



NEWS



News Headlines 09/17/2020

- Strip mall in Highgrove catches fire due to possible illegal drug making
- At least one Yucaipa home lost
- Bobcat Fire: Evacuation warning issued for Wrightwood, Piñon Hills; firefighter dies battling El Dorado
- Firefighters reach 63% containment on El Dorado Fire

Strip mall in Highgrove catches fire due to possible illegal drug making

Staff Writer, My Valley News

Posted: September 17, 2020



On Thursday, Sept. 17 at approximately 10:50 a.m., Cal Fire Riverside along with Riverside city fire, **San Bernardino County Fire**, CHP and Riverside county sheriff's department responded to a 3 alarm commercial building fire in the unincorporated part of Riverside County. Valley News/Marc Danielian

HIGHGROVE (CNS) - A strip mall in Highgrove erupted in flames Thursday, Sept. 17 after a possible illegal drug manufacturing lab triggered a fire, but no injuries were reported. The blaze started about 10:50 a.m. in the 300 block of West La Cadena Drive, near Center Street, according to the Riverside County Fire Department. The agency said 15 engine crews from both Riverside and San Bernardino counties were sent to the location and encountered a blaze raging in a unit, extending to two adjacent ones.

<https://myvalleynews.com/strip-mall-in-highgrove-catches-fire-due-to-possible-illegal-drug-making/>

At least one Yucaipa home lost

Rachael M. Gustuson, Karen Dasilva And Michelle Lopez, Redlands Community News

Posted: September 17, 2020



The massive El Dorado Fire that started Sept. 5 in Yucaipa continues to burn in the mountain communities. As of Wednesday, it had burned 18,092 acres and was 60% contained, according to Cal Fire.

“It is an odd feeling to be told you can’t go home,” said Yucaipa resident Jesse Dinkel, who was evacuated from his home last week. “After all, the one place we want to go most of all is home. But unlike Dorothy, we can’t just click our heels together and go home. We have to wait until the wonderful firefighters make it safe for us.”

All evacuation orders for Yucaipa, Oak Glen and Mentone were lifted on Sunday, Sept. 13.

“While we trust God to take care of us, we did have some fear and panic slip into our hearts,” said Sandi Cady of Yucaipa. “We hoped we weren’t taking too long to evacuate and then get caught in the fire. It was blowing right at our home to within quarter mile. We frantically packed what we could knowing that would be all we had left to begin a new life if the home burned — a very sobering thought! We’re so very grateful to our firefighters for saving our home and so many others.”

At least one home in Yucaipa on the North Bench is confirmed to have burned during the fire. Mike and Judy Burton on Jefferson Street lost their home.

Cathey Mattingly, public information officer for Cal Fire San Bernardino Unit, reminds residents that fire evacuation is a high priority.

“If people need a tip on what to do please go to readyforwildfire.org, she said. “If you live in an area that is being watched for evacuation, be prepared and monitor the social media sites and San Bernardino County Sheriff Twitter and Facebook sites.”

The fire affected all businesses in Oak Glen, either because of road closures or fire reaching the perimeter of many. Most were planning to reopen this week, said Jonathan Bastedo, president of the Oak Glen Apple Growers Association.

“Luckily, the orchards were almost completely spared from the fire,” he said. “I think that long term Oak Glen is only looking at a couple dozen apple trees that were damaged by fire and will need to be replanted.”

The Oak Glen Road drive is still scenic and has all the oaks and pines that visitors are used to, Bastedo said. It’s the vistas that were ravaged by the fire.

Labor Day weekend, when the fire ignited, is the traditional opening of apple season in Oak Glen.

“We are all glad to still be here and to be able to continue as planned with apple season,” Bastedo said. “Our harvest is still looking great and our air is clearer than the valley’s.”

Residents of Forest Falls and Mountain Home Village were evacuated on Saturday, Sept. 5, and most left and have not been able to return home, due to the mandatory evacuation orders.

“I’ve been evacuated a few times but this time it felt different,” said longtime Forest Falls resident Sarah Garrison, who left with her young family on Saturday. “I could actually see the threat of the flames right above my house. Once we got the car all packed and left, I had a pit in my stomach and prayed everything would be OK. I’m very grateful for the firefighters and all the work they’ve done so far.”

Another Forest Falls resident, Andrea Stetler, concurred. Stetler has lived in the mountain community since 2017.

“I tried to stay hopeful as I looked up to my mountain from San Bernardino and saw the massive plume rising over my boyfriend’s apartment in the distance, but closer than I’ve ever seen, tears came to my eyes and my chest felt tight,” she said. “I could only pray for the ones who were still in Forest Falls. As days drag on, I seesaw between anxiety and exhaustion, constantly searching for new information. But what gives me hope is that the most beautiful trees need fire to break open their seeds.”

Four days after the mandatory evacuation order was announced, the fire exploded in

Sheriff’s Service Specialist Jenny Smith said it was a harrowing event.

“Deputy (Alicia) Rosa was in the area of Valley of the Falls and Canyon last Wednesday and saw that flames from the El Dorado Fire were close to and approaching homes on Canyon Drive and asked for immediate assistance in evacuating any additional residents,” Smith said. “I was nearby and quickly responded. We drove around Canyon Drive, knocking on doors and using the PA from the vehicle to alert everyone to leave.”

“There was a lot of thick smoke in the air and ash was getting into my eyes. When other deputies arrived, they systematically went street by street, making announcements and also transported a female, who didn’t have a vehicle or way to get out.”

“I am always amazed at the bravery and true hearts of my partners, but seeing them, continually put the lives of others before their own is more than phenomenal. Deputy Rosa is a true hero. She is selfless.”

Due to the active fires and burned power poles along Hwy 38 and in Forest Falls, residents can expect to remain evacuated until power is restored in the canyon. **San Bernardino County Fire** Chief Dan Munsy said Southern California Edison is evaluating the damage on a regular basis.

The fire activity slowly burned down slope towards the Angeles Oaks community on Monday and Tuesday.

Firefighters are currently around Angeles Oaks, which also remains evacuated due to the active fire.

https://www.redlandscommunitynews.com/at-least-one-yucaipa-home-lost/article_6fdd0dd2-f91f-11ea-b2aa-e7b1361e2874.html

Bobcat Fire: Evacuation warning issued for Wrightwood, Piñon Hills; firefighter dies battling El Dorado

Charity Lindsey, the Daily Press

Posted: September 17, 2020 at 9:55PM



The Bobcat Fire continues to burn in the Angeles National forest on Tuesday, Sept. 15, 2020. Photo Courtesy of the Angeles National Forest

An evacuation warning was issued for Piñon Hills and Wrightwood around 7 p.m. Thursday as **San Bernardino County Fire** strike teams prepared to protect the area from the Bobcat Fire.

While an evacuation warning doesn't necessarily mean an evacuation will follow, it's issued to strongly encourage residents of the area to "have a plan and make sure you're ready" for possible evacuation, according to Angeles National Forest spokesman Larry Smith.

"Get your documents together, get your pets together, start packing your bags, because it may affect you," Smith said. "Once a call comes in to evacuate, that means hop out in your car and leave ... a warning means you may be impacted."

The Bobcat Fire, which has been burning since Sept. 6, was up to approximately 60,557 acres and 15% contained by 8 a.m. Friday. Some 1,300 fire personnel were assigned to the blaze.

Areas under evacuation include Juniper Hills; Devil's Punchbowl; east of Devil's Punchbowl; Paradise Springs; south of Big Pines Highway; north of Big Rock Creek; and west of Jackson Lake. In addition, anyone north of Angeles Crest, between Clear Creek Station and Highway 39, are under evacuation order, Smith said.

Evacuation routes for Piñon Hills and Wrightwood are Highway 2 to Phelan and Highway 139 to Interstate 15, according to the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department. A map of the evacuation warning area is provided on the County website.

At 7:21 p.m. Thursday, **County Fire** tweeted that strike teams are "assembled and ready to protect (Wrightwood and Piñon Hills) if the need arises."

Ryan Holman, superintendent for Snowline Joint Unified School District, said remote classes were canceled Friday. Additionally, district schools and facilities were closed.

Holman said Serrano High School, located at 9292 Sheep Creek Road in Phelan, was "being staged as an evacuation center in the event it is needed."

The Phelan Pinon Hills Community Services District said an empty lot at 4176 Warbler Road in Phelan is available as an evacuation location for residents with horses.

The cause of the Bobcat Fire remains under investigation. The blaze began in Azusa near the Cogswell Dam and West Fork Day Use area northeast of Mount Wilson in the Angeles National Forest. Losses such as structures and homes are not yet being recorded, according to Smith.

“We do want to remind people that as of today, all 18 national forests (in California) are under closure until at least Sept. 21,” Smith said. “They’re closed to all general activity, including campgrounds and day use.”

At 9:52 p.m. Thursday, Angeles National Forest tweeted that fire crews are ready to “defend infrastructure” at the Mount Wilson Observatory, a 116-year-old site of significant 20th century scientific discoveries and home to valuable transmission equipment.

The Bobcat Fire in the San Gabriel Mountains northeast of Los Angeles came within 500 feet of the observatory Tuesday, but efforts like controlled burns to clear fuel, water drops and clearing brush helped protect the facility, Angeles National Forest officials said in social media posts.

El Dorado Fire

A firefighter died Thursday while battling the El Dorado Fire, U.S. Forest Service officials said Friday.

"The name is being withheld pending notification of next of kin," officials said in a statement. "Our deepest sympathies are with the family, friends and fellow firefighters during this time."

The firefighter went missing Thursday while battling the fire, CBS2 reported. The cause of death is under investigation.

The fire in the Oak Glen and West Yucaipa areas has so far charred 21,678 acres with 66% containment. The blaze was burning actively overnight along Highway 38, San Bernardino National Forest officials said Friday morning.

They said the fire has continued to "make active runs to the north" and had the potential for spotting — or creating new fires — up to a mile ahead of the main body of the fire.

There were no evacuation directives for Big Bear residents as of 8:30 a.m. Friday, though officials recommend monitoring updates. Evacuation orders were still in effect for those living in Mountain Home Village, Forest Falls, Angelus Oaks and Seven Oaks.

The fire, sparked by a pyrotechnic device used during a gender reveal party on Sept. 5, has destroyed four homes and six other structures and damaged two homes and four other structures.

A Cal Fire official has said that the couple tried to extinguish the blaze themselves, then called 911 and remained on scene until firefighters arrived.

The investigation is continuing, and it will be up to the district attorney whether any charges will be filed.

<https://www.vvdailynews.com/story/news/2020/09/17/bobcat-fire-evacuation-warning-issued-wrightwood-and-pinon-hills/3490681001/>

Firefighters reach 63% containment on El Dorado Fire

Rachael M. Gustuson, Karen Dasilva and Michelle Lopez, Highland Community News

Posted: September 17, 2020



CAL Fire's UH-1H Super Huey 301 helicopter was part of the air attack on the El Dorado Fire in Oak Glen Saturday, Sept. 5. Its participation was critical in tamping out the flames that kept flaring up along ridges.

The massive El Dorado Fire, that started Saturday, Sept. 5, in Yucaipa, continues to burn in the mountain communities. As of Thursday, Sept. 17, the fire burned 18,500 acres and was 63 percent contained.

Yucaipa

"It is an odd feeling to be told you can't go home," said Yucaipa resident Jesse Dinkel, who was evacuated from his home last week. "After all, the one place we want to go most of all is home. But unlike Dorothy, we can't just click our heels together and go home. We have to wait until the wonderful firefighters make it safe for us."

All evacuation orders for Yucaipa, Oak Glen and Mentone were lifted on Sunday, Sept. 13.

"While we trust God to take care of us, we did have some fear and panic slip into our hearts," said Sandi Cady, Yucaipa resident. "We hoped we weren't taking too long to evacuate and then get caught in the fire. It was blowing right at our home to within quarter mile. We frantically packed what we could knowing that would be all we had left to begin a new life if the home burned, very sobering thought! We're so very grateful to our firefighters for saving our home and so many others. We want to pray God's blessings upon every firefighter who fought this deadly fire."

At least one home in Yucaipa on the North Bench is confirmed to have burned during the fire. Mike and Judy Burton on Jefferson Street lost their home.

"We want to continue to remind people that fire evacuation is a high priority, especially in an active fire area. If people need a tip on what to do please go to readyforwildfire.org. If you live in an area that is being watched for evacuation, be prepared and monitor the social media sites and San Bernardino County Sheriff Twitter and Facebook sites. Be sure to sign up for the county alert system (TENS) for early warning notifications," said Cathey Mattingly, public information officer for Cal Fire San Bernardino Unit.

Oak Glen

While the El Dorado Fire did affect all the businesses in Oak Glen, either because of road closures or fire reaching the perimeter of many operations, most were planning to reopen this week, said Jonathan Bastedo, president of the Oak Glen Apple Growers Association.

“Luckily,” Bastedo said, “the orchards were almost completely spared from the fire. I think that, long term, Oak Glen is only looking at a couple dozen apple trees that were damaged by fire and will need to be replanted.”

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“We are all glad to still be here and to be able to continue as planned with apple season,” Bastedo said. “Our harvest is still looking great and our air is clearer than the valleys.”

For a few days, things did look pretty grim while the fires were running through Oak Glen, Bastedo admitted.

“But, we have come out the far side relatively unscathed,” he said.

Oak Glen apple season runs through Thanksgiving weekend.

Forest Falls and Mountain Home Village

Residents of Forest Falls and Mountain Home Village were evacuated on Saturday, Sept. 5, and most left and have not been able to return home, due to the mandatory evacuation orders.

“I’ve been evacuated a few times but this time it felt different,” said longtime Forest Falls resident Sarah Garrison, who left with her young family on Saturday. “I could actually see the threat of the flames right above my house. Once we got the car all packed and left, I had a pit in my stomach and prayed everything would be OK.”

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Four days after the mandatory evacuation order, the fire exploded in Forest Falls. Law enforcement was out Wednesday, Sept. 9, to warn all the remaining residents to evacuate.

Sheriff’s Service Specialist Jenny Smith said it was a harrowing event.

“Deputy [Alicia] Rosa was in the area of Valley of the Falls and Canyon last Wednesday and saw that flames from the El Dorado Fire were close to and approaching homes on Canyon Drive and asked for immediate assistance in evacuating any additional residents. I was nearby and quickly responded. We drove around Canyon Drive, knocking on doors and using the PA from the vehicle to alert everyone to leave.

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https://www.highlandnews.net/news/public_safety/firefighters-reach-63-containment-on-el-dorado-fire/article_76c7cd74-f926-11ea-9d81-dff28377e5e8.html