



NEWS



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Brush fire along Cajon Pass north of San Bernardino 95% contained

Eric Licas and Quinn Wilson, The Sun

Posted: January 10, 2021 at 3:55PM



An air tanker drops fire retardant on the Blue fire, which burned in the hills north of San Bernardino, along the Cajon Pass on Sunday, Jan. 10, 2021. (Photo courtesy of the San Bernardino National Forest Service)

Firefighters tackled flames in foothills along the Cajon Pass in San Bernardino County on Sunday, Jan. 10.

The Blue fire was spotted near the 15800 block of Cajon Boulevard, also known as Historic Route 66, at 2:38 p.m., San Bernardino National Forest spokesman Zach Behrens said. As of 8:35 p.m., crews had reached 95 percent containment on the fire and it had consumed six acres, Behrens said.

The blaze was originally estimated being about 50 acres in size, however, Behrens said smoke from the fire made it appear larger than it was.

Roughly 150 firefighters from the Forest Service, Cal Fire and the **San Bernardino County Fire Department** responded, and managed to slow the fire's spread by 3:30 p.m. Ground crews working with three helicopters and two fixed-wing aircraft were working on the fire, Behrens said.

There were no immediate reports of injuries or damaged structures, Behrens said. The cause of the fire was unclear.

<https://www.sbsun.com/2021/01/10/crews-tackle-brush-fire-along-cajon-pass-north-of-san-bernardino/>

19-year-old Moreno Valley woman killed in San Bernardino drive-by shooting

Jonah Valdez, San Gabriel Valley Tribune

Posted: January 9, 2021 at 5:21PM



A gunman shot and killed a 19-year-old woman on Friday afternoon in San Bernardino, authorities said.

The woman was riding in a vehicle with a 24-year-old Helendale man in the area of West Hanford Street and University Parkway when, about 4:45 p.m., a man pulled up in a vehicle next to them and fired several shots into the car, San Bernardino police said Saturday.

The woman was hit by at least one bullet, police said. The man called 9-1-1 and tried to drive to a local hospital until he eventually stopped at a 7-Eleven and Mobil gas station on North Waterman Avenue and East 29th Street.

At the station, paramedics treated the woman inside an ambulance but she was declared dead at the scene, said San Bernardino police Lt. Michele Mahan. Her name was not released while authorities notify her next of kin, but officials said she was a Moreno Valley resident.

The ambulance remained on scene until the coroner arrived as a part of the ongoing homicide investigation, Mahan said.

Given that the woman died inside an ambulance at the gas station, Mahan said observers began to wonder whether she had been rejected treatment at a hospital due to the ongoing surge of COVID-19 cases overwhelming hospitals.

However, COVID-19 did not have an impact on the woman's survival, said Eric Sherwin, spokesman for the **San Bernardino County Fire** Department.

Paramedics and hospital physicians made the decision to not transport the woman to a hospital based on cardiac arrest protocols that pre-date COVID-19, he said.

"The injuries sustained were so grievous that the patient was not viable despite our best efforts," Sherwin said. "We've had that protocol in place well prior to COVID."

Earlier this week, medical officials in Los Angeles County responded to the issue of hospitals overcrowded with COVID-19 patients by instructing ambulances not to transport patients to the hospital with virtually no chance of survival and to preserve supplemental oxygen supplies by only administering it to people who desperately need it.

The delays have forced some ambulances to wait for as long as six to eight hours before off-loading patients at hospitals.

Lt. Mahan said detectives have not yet declared a motive in Friday's fatal shooting.

The 19-year-old's death marks the latest instance of violence in San Bernardino that experienced an increase in homicides in 2020, much like many cities across the nation. Police recorded 68 homicides, 21 more than 2019, according to a December report by this newspaper.

Community leaders have ascribed the uptick in violence largely to the pandemic, which has hampered people's access to outreach and violence intervention programs and resources.

<https://www.sbsun.com/2021/01/09/19-year-old-moreno-valley-woman-killed-in-san-bernardino-drive-by-shooting/>

Ambulances across Southern California feeling strain of coronavirus surge

David Rosenfield, Ryan Hagen, and Nick Green, The Daily Breeze

Posted: January 9, 2021 at 10:12AM



Ambulances wait outside the emergency entrance at the Arrowhead Regional Medical Center in Colton on Tuesday, Jan. 5, 2021. San Bernardino County has started to send ambulances to only some people who request one, as the result of the number of ambulance calls and the number of people in emergency rooms increasing, due to the rise in COVID-19 patients. (Photo by Watchara Phomicinda, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

Paramedics wait hours to drop off patients.

Ambulances pass one hospital on their way to another.

Some folks, fearing for their health, call 911 for help — only to hear their conditions are not serious enough for emergency transportation.

The consequences of the surging coronavirus, catalyzed by holiday gatherings and pandemic fatigue, become more dire by the day. The pandemic has already sent thousands of Southern California families into mourning — and the death toll keeps climbing. Hospitals, facing an onslaught of cases, are being crippled.

And now, even ambulance services are being strained.

Paramedics throughout Southern California have faced increasingly long wait times to offload patients at hospitals. That, in turn, has created logistical complications when ambulances are needed elsewhere. Responses to 911 calls, at times, have been delayed. In some cases, ambulances won't come.

Counties and cities have responded to the crisis in different ways, such as by diverting ambulances to hospitals that aren't as busy as others or by pumping in more resources. In Los Angeles County, health officials have reinforced a frightful, albeit already-in-place, strategy for paramedics: If you can't revive a patient's pulse on scene, don't head to a hospital.

"It's frustrating for EMTs and paramedics," said Jeff Lucia, spokesman for Care Ambulance Service, which operates in Los Angeles and Orange counties, "who are in a career to help people and be there when people need help the most."

Yet, if conditions worsen, which officials predict will happen at least through January, health officials could further ration emergency response services.

Doing so, health officials warn, could lead to even more tragedy.

And not just from the coronavirus.

Long wait times

Ten hours.

That's how long one Torrance ambulance waited to offload a patient at Inglewood's Centinela Hospital Medical Center on Monday, Jan. 4.

Paramedics have their own slang to describe waiting for their patients to be admitted to hospitals: Wall time.

Ten hours is a long time to lean on a wall with nothing to do. But the paramedics with McCormick Ambulance, Torrance's private operator, are becoming well-practiced.

"They are notorious," said Torrance Assistant Fire Chief Alec Miller, "for 10-hour wall times right now."

Yet, Centinela is not alone.

Overcrowding has created long wait times at hospitals throughout the region. In L.A. County, Lucia said, ambulances were often idling eight-to-12 hours to admit patients.

Paramedics in Orange County, San Bernardino and Riverside counties have also, at times, had to linger for hours before admitting patients.

And boredom is not the only side effect.

"We had a couple of instances where McCormick was unable to provide an ambulance for our calls," Miller said. "If they have a unit out of service, that affects the whole system."

Steve Tracy, a spokesman for the San Bernardino County Fire Department, was more direct:

If an ambulance is tied up, he said in an interview late last year, "it can't respond to other emergencies."

And the surge has gotten so bad, particularly in Los Angeles County, that keeping up with calls has become difficult.

"No matter how many ambulances we put on," Lucia said, "they are getting tied up at hospitals and not clearing for the next calls."

Those delays, however, are not implacable. There are workarounds.

But it requires some creativity.

Finding solutions

One such tactic is diversion.

That strategy is a way of balancing resources by having an ambulance go to one hospital instead of another, even if it requires driving miles farther than normal.

On any given day over the past week, 70% to 90% of L.A. County hospitals were on diversion because they couldn't accept patients who required advanced life support. A handful of hospitals also declared "internal disasters," turning away ambulances of all kinds to reduce the pressures on staff.

And one day early this week, 22 of Orange County's 25 emergency receiving centers, according to the OC Health Care Agency, rerouted paramedic crews because of slow turnaround inside ERs.

But if every hospital needs to divert newcomers, some health officials say, the strategy becomes feckless.

That's why Orange County's health agency this week banned hospitals from diverting ambulances — for the second time in two months. The county's director of Emergency Medical Services, Dr. Carl Schultz, also temporarily halted the practice in December.

"If nothing was done, ambulances would soon run out of hospitals that could take their patients," Schultz said in a mid-December statement explaining his reasoning. "While this (ban) will place some additional stress on hospitals, it will spread this over the entire county."

Not all hospitals, though, have experienced continuous hours-long delays.

Torrance's two hospitals, for example, both had normal wait times early Tuesday, averaging about 30 minutes, said Miller, that city's assistant fire chief.

But Providence Little Company of Mary Medical Center and Torrance Memorial Medical Center have both revived a strategy initially used at the start of the pandemic: They have triage units set up outside emergency rooms to treat patients, if necessary.

In all, L.A. County officials this week were erecting triage tents outside seven hospitals to alleviate long lines.

California, meanwhile, has started using its Fire and Rescue Mutual Aid system — often activated to respond to wildfires — to help the state's response to COVID-19.

Firefighter paramedics and EMTs, for example, were being deployed to emergency rooms for 14-day operational periods — giving much-needed backup to exhausted hospital workers. UC Irvine Medical Center and Barstow Community Hospital were among the facilities to receive the extra bodies.

Some local agencies have also taken it upon themselves to increase resources.

Riverside County has asked American Medical Response, with which it contracts for emergency medical transportation, to provide more ambulances, said Shane Reichardt, a spokesman with the county's Emergency Management Department.

Long Beach, in L.A. County, added four ambulances to its fleet around Christmas, Fire Department spokesman Capt. Jack Crabtree said.

And two of those ambulances exclusively work with patients exhibiting coronavirus-related symptoms.

Long Beach has also benefited from a more nimble, computerized form of diversion.

St. Mary Medical Center, operated by Dignity Health, has a computerized network connected to other hospitals in the Long Beach area that tracks available resources among its counterparts, Crabtree said.

An official there will tell paramedics which hospital to send each patient.

The result, Crabtree said, is that while ambulance crews are busy, they have had no trouble getting patients into hospitals.

“Even though it appears the people are busy,” Crabtree said, “when the public still calls 911 and needs help, we want them to know we’re there responding.”

Not responding to certain calls
That, in general, remains true across the region.

Even in L.A. County – the pandemic’s current national epicenter.

Despite emergency call volumes there being up across the board – mainly because of coronavirus-related requests – response times to the scene have not been affected, said Dr. Clayton Kazan, medical director for L.A. County Fire Department.

But response times typically refer to how long it takes an ambulance to get from one location to wherever the 911 call came from – and not the logistical task of figuring out which paramedic crew to send.

So health and public safety officials have gone beyond diversion and triage tents to get around long hospital wait times – by rationing emergency services.

One common way, officials say, is by directing 911 callers with less serious issues elsewhere in the health system, such as urgent care, a clinic or their medical providers.

Some people, for example, call 911 because they want to be tested for the coronavirus or are out of medication, said Eric Sherwin, a spokesman for the **San Bernardino County Fire** Department.

San Bernardino County is currently referring 25 to 50 people a day to somewhere else rather than calling an ambulance to take them to the ER, Sherwin said.

The request for coronavirus testing, Sherwin said, is an example of where “this policy is really helping us out.”

San Bernardino County, though, will still send paramedics to less-critical calls – but without their wheels.

If someone calls 911 because they, for example, have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or the flu but do not appear to need hospitalization, the county will send a paramedic without an ambulance.

That strategy, adopted in November, has also succeeded in relieving the pressure off paramedics who had previously spent upwards of half a day leaning on a hospital wall, officials said.

The result, Sherwin said, is paramedics have been able to get people experiencing a true emergency to the hospital as quickly as possible.

L.A. County, meanwhile, has gone further.

Health officials there, in one of several recently issued directives, have told paramedics not to transfer residents of skilled-nursing facilities or those under hospice care to hospitals if they decline life-saving treatments, such as ventilators.

Another directive told paramedics not to provide supplemental oxygen to patients unless their saturation levels dip below 90%, rather than the traditional 93%. Normal oxygen saturation levels are around 95%.

A third instructed ambulances to not transport patients to the hospital if they have virtually no chance of survival.

That directive, though, is not as drastic as it appears on the surface. Resuscitation policies, in fact, remain the same.

“There is no change to an effort to regain circulation, which is a minimum of 20 minutes, (or) requirements to provide medication in the field and transport individuals,” Dr. Christina Ghaly, the county’s Health Services director, said Tuesday. “The only difference is for someone who already died to not have the emergency department involved in managing the deceased’s body.”

None of the new directives, officials say, deviates enormously from typical standards of care.

But they could be precursors to even more draconian rationing efforts if the coronavirus doesn’t abate.

A dire prospect

And, officials say, long ambulance wait times and rationing care could, combined, be disastrous for folks with non-coronavirus medical emergencies – such as those who have heart attacks or get in serious car crashes.

Take heart attack and stroke survivors. They will still get transported to a hospital and treated, officials said. But it might take a bit longer to receive care.

And with those conditions, getting care quickly is crucial for recovery.

There are others, health officials have said, who may have treatable conditions but can’t get adequate care. So those conditions will become more severe – and potentially fatal

“The high census of COVID-19 patients in our hospitals is distressing,” Barbara Ferrer, L.A. County’s Public Health director, said Monday. “Not only for those with COVID-19 but for all others in the county who need acute care. Those who have a stroke or heart attack or experience a traumatic injury are finding it more difficult to access care than they did a month ago.”

Yet, even though medical workers and hospital leaders are already making tough choices about health care, the severe rationing hasn’t yet begun.

No hospital, in fact, has declared official crisis care standards – which would put them in a triage situation akin to a natural disaster.

But some fear the region could soon get there.

“Doctors, nurses and respiratory therapists and others are bracing,” said Carmela Coyle, president and CEO of the California Hospital Association, “for what will be in the next few weeks, a very difficult environment when it comes to caring for our neighbors, our family members and our friends.”

The only hope, health officials say, is to stanch the surge. Otherwise, countless more will die from the coronavirus.

Including those who never contract it.

<https://www.sbsun.com/2021/01/09/ambulances-across-southern-california-feeling-strain-of-coronavirus-surge/>

Single-vehicle rollover crash in Hesperia leaves one dead, another injured

Rene Ray De La Cruz, Victorville Daily Press

Posted: January 8, 2021 at 2:09PM



A single-vehicle rollover on Jan. 1, 2021, in Hesperia resulted in the death of a passenger and also a driver who sustained major injuries. Daily Press File Photo.

An off-highway rollover on New Year's Day in Hesperia has left a passenger dead and the driver hospitalized with major injuries.

Hesperia Sheriff's Station officials on Wednesday reported that the single-vehicle crash occurred at approximately 4:38 p.m. Jan. 1 at the intersection of Fir Street and Opal Avenue.

Both roads are unpaved and situated west of Maple Avenue, Google Maps shows.

Sheriff's deputies and **San Bernardino County Fire** personnel at the scene found a 20-year-old man, the driver, suffering from major injuries. He was taken to a hospital for treatment, the report said.

First responders also discovered a 23-year-old male passenger, who had been ejected from the vehicle. Fire personnel pronounced him dead at the scene, the sheriff's report said.

Preliminary evidence found by the Hesperia Station Major Accident Investigation Team indicates that the vehicle was traveling northbound on Opal Avenue. For unknown reasons, it left the road, collided with a dirt berm on the west side of the roadway and overturned several times.

The names of the driver and passenger were not disclosed by the sheriff's department.

The collision remains under investigation and witnesses are asked to contact Hesperia Sheriff's Station Deputy E. Perez at 760-947-1500.

Those with information can remain anonymous by calling the WeTip Hotline at 1-800-782-7463 or by visiting www.wetip.com.

<https://www.vvdailypress.com/story/news/2021/01/08/single-vehicle-rollover-crash-hesperia-leaves-one-dead-another-injured/6577623002/>

7-year-old boy killed, 3 injured in Joshua Tree house fire

Jonah Valdez, San Gabriel Valley Tribune

Posted: January 9, 2021 at 7:46PM



A boy was fatally injured and three other people were hurt in a house fire in Joshua Tree on Thursday, officials said Saturday, Jan. 9. (San Bernardino County Fire Department)

A 7-year-old boy died while three others, including an 8-year-old girl, were seriously injured in a house fire in Joshua Tree earlier this week, authorities said.

The fire was reported on Thursday around 12:15 p.m. at a home in the 62200 block of Crestview Drive where fire crews found four individuals with injuries, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department said on Saturday in a statement.

All four were transported to a local hospital where the 7-year-old boy died, the department said. The other three, an 8-year-old girl and two women, 33 and 67, all residents of Joshua Tree, were flown to trauma centers.

Information on the conditions of the surviving three individuals was not immediately available on Saturday.

The Sheriff's Department said the incident does not appear to be criminal in nature as investigators work to determine what cause the blaze.

<https://www.sbsun.com/2021/01/09/7-year-old-boy-killed-3-injured-in-joshua-tree-house-fire/>

Needles, CA: Detectives arrested father for child endangerment in fatal residential structure fire that killed two children at 511 Bazoobuth Street.

Staff Writer, ZachNews

Posted: January 9, 2021



Firefighters from **San Bernardino County Fire** Department and Mohave Valley Fire Department responded to a residential structure fire at 511 Bazoobuth Street just west of B Street.

Needles, California: Detectives from the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department have arrested the father for child endangerment in fatal residential structure fire that killed two children at 511 Bazoobuth Street that occurred on Thursday, January 7th, 2021.

In a press release to ZachNews from the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department's Colorado River Station, at 10:04 p.m., deputies and fire personnel responded to a report of a residence engulfed in fire on Bazoobuth Street. Once the fire was extinguished, fire personnel entered the structure and found two deceased children inside.

Due to the suspicious nature of the incident, detectives from the Specialized Investigations Division and Bomb/Arson Detail responded to conduct the investigation. Detectives learned that the mother of the children was out of town and the children's father, Christifer Williamson, was caring for them. Williamson was not at the residence when deputies and fire personnel arrived.

On Friday, January 8, 2020, at 3:30 p.m., detectives were notified that Arizona Department of Public Safety Officers conducted a traffic stop and detained Williamson. Williamson was transported to the Needles Station and was booked on child endangerment charges.

The cause of the fire remains under investigation.

The investigation is ongoing and anyone with information is asked to contact Detective David Carpenter, Specialized Investigations Division – Homicide Detail at (909)387-3589. Callers can remain anonymous and contact WeTip at 800-78CRIME or <http://www.wetip.com>.

<https://zachnews.net/2021/01/07/breaking-news-needles-ca-residential-structure-fire-burning-at-511-bazoobuth-street/>