



NEWS



News Headlines 02/26/2021

- Burning trash barrel sparks wind-driven fire in San Bernardino
- Victorville announces new chief for city-run fire department
- Wind-driven fire destroys 2 homes, damages a 3rd in Bloomington
- Two homes are destroyed, and a third house is damaged in wind-driven fire in Bloomington

Burning trash barrel sparks wind-driven fire in San Bernardino

Erin B. Logan, LA Times

Posted: February 25, 2021 at 12:12PM



Strong winds made conditions difficult for firefighters battling a blaze that damaged at least three structures in the Bloomington area of San Bernardino County. (OnScene.TV)

A wind-driven fire broke out overnight in a residential neighborhood in San Bernardino County, burning two acres and three homes, authorities said Thursday.

San Bernardino County Fire Department crews arrived in the 10700 block of Tamarind Avenue in the Bloomington community just after midnight after reports of a fire burning in the backyard of a home, Battalion Chief Mike McClintock said.

Soon after, more residents called 911 to report that the fire had spread to a nearby home.

“There was significant wind that allowed those embers to spread from house to house,” McClintock said.

Santa Ana wind gusts reached 50 mph overnight, fanning embers that eventually engulfed two acres and two houses. A third home was badly damaged, McClintock said. No injuries were reported.

Fire Departments from Rialto and Colton each gave an engine to help put out the fire. The Red Cross helped displaced residents find temporary housing.

The fire, which broke out on the edge of Fontana, started in a barrel that contained burning wood that was unattended in a backyard, investigators said. An ember jumped onto dry fuel, igniting the larger flame.

More than 40 firefighters were onsite at the height of the blaze, McClintock said. Crews were able to knock it down within 90 minutes, but returned multiple times to tamp down nearby hot spots. By 8 a.m., the “fire was pretty much dead,” officials said.

Investigators are still determining whether the person burning the wood in the barrel will be charged, McClintock said.

The wind also toppled at least three big rigs on freeways in Riverside and San Bernardino counties early Thursday, temporarily closing lanes, Caltrans spokeswoman Terri Kasinga said. The California Highway Patrol did not immediately respond to an inquiry asking whether injuries were reported.

The high winds also closed a COVID-19 vaccination site at Disneyland. The site is expected to reopen Friday if gusts subside. Forecasters said the winds are expected to peak Thursday, but another strong wind event is expected this weekend.

Northerly winds are expected to return late Friday, and moderate to potentially strong Santa Ana winds are likely late Saturday into Sunday, National Weather Service meteorologist David Sweet said.

“If you feel like you haven’t experienced enough winds this winter, you can look forward to Sunday,” said Sweet, who is based in Oxnard.

A high-wind warning is in effect for the mountains and the Santa Clarita Valley through Thursday afternoon. An advisory for coastal and valley areas will end at 3 p.m.

The South Coast Air Quality Management District also issued a windblown dust and ash advisory for portions of Riverside and San Bernardino counties through Thursday evening. High winds could whip up ash from recent wildfire burn scars, including the El Dorado fire and the Apple fire.

<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-02-25/burning-trash-barrel-sparks-wind-driven-fire-in-san-bernardino>

Victorville announces new chief for city-run fire department

Martin Estacio, Victorville Daily Press

Posted: February 25, 2021 at 3:37PM



Jeff Armstrong has been selected as the new chief of the Victorville Fire Department city officials announced on Wednesday, Feb. 24, 2021. Courtesy of The City of Victorville

Victorville has selected a new chief to run the city's fire department after former head Greg Benson resigned last year.

Jeff Armstrong will take the reins of the Victorville Fire Department on March 29 following a nationwide search, officials announced Wednesday.

Armstrong has 24 years of fire and emergency services experience, according to a city statement. He currently serves as the fire chief of Rio Vista — a city of about 9,700 people in Northern California — where he was hired in 2017.

Before that, Armstrong worked closer to the High Desert as the fire chief for California City in neighboring Kern County. That stint lasted from 2013 to 2016, his LinkedIn profile shows.

"I look forward to continuing the development of Victorville Fire and working with its skilled team of fire professionals to further establish a culture of excellence, inclusion and collaboration," Armstrong said in a statement. "Central to our effort will be to make Victorville Fire a community-focused fire department."

The city's new hire comes more than six months after Benson abruptly resigned his post in August. The city did not provide a reason for his departure, citing a human resources matter.



Victorville Fire Chief Greg Benson speaks during a Victorville Rotary Club meeting in October 2019. He abruptly resigned as chief in August 2020.

Benson was Victorville Fire's first chief after city officials voted to go back to running its own department. He saw the transition in 2019 as Victorville officially terminated its contract with San Bernardino County, which had provided fire services in the city for a decade.

The city appointed John Becker, a former Victorville Fire chief, to fill the void as they searched for a permanent replacement. Becker will continue to run the department until Armstrong assumes the role.

City Manager Keith Metzler, meanwhile, praised Armstrong, calling him “a proven fire services professional with the breadth of skills, leadership and experience” necessary to take Victorville Fire to “the next level.”

“Jeff is joining Victorville Fire at an exciting time,” Metzler said in a statement. “We will rely on his leadership to guide us through expansion of our fire and medical services including standing up Fire Station 315 with new revenue generated by Measure P.”

Measure P, the one-cent sales tax measure passed by voters in November is set to take effect April 1. Officials have said that an estimated \$15 million in annual revenue could be used to hire firefighters and reopen the station near Sunset Ridge Park, which has never been fully staffed.

In addition to earning degrees in public safety administration and fire science, Armstrong also serves as the At-Large Director for the Safety, Health and Survival Section of the International Association of Fire Chiefs.

<https://www.vvdailypress.com/story/news/2021/02/25/victorville-announces-new-chief-city-run-fire-department/6824748002/>

Wind-driven fire destroys 2 homes, damages a 3rd in Bloomington

Brian Rokos, The Press-Enterprise

Posted: February 25, 2021 at 2:08PM



A man with a garden hose at right attempts to extinguish a fast-moving fire that burned three homes on Tamarind Avenue in Bloomington on Feb. 25, 2021. (Loudlabs News)

Flames from an unattended fire spread by gusting 50 mph winds destroyed two homes and damaged a third in Bloomington early Thursday, Feb. 25, the San Bernardino County Fire Department said.

The fire was reported at about 12:30 a.m. in a backyard in the 10700 block of Tamarind Avenue. Before firefighters arrived, the flames had spread to a home. And before long, three homes, a trailer and vegetation were ablaze as embers raced across properties, swirling like fireflies.

Battalion Chief Mike McClintock estimated the wind was blowing at 20 mph with gusts to 50 mph as Fontana police and sheriff's deputies evacuated residents.

It took 40 firefighters from the county, Rialto and Colton an hour and a half to control the flames.

Despite the dangerous conditions, no one was reported injured, McClintock said.

The fire appeared to start in a barrel where a resident had been burning wood, he said. The investigation was continuing.

<https://www.sbsun.com/2021/02/25/wind-driven-fire-destroys-2-homes-damages-a-3rd-in-bloomington/>

Two homes are destroyed, and a third house is damaged in wind-driven fire in Bloomington

Staff Writer, Fontana Herald News

Posted: February 25, 2021



Two homes were destroyed, and a third house was badly damaged due to a wind-driven fire in Bloomington during the early morning hours of Feb. 25, according to the **San Bernardino County Fire Department**.

There were no reports of injuries.

At 12:23 a.m., crews were dispatched to a report of a backyard on fire in the 10700 block of Tamarind Avenue, said Public Information Officer Mike McClintock. Moments later, residents called and said the fire had spread to a nearby home. A full structure response was requested.

Arriving crews found one home well involved with multiple exposures. A sustained wind of 20 mph with gusts to 50 mph quickly spread the fire to the south. Due to the immediate exposures and high winds, a second and ultimately a third alarm were requested. Despite firefighters' best efforts, the blaze spread to a total of three homes, multiple properties and approximately two acres of vegetation.

Firefighters were successful in knocking down the fire within 90 minutes. They also managed to keep the fire from spreading to multiple nearby homes and vegetation. Once the fire was knocked down, crews focused on mop-up to ensure the fire didn't cross containment lines. Crews remained on-scene for multiple hours working on overhaul.

At the height of the fire, more than 40 firefighters battled the blaze. The American Red Cross was requested to assist displaced occupants with temporary living conditions.

Investigators were able to track the fire's cause / origin to a burn barrel nearby. The non-permitted fire was left unattended, with winds sending embers to receptive fuels. The fire then quickly moved to nearby vegetation and homes, McClintock said.

San Bernardino County Fire responded with 10 engines, two trucks, four chief officers, a medic squad, an air/light unit and two investigators. Colton and Rialto firefighters also assisted during the incident.

https://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/news/inland_empire_news/two-homes-are-destroyed-and-a-third-house-is-damaged-in-wind-driven-fire-in/article_9e3b984c-7796-11eb-822e-e3ee23a6096b.html