



NEWS



News Headlines 09/05/2020

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- Yucaipa man killed by deputies after shooting, 4-hour standoff in Lucerne Valley

El Dorado Fire: Hundreds evacuate as blaze grows to nearly 2,200 acres, 5% contained

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El Dorado Forest Fire rages in California's San Bernardino County

Cal Fire firefighters battled a fast-moving wildfire that charred 2,159 acres near the San Bernardino National Forest on Saturday, prompting evacuation orders for residents across the southwest corner of San Bernardino County.

Smoke from the blaze, dubbed the El Dorado Fire, could be seen across the desert. Evacuation orders were issued for some residents in the communities of Oak Glen, Forest Falls and Mountain Home Village — a trio of towns clustered near the base of San Gorgonio Mountain.

Some residents in eastern Yucaipa, a city about 20 miles southeast of San Bernardino, also were ordered to evacuate, while others remained under evacuation warning.

By Saturday night, some evacuation orders were lifted Oak Glen residents who live east of Pine Bench Road are allowed to return home, according to Cal Fire.

About 30 homes, primarily located in Oak Glen, were threatened Saturday, but San Bernardino County Fire Chief Dan Munsey said only one outbuilding was destroyed.

Cal Fire San Bernardino Chief Shane Littlefield said 450 firefighters responded to the blaze, which was 5% contained as of 9 p.m. Saturday. No injuries have been reported.

"We're sitting at about 110 degrees with not much relief in sight," said Josh Boehm, a Cal Fire division chief.

Cal Fire arson investigators are conducting the investigation, Littlefield added. "Hopefully we'll release a cause within a couple days," he said.

The bulk of smoke Saturday came from an area near Oak Glen and Potato Canyon roads in Yucaipa, with firefighters stationed along the thoroughfares to provide structure protection as massive flames encroached on several homes.

Oak Glen resident Terry Braden was one of roughly 10 people gathered in a parking lot near the crews. "It really packed a punch and moved fast," Braden said of the blaze.

Area residents were still reeling from recent Apple Fire, which charred more than 33,000 acres across the region as it burned most of August.

San Bernardino National Forest: Fire crews added to reserves ahead of weekend

Saturday's blaze is about 2 miles from the Apple Fire burn scar, Boehm said. If the fire heads east, he added, the scar will help firefighting efforts.

Rachelle Stevens, an Oak Glen resident evacuated during the Apple Fire, had never seen flames as large as on those on the ridge Saturday.

"Oh no, not again," said Stevens, who lived about 5 miles from the blaze.

The residents watched as firefighters with hoses sprayed brush near homes and tankers made several fire retardant drops near those that were immediately threatened.

Crews in the nearby San Bernardino National Forest were "ready for the initial attack," Boehm said, having already added to their ranks ahead of the blaze. The forest had a pre-positioned strike team with five fire engines, one hot shot crew, bulldozer and water tender on 24-hour standby throughout the 676,666-acre preserve nearby in the valley.

Red Cross set up a temporary evacuation facility at the Yucaipa Community Center, located at 34-900 Oak Glen Road.

Residents seeking information about the fire can call (909) 383-5688.

Where did the blaze begin?

Boehm, the Cal Fire division chief, said the agency received multiple reports of a fire around 10:30 a.m. Saturday.

It appeared to have started behind El Dorado Ranch Park in Yucaipa, Cal Fire spokeswoman Cathey Mattingly said, and was 5 acres in size when firefighters arrived at the scene in the 37-000 block of Oak Glen Road.

Munsey, the county fire chief, described the fire as "very angry" when crews arrived. "We saw 40- to 50-foot flame lengths that were just shooting up," he said.

The fire quickly grew to 400 acres, fueled by grass and sagebrush at lower elevations and some timber at higher elevations. It had doubled in size to 800 acres by 2 p.m.

It burned uphill toward Highway 38, Mattingly said, driven by a "slight wind."

A massive plume of smoke billowed from the hills above Yucaipa in the afternoon as flames burned up the ridge overlooking the community.

Mattingly said there had been low humidity and high temperatures earlier in the morning. "We're burning upslope," she said. "It's going to tend to go faster."

However, an earlier breeze seemed to have settled down by 2 p.m. "That could work to our benefit," she said.

Cal Fire was in unified command with the U.S. Forest Service in San Bernardino, as well as the San Bernardino County Sheriff, **San Bernardino County Fire**, California Highway Patrol and the Yucaipa Police Department, Mattingly said.

Where did the fire burn?

El Dorado Park sits in eastern Yucaipa. A handful of helicopters circled the area as they battled the flames, which had charred a swath of brush near the park's parking lot and restrooms by early Saturday afternoon.

A handful of Cal Fire engines, SUVs and other vehicles were stationed at the park. Yellow caution tape was tied to several rocks near the restrooms and trailhead.

To the east, the neighboring community of Oak Glen was the first to receive evacuation orders. It is home to 420 people and known for its apple orchards.

The fire had partially charred Oak Glen's historic Parrish Pioneer Ranch as of early Saturday afternoon. The ranch produces many apple varieties that are unique to the area, as well as heritage and antique apples that are no longer commercially available, according to the ranch's website.

Apples have grown on the ranch for more than 150 years. Enoch Kidder Parrish traded four mules and a wagon for 160 acres of land in Oak Glen in 1866, according to the ranch's website. He had planted the first full-scale orchard in Oak Glen by 1867.

Further north, the 260-square-mile census tract that includes Forest Falls and Mountain Home Village is home to 2,169 people.

The El Dorado Fire is just northwest of where the Apple Fire ignited on July 31. That blaze was the second-largest in more than a decade in Riverside and San Bernardino counties, behind the August 2016 Blue Cut Fire, which burned 36,274 acres near the Cajon Pass.

Investigators say a diesel-fueled vehicle "emitting burning carbon from the exhaust system" ignited the Apple Fire in the 9000 block of Oak Glen Road in Cherry Valley.

What roads, recreational areas were closed?

The following roads were closed as of Saturday afternoon while crews battled the blaze:

Oak Glen Road between Pine Bench

Highway 38

The fire also spurred the closure of several outdoor recreation areas on a holiday weekend when people were expected to flee the heat and head to the higher-elevation mountains and lakes near Los Angeles.

As of Saturday afternoon, these San Geronio Wilderness trails, trailheads and picnic areas were closed:

Vivian Creek

Momyer

San Bernardino Peak

Falls picnic area

Thurman Flats picnic area

The Mill Creek drainage and off-trail areas of the San Gorgonio Wilderness south of the San Bernardino Peak Divide Trail were also closed.

Saturday weather conditions

Temperatures for the Oak Glen area had reached 105 degrees by Saturday afternoon, with “pretty low” humidity around 15% and “fairly light” winds with gusts around 10 to 15 miles per hour, according to Samantha Connolly, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in San Diego. Gust speeds were expected to increase to 20 to 25 miles per hour later in the afternoon, she said.

Temperatures were expected to remain above 20 to 25 degrees above normal throughout the weekend, with an expected high of 109 on Sunday and 107 on Labor Day, Connolly said. Humidity was expected to remain low overnight, she said.

Given the very high temperatures, relatively low humidity and dry winds from the east and southeast, “any fires that start are going to grow fast,” she said.

The brutal stretch of heat coupled with the forecast of possible dry, gusty winds, is making for dangerous weekend fire weather at a time when nearly 13,000 firefighters already are battling to contain nearly two dozen major fires around California.

High pressure is expected to strengthen throughout Labor Day weekend, ushering in the sweltering conditions, forecasters said. Outdoor burning is not recommended.

The National Weather Service issued a Red Flag Warning for the inland region that began at 10 a.m. Saturday and ends 6 p.m. Sunday.

The California Independent System Operator, which runs the state power grid, issued a “Flex Alert” for 3 p.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday through Monday, asking people to conserve power by not using appliances and keeping air conditioners at 78 degrees or above.

Operators didn't expect a repeat of the rolling blackouts that took place during a mid-August heat wave. But they warned that the system could be strained by unforeseen problems, such as a fire that disrupts a power line.

<https://www.desertsun.com/story/news/2020/09/05/oak-glen-residents-ordered-evacuate-400-acre-wildfire-burns-rapid-rate/5729799002/>

Yucaipa man killed by deputies after shooting, 4-hour standoff in Lucerne Valley

Matthew Cabe, Victorville Daily Press

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This screen grab from video shows San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department vehicles outside Moss Mobile Manor & RV Park on Friday, Sept. 4, 2020, during an active shooter incident. Screen Grab Courtesy of Lewis Busch

San Bernardino County sheriff's deputies shot and killed a Yucaipa man at a mobile home park in Lucerne Valley on Friday after authorities said he injured at least one person during an active shooter incident and refused to surrender during a four-hour standoff.

Joshua Beedie, 38, continued to fire a weapon from an unknown location inside Moss Mobile Manor & RV Park as deputies from the Victor Valley Station in Adelanto arrived on scene, according to a sheriff's statement released Saturday. The mobile home park sits in a remote section of Lucerne Valley just off Highway 247, about 2 miles east of Camp Rock Road and more than 7 miles east of the town proper.

Responding deputies evacuated residents and started a search for the suspect, later identified as Beedie. Sheriff's aviation and California Highway Patrol helicopters assisted from above. Authorities believed Beedie was hiding in a section of the mobile home park where abandoned cars and trailers are kept.

An aerial map of the property showed two large sections that fit the description provided by sheriff's officials. The first section, on the property's eastern flank, included seven rows of abandoned vehicles in otherwise open space. The second, at the back of the property to the north, appeared more haphazard in layout and included additional abandoned vehicles, as well as trees and what looked like a building for storage.

Sheriff's personnel spoke to Beedie via loudspeaker during the search.

"Sheriff's aviation, as well as deputies on the ground, made numerous (public address) announcements in efforts to get the suspect to surrender peacefully," the statement said. "The suspect continued to ignore their commands."

Deputies with the sheriff's Specialized Enforcement Division responded and used three armored vehicles to approach the area where it was believed Beedie was hiding.

Deputies shot Beedie at approximately 1:30 p.m. Friday, about four hours after the Victor Valley Station deputies arrived on scene. Two rifles, an AR-15 and a sawed-off shotgun were found next to Beedie, who was taken to a hospital where he later died, according to sheriff's officials.

Freelance videographer Lewis Busch provided footage of a **San Bernardino County Fire** ambulance arriving at St. Mary Medical Center in Apple Valley after leaving the scene at approximately 2 p.m. Busch said the patient inside was believed to be the suspect.

Sheriff's officials said a preliminary investigation revealed that Beedie had shot at two people before deputies arrived. One person received minor injuries after being hit by the gunfire. The sheriff's department did not release an update on the victim Saturday. No deputies were injured during the incident.

Sheriff's officials said Beedie was wanted for an attempted murder and rape out of the Morongo Basin Station in Joshua Tree, about 45 miles southeast of Moss Mobile Manor. It was unclear Saturday why Beedie went to the mobile home park or if his alleged actions there were somehow linked to his wanted status.

Meanwhile, Highway 247 — a main thoroughfare that connects the Victor Valley to Joshua Tree National Park and Twentynine Palms — was shut down in both directions during the incident. Additional footage provided by Busch showed San Bernardino County Fire personnel directing traffic off the highway and onto Camp Rock Road.

A Facebook post on Friday from CHP's Victorville office said the highway was closed "at Camp Rock Road and Dallas Road due to an active shooter incident." A review of roads in the area did not show a "Dallas Road."

Dallas Avenue is located about 1 mile east of Camp Rock Road on Highway 247, but both roads are west of Moss Mobile Manor, which would mean that the closed section of the highway did not include where the shooting incident took place.

An email left with CHP officials seeking clarification on the closure was not immediately returned Saturday.

Detectives from the Specialized Investigations Division, Homicide Detail are conducting the ongoing investigation. Sheriff's officials asked anyone with information, or anyone who witnessed Friday's incident, to contact Det. Robert Hoag at 909-387-3589.

<https://www.vvdailypress.com/story/news/2020/09/05/yucaipa-man-killed-deputies-lucerne-valley/5728700002/>