



# NEWS



## News Headlines 05/19/2021

- Havasu Lake garage fire brings attention to emergency resources
- YUCCA VALLEY HAZARDOUS WASTE COLLECTION DEEMED A SUCCESS

## Havasu Lake garage fire brings attention to emergency resources

Daisy Nelson, Havasu News

Posted: May 19, 2021



HAVASU LAKE, Calif. — A devastating garage fire has turned the Havasu Lake community’s focus to local emergency capabilities and resources.

On Friday around 8:15 p.m. on the shores of Havasu Lake, Gary Chamberlain was hanging out with his grandkids by the water when smoke began to billow from their neighborhood. He and his wife jumped into their golf cart to see if it was their home that had caught fire.

When they arrived at the 148500 block of Flasher Road, they were relieved to find it wasn’t their house — but devastated to see a fire at all. Residents were already gathered as they watched a detached garage go up in flames.

The family wasn’t home, so no injuries were reported. But the garage was a total loss.

According to Tracey Martinez, public information officer for the **San Bernardino County Fire** Department, the fire started inside a vehicle parked in the garage, located right next to the family’s mobile home. The exact cause is still under investigation.

A fire captain and firefighter paramedic responded to the scene in a brush patrol unit (a fire truck designed to navigate narrow roads when fighting wildfires) within five minutes.

It took 38 minutes to put the fire out, Martinez said. As the two-man team fought the blaze, one neighbor jumped into action to help.

David Odell is a retired firefighter and father to next-door neighbor Bryanna Meredith.

“That night was incredibly surreal, and I think I went through every emotion possible,” Meredith said.

“Devastated for our neighbors, frightened that the fire would spread to our house, worried for my daughters who were absolutely terrified, and also incredibly proud seeing my dad in action after being retired for 13 years. He was incredibly calm and in control of the situation, and it made everyone around him calm and feel like we could get through this no matter what happened.”

Her girls baked brownies and made thank you cards for the firefighters on Monday to show their appreciation for their service.

Chamberlain watched both men fight “with such tenacity” to put it out. “By the grace of God,” a slight breeze from the south helped keep the fire from spreading to the rest of the mobile home park, he said. Without that breeze, “it could have easily been much more disastrous,” Chamberlain added.

Having a two-man team wasn’t their only challenge. The water pump on the brush patrol unit kept shutting off. Chamberlain estimates he heard it stop at least 12 to 15 times, resulting in low water pressure and frequent restarts.

It’s standard protocol for every SBCFD station to test the water pumps. That morning, it was working fine, Martinez said. They tested it after the fire and again the following morning using a different water source than the night before, and it continued to work normally.

Martinez said the department believes “there may have been air in the water system causing the pump to shut off.” Chamberlain noted that the water line is “pretty weak” in that area already.

An engine crew from Needles, including a fire captain, engineer and firefighter, also responded to the blaze to assist. The trip from the Needles station typically takes about 38 minutes, according to Google Maps.

Martinez said that, aside from the garage being a total loss, there was a small amount of heat damage to some of the facia board of the home and a broken window, “probably blown out from the heat.”

According to a GoFundMe fundraiser created by Jennifer Combs, the residents of the home were on their way back to Havasu Lake, about two hours away when they heard about the fire. The GoFundMe has raised \$3,645 as of Tuesday afternoon and can be found at [gofund.me/daac4397](https://gofund.me/daac4397).

SBCFD Station 18 is located at 148808 Havasu Lake Road. While it’s labeled as a station, its main purpose is to store equipment. It also has some office space for administrative duties and a laundry room, but unlike a typical fire station, it “was never intended for full occupancy,” Fire Captain Michael Murphy said. Instead, they cohabitate the doublewide sheriff’s compound to eat and sleep.

The two-man team is on duty 24 hours a day, every day of the year, and their equipment includes one brush patrol unit, one fire engine, and one fire boat, Martinez said. A new fire boat is currently in the shop getting county logos applied and finishing touches, Murphy said. He also said they have a 2,500-gallon water tender. Martinez added that the department is “in the process of securing funding to add a firefighter engineer full time... but they’re still working on that.”

Their station covers a large area, aside from Havasu Lake and the Chemehuevi Reservation — from Iron Mountain on California State Route 62 to the Vidal Agricultural Station and US Route 95 to Needles. They also respond to lake calls and provide service to Havasu Palms and Black Meadow Landing by boat.

Chamberlain has been involved with the fire department for years now, trying to help them establish special district funding and keep personnel in Havasu Lake. He acknowledges that the community is remote but noted that that’s a big reason why their service is so vital. Friday’s fire was proof of that.

“It made you wonder, ‘Can two men really fight a structure fire successfully?’” he said. “They were stuck between a rock and a hard place... We really appreciate everything these guys do, and we just want to get them the best equipment they can get.”

Murphy said that during the two years he's been a fire captain for Havasu Lake, there've been a total of two structure fires and a few vegetation fires.

Oftentimes, residents seem surprised when his team responds to a call within minutes, Murphy said. Many are unaware that there is a full-time team on duty.

"One of the biggest challenges that comes with serving a community is letting everyone know who you are and what services you provide," he said. When they began providing full time service, only about 30 people showed up to their first community meeting, where they introduced themselves, Murphy said.

But he hopes an upcoming meeting will change that. In response to several concerns voiced by residents after Friday's fire, SBCFD Assistant Chief Scott Tuttle will address the community at the end of this month to help clarify questions about the fire department, their capabilities, and funding.

"He just wants to introduce himself and dispel any rumors and tell them this is what your tax dollars pay for, and this is the service that you have," Martinez said.

The meeting will be held at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, May 26 at the Fire Hall (attached at the back of Station 18).

[https://www.havasunews.com/news/havasulake-garage-fire-brings-attention-to-emergency-resources/article\\_92669136-b86c-11eb-9f50-238ed8e45873.html](https://www.havasunews.com/news/havasulake-garage-fire-brings-attention-to-emergency-resources/article_92669136-b86c-11eb-9f50-238ed8e45873.html)

# YUCCA VALLEY HAZARDOUS WASTE COLLECTION DEEMED A SUCCESS

Staff Writer, z1077fm.com

Posted: May 19, 2021



The Town of Yucca Valley has a contract with the county to provide two onsite collection events for household hazardous waste. The event for 2020 was canceled due to COVID-19, but the town was able to hold its first event in 2021 last April. Managing editor Tami Roleff says the event was called a great success...

About 25 staff from **San Bernardino County Fire Department** showed up April 24 with large box trucks and plastic sheeting in the north parking lot of the Yucca Valley Community Center. The workers set up collection stations for paint and solvents, used oil and filters, electronic waste, batteries, used needles, and more. The town reported that 230 cars, with residents from throughout the Morongo Basin, dropped off more than 19,000 pounds of electronic and household hazardous waste during the 4-hour collection event. In exchange, residents were given oil containers, oil buckets, rags, funnels, and sharps containers, for future use.

Of the 230 participants, the majority came from Yucca Valley with 156 local residents attending the event. Below are the locations from the other participants traveled from:

- o Yucca Valley: 156 (68%)
- o Joshua Tree: 32 (14%)
- o Morongo Valley: 11 (5%)
- o 29 Palms: 11 (5%)
- o Landers: 8 (3%)
- o Pioneertown: 8 (3%)
- o Johnson Valley: 3 (1%)
- o Yucaipa: 1 (.4%)

Amounts (lbs.)	Waste	Amounts (lbs.)	
Flammable	1,464	Antifreeze	213
Oil Based Paint	978	Motor Oil	2,550
Toxics	250	Used Oil Filters	76

Corrosive Acids	54	Fluorescent Tubes	154
Corrosive Bases	44	Household Batteries	556
Oxidizers	31	Lead Acid Batteries	1,490
Latex Paint	6,107	CRTs/Misc E-waste	3,673
Aerosols	339	Cooking Oil	192
Pharmaceuticals	42	Sharps	55
Roofing Tar	207	Materials Exchange	655
Fertilizers	25	Compressed Gas Cylinder	56
PCBs (ballast)	0	Fire Extinguishers	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,253</b>		

SHARE THIS:

<http://z1077fm.com/yucca-valley-hazardous-waste-collection-deemed-a-success/>