



# NEWS



## News Headlines 01/22/2021

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## No Houses Lost to Wildfire

Mary-Justine Lanyon, The Alpine Mountaineer

Posted: January 20, 2021



San Bernardino County Fire Chief Dan Munsey (Photo by Mary-Justine Lanyon)

Last year was the first year in 25 years within the **County Fire** district that no house was lost to wildfire.

“I am so excited about that,” Chief Dan Munsey told members of the Mountain Sunrise Rotary Club.

He noted that every firefighter wants to go to a fire. “We don’t like the destruction of it but, if you train for something and are good at it, you want to practice your skills.

“But that’s not our job,” the chief said. “I don’t want to fight fires in my jurisdiction. I will do everything I can to prevent fires.”

He praised the work being done by the Mountain Rim Fire Safe Council, under the direction of Laura Dyberg, to reduce the risk of fires. Creating fuel breaks, identifying dead trees and getting them removed, making sure property owners know how to keep their property safe – that community risk reduction all adds up to a safer community.

Community risk reduction goes beyond a fire, Chief Munsey said. The fire scar, he noted, is susceptible to flooding. “We look at the potential threats to the community from ice storms, floods, earthquakes and fire.”

County Fire’s goal, the chief said, is to “proactively reduce risk to the community before an incident occurs.”

He chuckled as he talked about County Fire’s use of goats to help reduce risk.

“Where do fires occur every year in San Bernardino?” he asked. The answer was on Little Mountain. “We know that area will burn. What is predictable is preventable.” And so, they put goats on Little Mountain.

“It’s expensive to do,” he said, “and hard to get goats. But it’s a good investment.

“I want to continue this trend of not burning houses down in our jurisdiction.”

People are calling 911 for reasons other than an emergency these days, Chief Munsey said. They’ll call and say, it’s not really an emergency – please don’t use lights, don’t send a fire engine.

“We are there for you but, at the same time, we have finite resources,” the chief said. “So, how are we addressing this problem?”

Ten years ago, **San Bernardino County Fire** started thinking about it and has come up with an emergency medical dispatching system. Now, when a call comes in, the person will be asked a series of questions. “We

will determine if they are breathing, if their airway is open, if they have good circulation. The longer they are on the call, the less likely it's an emergency," Chief Munsey said.

If it turns out to be a low-acuity problem or not an emergency at all, the call will be shifted to a nurse in the dispatch center. Chief Munsey said they have "soft started" this program, which is currently staffed part-time during peak hours. The intention is for a nurse to be available 24/7 soon.

He told the Rotarians that San Bernardino County is the first county in the U.S. to be doing this. "Our goal is to get that caller to appropriate care in an appropriate time and with the appropriate method," Chief Munsey said.

It can be very expensive to be transported by ambulance, he noted. "When an ambulance arrives, by law it can only take you to the ER. By sending calls to a nurse and working with Public Health, different insurance companies, Urgent Cares and doctors, we can connect a patient to the care they need without sending an expensive response."

While many people don't believe that COVID-19 is a problem, the chief said he is not one of them. "I've seen the effects of it. We are talking about how to work together to prevent the hospital system from collapsing. Patients are staying in the back of an ambulance for hours until a hospital can find room for them.

"We have hospitals in the county that are running out of oxygen. This is real – what I see every day.

Chief Munsey said having ambulances in the fire stations is a great system. "These folks train together. Every fire engine has a paramedic on it. They save lives.

"The greatest accomplishment in my career was when someone would say, do you remember me? You were the paramedic who restarted my heart. That makes you feel incredible. Your paramedics are incredible. They train every day so they're there for you in an emergency."

And, he added, "your firefighters are among the best. You wouldn't believe the stories about their going out of the way to help the public."

Chief Munsey told the story of a mountain visitor who had an emergency and was taken to Mountains Community Hospital. The man told the firefighters and paramedics that his daughter had run out of gas driving up the hill. They called their mechanic, who took gas to the daughter so she could get to the hospital.

"It's not like that across the U.S.," Chief Munsey said. "Fire departments have gotten bigger and bigger. Some forget why they're here. It's not to respond to emergencies but to prevent them."

There are three Cs that are of utmost importance to him, the chief said: community involvement, collaboration and communication.

"We are a community-based fire department," he said. "And we are great collaborators with our partners. Think about what Laura Dyberg is doing, what Rotary is doing. If we make the community better, we will make it safer. We work with Caltrans and all the fire chiefs. Jurisdictional boundaries no longer matter. The closest agency will respond."

And, Chief Munsey said, “communication is important to me. I promise you, you will know who I am.”

<https://thealpinemountaineer.com/mountain-sunrise-rotary-club/>

## No Body Found After Yucca Valley Fire, Cause Under Investigation

Staff Writer, z1077fm.com

Posted: January 22, 2021



We have more information regarding a house fire in Yucca Valley early Thursday morning. According to Battalion Chief Michael McClintock, fire crews were dispatched around 4:30 a.m. to the 57400 block of Buena Suerte in the Western Hills neighborhood of Yucca Valley. Arriving crews found the three-story home under construction well involved with flames. Crews also encountered downed power lines, a burning power pole, an RV, and multiple burning vehicles.

Crews concentrated efforts on protecting nearby homes and vegetation, knocking down the fire in approximately one hour. Bystanders reported hearing a cry for help from the home, but no occupants were on scene when fire crews arrived. Once the fire was extinguished, investigators slowly searched the site with cadaver dogs, but no human remains were discovered. The fire's cause & origin is under investigation.

<http://z1077fm.com/more-information-on-yucca-valley-home-destroyed-in-fire-early-thursday-morning/>

## **Paul Russ, former mayor of Hesperia, dies after testing positive for COVID-19**

Matthew Cabe, Victorville Daily Press

Posted: January 22, 2021



Paul Russ, the former mayor of Hesperia, who most recently ran for a seat on the Hesperia Unified School District Board of Directors in November, has died at the age of 61, his family confirmed with the Daily Press.

Russ died Thursday, according to his daughter, Stephanie Russ, who said her father tested positive for COVID-19 on Jan. 8. He died at Victor Valley Global Medical Center shortly before 3 p.m.

“(H)e went back and forth several times,” Stephanie Russ said via text message Thursday evening. “The 18th (of January) was when he was admitted. Per the nurse he died of Covid pneumonia.”

On Jan. 16, Paul Russ posted on Facebook that he was “back at the ER for the fourth time this week” after experiencing problems with his oxygen levels, which he said were low.

After he was admitted at Victor Valley Global, Stephanie Russ said her father “coded three times and fought until the very end.”

“He was the most amazing man ever ... he loved his children and loved his grandchildren more,” she said.

Paul Russ won a seat on the Hesperia City Council in November 2014, finishing third among eight candidates. Councilman Bill Holland and the late Russ Blewett, who died in 2018, were the top vote-getters that year.

In 2016, while serving the city as mayor pro tem, Russ ran for San Bernardino County 1st District Supervisor, pegging himself “an outsider” in the four-challenger race against incumbent Robert Lovingood.

In an interview that year with the Daily Press, the long-time businessman with a background in banking described himself as a “Constitutional conservative,” named public safety a funding priority and listed fighting welfare fraud as one method to eliminate waste at the county level.

With just under 11.5% of the vote, Russ finished in fourth place among five candidates in the primary. During that same election cycle, though, he won a seat on the San Bernardino County Republican Central Committee for the 1st District.

The following month, Russ started his term as Hesperia's mayor, serving through the end of 2017, a year that also brought health scares.

Already a kidney transplant recipient and cancer survivor, Russ fell into a coma in March 2017 after his only kidney, which he had recently learned was failing, started to shut down when medicine for a leg injury failed to pass through the organ.

In July of that year, he told the Daily Press he would undergo chemotherapy after learning he had liver cancer.

Then, in November, Russ temporarily moved to Louisiana alongside his wife, Luana, with hopes that doctors at Ochsner Medical Center in New Orleans would find him a new liver and kidney.

A one-night fundraiser organized by Juan and Jannai Archuleta — close friends of Russ — and held at the Apple Valley Wine Seller raised nearly \$40,000 to help cover medical and living expenses, the Daily Press reported.

The following month, doctors performed a double transplant surgery on Russ' cancerous liver and failing kidney, the latter of which he received from his late-brother nearly 30 years earlier.

After the procedure, Russ said he was thankful for the successful 10-hour surgery and the “life-saving journey” that would allow him to spend time with his family.

“I was gone from Thanksgiving to almost Easter, and during that time, I never gave up hope that they’d find organs for me,” Russ said in March 2018. “It’s good to be home, it’s good to be alive and it’s good to be sleeping in my own bed again.”

Russ lost a re-election bid later that year in a close and somewhat bitter District 3 race against Cameron Gregg.

On the campaign trail, Gregg — who became the youngest mayor in Hesperia's history in December — said he was running against Russ’ “corrupt ways,” which he said did not represent “what is good for Hesperia.”

At times, Russ took flak from residents, too, after he voted for the master-planned community Tapestry project during his lone term on the City Council. He defended his decision, though, telling the Daily Press that growth in the area was inevitable and that he preferred it to be controlled rather than a “patchwork expansion.”

On Thursday night, Hesperia Councilman Larry Bird said he was shocked to discover that Russ had died. A former mayor himself, Bird championed the late elected's years on the dais.

“During his time on the council, Paul used his financial knowledge to help the city,” Bird said. “Hesperia finds itself in a good position today, partly because of his efforts, especially in helping the city transition to **San Bernardino County Fire**, which will be his legacy.”

An avid golfer, Russ often played with Mike Stevens, an Air Force veteran and former Victorville City Council candidate. The two were part of a foursome that played twice a week, mainly at Ashwood Golf Course in Apple Valley, Stevens said Thursday.

“Paul called us ‘postal golfers’ because despite the snow, the rain or the heat, we’d still get out on the course and play,” he said.

Like Bird, Stevens said his long-time friend's death came as a shock, adding that pre-existing conditions made Russ more aware of the dangers associated with contracting COVID-19.

“Paul was like the Energizer Bunny because of his ability to bounce back after numerous health issues and setbacks,” Stevens said. “Every time Paul got hit, he always maintained a positive attitude and knew that he could fight back. I guess this was just too much of a fight for him.”

“My prayers are with Paul’s wife, Lu, and her family,” Stevens said.

<https://www.vvdailypress.com/story/news/2021/01/21/paul-russ-former-mayor-hesperia-dies-after-testing-positive-covid-19/6667431002/>



## **Fatal Collision on Lake Forest Drive**

**Staff Writer, Mountain News**

Posted: January 20, 2021 at 4:45PM

Public Information Officer Jacob A. Griede from the California Highway Patrol issues a press release regarding fatal collision in Twin Peaks that occurred on January 14, 2021.

According to the press release, on January 14, 2021, at approximately 1030 hours, a 15-year-old female and a 17-year-old female, both from Twin Peaks, California were riding a 2007 Suzuki LT-R450 Quadracor, eastbound on Lake Forest Drive west of Alpine Lane. Both riders were not wearing a helmet and at this time, it is still be investigated on who was driving the Suzuki Quadracor at the time of the collision. Circumstances are still being investigated which lead up to and caused the Suzuki Quadracor to leave the roadway and collided into a concrete retaining wall, which caused both riders to be ejected from the Suzuki Quadracor.

**San Bernardino County Fire** Department responded to the scene. The 17-year-old was transported to Loma Linda University Medical Center with major injuries. The 15-year-old was transported to Mountains Community Hospital where she was pronounced deceased by medical personnel.

Any witnesses to the traffic collision or events prior to the collision are asked to please contact the Arrowhead Area Office (909)867-2791. Officer M. Cadena from the Arrowhead Area Office is handling the investigation.

<https://mountain-news.com/news/40215/fatal-collision-on-lake-forest-drive/>

## Fire damages residential structure in Bloomington on Jan. 20

Staff Writer, Fontana Herald News

Posted: January 21, 2021 at 2:35PM



A fire damaged one unit of a four-unit residential complex in Bloomington on Jan. 20.

(Contributed photo by **San Bernardino County Fire** Department)

A fire damaged one unit of a four-unit residential complex in Bloomington on Jan. 20, according to the **San Bernardino County Fire** Department.

There were no reports of injuries due to the incident, which took place in the area of San Bernardino and Vine streets.

Crews from the **San Bernardino County Fire** Department, helped by the Rialto Fire Department, were successful in keeping the fire out of the adjacent units at the complex.

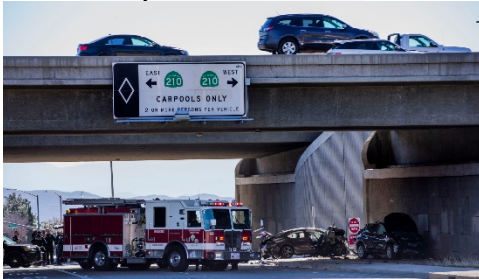
An investigator was trying to determine the cause of the blaze.

[https://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/news/fire-damages-residential-structure-in-bloomington-on-jan-20/article\\_8b91cc26-5c38-11eb-bf1a-9ffec0ac7d03.html](https://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/news/fire-damages-residential-structure-in-bloomington-on-jan-20/article_8b91cc26-5c38-11eb-bf1a-9ffec0ac7d03.html)

# 1 killed, 2 hospitalized after chase ends in crash in Fontana

Eric Licas, Orange County Register

Posted: January 20, 2021 at 10:05PM



A high-speed pursuit ended with a violent crash at Beech Avenue below the 210 fwy, killing an innocent male driver and sending a female passenger to the hospital in critical condition as the suspect driver was also transported with injuries in Fontana on Wednesday, January 20, 2021. (Photo by Terry Pierson, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

One person died and two were hospitalized after a vehicle that was chased by police wound through Rialto and Rancho Cucamonga before crashing Wednesday, Jan. 20 in Fontana.

Authorities attempted to stop a person sought in connection with a prior ongoing investigation at about 12:05 p.m. on a surface street in Fontana, police Officer Kevin Anderson said. He said the suspect took off on what turned out to be a roughly 10-minute pursuit through two other cities.

The motorist returned to Fontana and exited the 210 Freeway at Beech Avenue, police said. The driver failed to stop at an intersection and slammed into another vehicle occupied by a man and a woman.

The two people in the vehicle that was struck were a couple, Anderson said. Their identities were not publicly available. One died at the scene of the collision. The other, along with the suspect in the pursuit, were hospitalized.

Police declined to provide further details regarding why they were attempting to stop the man who was pursued. Information regarding what crimes he might be booked on suspicion of were pending his discharge from medical treatment, Anderson said.

The deployed airbags of a four-door sedan waved in the wind as it sat next to a wrecked compact SUV beneath the shadow of the 210 Freeway overpass on Beech in footage recorded at the scene. Firefighters and police temporarily blocked the street as investigators took photos and collected evidence Monday afternoon.

<https://www.sbsun.com/2021/01/20/1-killed-2-hospitalized-after-chase-ends-in-crash-in-fontana/>

## County Conducts Training Exercise to Evaluate, Enhance Large-Scale Vaccination Procedures

Staff Writer, High Desert Daily News

Posted: January 21, 2021



(Victor Valley)– To ensure its ability to effectively administer resident vaccinations and accurately transmit the resulting data to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) database, the County conducted two, two-hour training and evaluation drills this past Saturday.

The evaluation exercise helped prepare more than 70 providers and staff to operate the County’s upcoming community vaccination sites, or Medical Points of Distribution (MPODs), and involved participants from the County’s Department of Public Health, Department of Behavioral Health, and the Fire Department’s Office of Emergency Services. They were specifically designed to evaluate the following:

Ability of County residents to register for COVID-19 vaccinations;

Ability of participants to upload vaccination data to the CDPH database;

Ability of participants to implement the mandated 15-minute observation period; and

Ability to integrate a video conferencing translation platform.

Emergency Managers from the cities of Rancho Cucamonga, Chino, Colton, and Loma Linda were part of the core planning team.

“As we continue to expand our vaccination program, our ability to implement it smoothly and efficiently is essential,” said Michael A. Ramirez, supervising emergency services officer for the **San Bernardino County Fire** Office of Emergency Services. “These simulations enable us to determine the effectiveness of our processes and identify any concerns that need to be addressed.”

County workers participated in the two MPOD sessions, which were held at the RC Sports Center in Rancho Cucamonga. The exercise included 50 individuals who were actually given the vaccine. Participants were designated a variety of roles, such as “players,” “controllers,” “simulators,” and “actors;” non-participatory roles included “evaluators” and “observers.”

The exercises were followed by a series of debriefing sessions, during which participants discussed effectiveness and potential areas of improvement. Participants were also given an opportunity to candidly discuss what they considered the strengths and weaknesses of the exercise.

“The MPOD exercises are a critical component to build our readiness and capacity to vaccinate more and more of our County residents,” said County Director of Public Health Corwin Porter. “It is especially important given we will soon be opening up more MPODs and vaccination supersites in the coming weeks.”

For more information on the County’s vaccination program, including the multi-phased allocation schedule proposed by the California Department of Public Health, please visit the vaccine page of the County COVID-19 website.

<http://highdesertdaily.com/2021/01/county-conducts-training-exercise-to-evaluate-enhance-large-scale-vaccination-procedures/>

## Hazmat site gets back into business: Basin locals bring in their hazardous trash as marshal reopens collection site

Stacy Moore, Hi-Desert Star

Posted: January 21, 2021 at 5:11PM



Carlos Flores, foreground, Christopher Scheller and Arnel Natividad maneuver a box of old paint and varnish cans into a panel truck during the hazardous materials collection in Joshua Tree Saturday.

Technicians with the **county fire** marshal's office stayed on their toes when the Morongo Basin's only collection site for household hazardous waste reopened Jan. 16.

The technicians collected waste from 132 people at the collection site, which is on Twentynine Palms Highway east of downtown Joshua Tree.

The site was closed from September through December 2020 while workers built an awning that would protect employees from bad weather, said Assistant Fire Marshal Jose Rodriguez.

The money for the awning was provided by a grant from the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle), he added.

The hazardous materials technicians got busy beneath the awning as soon as the gates opened on Jan. 16, pulling bags and boxes of materials from locals' trunks and backseats.

It was a no-contact drop-off, with people instructed to stay in their cars.

To make up for being closed for a few months, the site will be open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the first and third Saturday of every month through August. Starting in September, it will be open 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the third Saturday only.

Masks are required and this site is open only to San Bernardino County residents. Identification will be required.

The site is at 62499 Twentynine Palms Highway. For information, call (800) Oily Cat (800-645-9228) or visit Greensb.net.

<https://hidesertstar.com/news/178671/hazmat-site-gets-back-into-business-basin-locals-bring-in-their-hazardous-trash-as-marshall-reopens-collection-site/>