raise on July 27, 2024. The county also agreed to increase the premium subsidy for those employees' medical insurance.

The Safety Unit and its managers include all sworn officers, from deputies to lieutenants.

The county estimates these increases will cost an additional \$9.7 million this fiscal year, another \$14 million in the 2023-24 fiscal year, and \$25 million more in the 2024-25 fiscal year, then \$28 million each year after that.

The covered Sheriff's Department employees will also receive COVID-19 premium bonus pay, which the county plans to pay for with federal COVID relief funds through the American Rescue Plan Act.

<https://www.gov1.com/public-safety/articles/calif-county-ems-providers-will-soon-get-4-more-pay-plus-2-raises-in-2-years-OOoMep74jYDhMqOx/>

## Firefighters knock down brush fire along NB I-15 freeway in Oak Hills

By Staff Writer, VICTORVALLEYNEWSGROUP.COM

Posted: July 13, 2022



(Hugo C. Valdez, VVNG.com)

OAK HILLS, Calif. (VVNG.com) — Fire crews knocked down a brush fire along the northbound I-15 freeway on Wednesday afternoon.

The fire was reported at about 6:45 pm, on July 13, 2022, north of Oak Hill Road, along Mariposa Road. **San Bernardino County Fire Medic Engine 305** arrived on scene and firefighters jumped into action and quickly doused the fire.

Cal Fire engines arrived shortly after and together they stopped the forward rate of spread. The fire grew to about an eighth of an acre and was extinguished just before 8:00 pm. The incident required California Highway Patrol officers to shut down a couple of lanes resulting in a backup of northbound traffic.

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

<https://www.vvng.com/firefighters-knock-down-brush-fire-along-nb-i-15-freeway-in-oak-hills/>

# Faulty firefighting equipment may have let Synagro waste blaze spread in High Desert; County inspectors also allege composting facility violated operating agreements by accepting too much waste material

By Charlie McGee, VVDAILYPRESS.COM

Posted: July 13, 2022



The early view of an inferno in the guts of an 80-acre High Desert pit of feces, brewery muck and more from across Southern California.

The 80-acre waste-pit fire now six weeks old in the High Desert grew after San Bernardino County environmental health investigators allege faulty firefighting equipment hampered Synagro Technologies Inc.'s initial response to the blaze.

"The facility has two inoperable water trucks that were unable to assist in getting the fire out while it was small," a June 29 report states.

In another finding, county inspectors allege Synagro, a Maryland firm acquired in late 2020 by an investing arm of Wall Street giant Goldman Sachs Group Inc., was taking in more recyclable material than legally allowed before the blaze started.

The open-air factory's permit bars it from accepting more than 2,000 "wet tons" of solid waste in its 80-acre pit on any given day. But according to a San Bernardino County Environmental Health Services report filed on June 24, Synagro broke its intake limit on at least 12 days in the two months before the fire started, including at least three times the week of the May 28 blaze. The fire was first publicly reported on May 31 by the Daily Press.

The alleged intake violations include:

- 2,165 wet tons on April 1
- 2,527 wet tons on April 5
- 2,049 wet tons on April 6
- 2,251 wet tons on April 7
- 2,056 wet tons on April 11
- 2,137 wet tons on May 10
- 2,079 wet tons on May 12
- 2,055 wet tons on May 17
- 2,011 wet tons on May 20
- 2,018 wet tons on May 24
- 2,306 wet tons on May 25
- 2,037 wet tons on May 26

Synagro couldn't be reached for comment about the alleged violations. County investigators, however, don't allege the capacity violations led to the fire.

## Controversy from the start

The officially dubbed Nursery Products Hawes Composting Facility was launched nearly a decade ago to recycle sewage sludge into compost for uses such as fertilizer. The open-air pit is permitted to compost only two forms of waste from across Southern California: “biosolids,” or semi-cleaned organic sewage such as human feces, and “green materials” such as grass clippings.

The facility has long been locally opposed, but the composting operation has faced unprecedented criticism since late May when a fire sparked mass complaints about noxious air and medical ailments caused by air pollution from the blaze.

When the usually northeast-bound winds of the Mojave Desert are low, the pollution effects in recent weeks have been subdued, High Desert residents said.

But when gusts pick up, the fire’s reach coincides with local accounts of rancid air, breathing problems, chest tightness, and headaches as far as 60 miles north in Fort Irwin.

Numerous residents in Barstow, about two-dozen miles east of the waste pit, say another foul smell wave that they attribute to the fire has started outside of their homes in sporadic waves since late last week.

### **A routine visit leads to violations**

All of the newly disclosed inspections and follow-up reports were conducted by Sarah Cunningham, one of more than 60 “environmental health specialist” employees on the county payroll as of 2021, per the latest public data obtained by Transparent California.

The earliest of these inspections came on May 26 — just two days before Synagro notified County Fire that the blaze had begun in its 80-acre waste pit.

This visit marked the county’s routine monthly inspection at the composting site just west of Hinkley, according to Cunningham’s report, which was received on June 24 by CalRecycle, a division of the California Environmental Protection Agency with state-oversight authority for waste composters like Synagro.

Across 18 inspections between November 2020 and last April, the county cited the Synagro site for 39 separate violations of health-and-safety code or its own permit, the Daily Press reported in June in an analysis of CalRecycle disclosures. There are 11 other actively operating sites in California whose permits classify them as a “Composting Facility (Other),” and they’ve logged a combined total of only one violation in the past two years.

On the May 26 inspection, Cunningham logged two repeat violations.

One is a citation first logged in February 2021 for contaminating its pit with forms of waste it isn’t permitted to accept: “mixed waste” — or raw sewage, described in a past inspection report as including “industrial materials, mixed demolition or mixed construction debris, or plastics” — and “food material” — specifically, brewery waste from a 1.7-million-square-foot Anheuser-Busch plant in Van Nuys, just north of Los Angeles.

The other repeat violation is a failure “to prevent off-site litter migration” into the surrounding desert ecosystem. The county first cited this violation in November 2020 and has given Synagro five multimonth deadline extensions to correct the problem since then. A new cleanup deadline of July 29 was set one day after the late May inspection, the county report states.

Separately, Cunningham recorded a new problem on the May 26 visit: Synagro had repeatedly broken a core rule of its permit by taking in too many truck loads of waste on numerous days in the prior two months, including the day of the inspection itself.

Based on environmental impact studies produced more than a decade ago to get the open-air facility approved — a more than a five-year process of courtroom setbacks and opposition from High Desert locals and environmental — the former Nursery Products LLC operators told county authorities would accept only a bit more than half of the 2,000-ton ceiling on an average day.

“The Project is expected to receive an average daily total of 1,100 wet tons of biosolids and green material,” states a final supplement EIR commissioned by the county in 2009 before Nursery Products got the final green light to launch near Hinkley.

The permit limits the factory to two specific forms of waste: biosolids — an industry term for what can also be called sewage sludge — and green materials, which essentially means things that grow in nature like yard clippings.

For the excessive daily loads of waste recorded on her May 26 inspection, Cunningham cited Synagro for violating California's Public Resources Code by operating "outside the permitted boundaries specified in a solid waste facilities permit." "Ensure conditions set forth in this facilities permit are followed at all times," her inspection report says. "This facility shall immediately reject any incoming loads prior to reaching 2,000 wet tons per day."

Yet, in line with a trend of nearly two years, the county regulator only gave Synagro a warning rather than a fine, which allowed the site to maintain a clean record of zero enforcement actions in roughly a decade of operations despite dozens of violations since 2020.

### **A flood of complaints**

Cunningham has made more trips to Synagro's factory in Hinkley since its waste-pit blaze began.

The county's Environmental Health Services division has disclosed eight additional inspection reports separate from the intake violation report to CalRecycle.

These eight reports are meant to represent separate, detailed follow-up inspections on complaints by residents or outside agencies about specific problems they allege the Synagro fire has caused.

Only one of the reports, dated June 29, provides a detailed run-down of allegations and responsive actions by the county. It describes an inspection by Cunningham in response to "two calls and one CalEPA complaint about a compost fire in Hinkley (that) has gotten too large for the fire department to put it out."

This inspection is what prompted the disclosure of two inoperable water trucks at the Synagro site being unusable in the fire's early stage, but the county issued no violations in response to the CalEPA complaint.

"This complaint is closed," the June 29 report states. "The facility and fire are currently under review with San Bernardino County (Environmental Health Services division)."

The other seven reports disclosed by the county appear to cover inspections in response to separate complaints by High Desert residents concerned about smoke from the fire causing illnesses. Those complaints were forwarded to the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District.

And more complaints are being investigated. By the end of June, the agency had received 10 official complaints "related to the fire at the composting facility and its impacts on surrounding areas," county public-health department spokesman Francis Delapaz told the Daily Press in a June 30 email.

The Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District, a separate local regulator charged with checking Synagro activities that specifically affect air quality, said it had already received nearly 200 complaints of alleged harm caused by the fire as of June 22.

<https://www.vvdailynews.com/story/news/2022/07/13/more-violations-found-synagro-waste-pit-sewage-blaze-hits-week-6-in-california-mojave-high-desert/10042807002/>