



# NEWS



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## Measure repealing fire district tax to go before San Bernardino County voters in June

Martin Estacio, VICTORVILLE DAILY PRESS

Posted: January 13, 2022 at 3:17 pm



San Bernardino County Fire Chief Dan Munsey speaks at a county supervisors' meeting on Tuesday, Jan.11, 2022. Courtesy Of San Bernardino County

Residents in San Bernardino County will see a second measure to repeal a fire district tax this year, only months after a similar initiative in November failed.

The County Board of Supervisors voted Tuesday unanimously to place the new measure on the upcoming June primary ballot.

Voters in unincorporated areas of the county — and some cities — will decide whether a fee levied on land parcels will stay in place or be thrown out. The same question was put to voters in November under Measure U which did not pass.

County supervisors approved the new tax that came with the expansion of Fire Protection Zone 5 (FP-5) in October 2018 after a hearing where they heard hours of public testimony — mostly in opposition to the new tax.

FP-5's expansion annexed 19,073 square miles of unincorporated land into the zone along with the cities of San Bernardino, Needles, and Upland. The zone initially covered Helendale and Twentynine Palms.

With the expansion, an annual parcel fee of \$157.26 was assessed on all parcels — vacant or not — with the ability to increase the fee up to 3% a year.

The tax now stands at \$161.98 per parcel after county supervisors approved a 3% increase last year as recommended by the **San Bernardino County Fire** Protection District.

The fire district argued the tax was necessary to shore up a \$29 million budget deficit and continue funding existing fire services which property taxes weren't covering.

County Fire Chief Dan Munsey told supervisors this week the FP-5 tax revenue amounts to \$42.7 million, or 18% of the fire department's operating budget. Without the tax, "somewhere between 15 to 17 fire stations would need to be closed districtwide," or over 25% of all stations, he said.

The only full-time fire station in Twentynine Palms would be on that list, Munsey added. In addition, the number of first responders could be reduced by up to one-third, according to the district.

### A protest process in 2018 scrutinized

Others, though, disagree with the tax and how it was implemented. Before the supervisors approved the expansion in 2018, the county instituted a protest process and sent mailers to affected landowners.

The process required an election to determine the fate of FP-5 if 25% of landowners had mailed the forms back saying they opposed the expansion.

If more than 50% protested, the proposed expansion would have been withdrawn entirely. Instead, only about 3% of landowners responded, according to a tally at the supervisors' meeting that year.

The nonprofit, Red Brennan Group, and other parties sued the county after its decision. They argued the tax should have been approved by a two-thirds vote of the electorate under Proposition 218 rules.

Proposition 218 requires a two-thirds vote when a local government imposes, extends, or increases any special tax.

A San Bernardino Superior Court judge disagreed with the group's assertion that the tax was unconstitutional and denied an injunction that would've temporarily stopped the fee.

Judge Donald Alvarez cited earlier court decisions that ruled language in the California Constitution requiring a two-thirds vote on general or special taxes didn't address those imposed in annexations.

After the decision, Tom Murphy, president of the Red Brennan Group, said there were two choices: Either a "change through the state legislature" or "an initiative petition directly to citizens."

"We opted for the second choice," he wrote in an email.

The group funded the petition effort to gather signatures for Measure U to repeal the tax. That measure failed in November, however, after 52% voted against it.

Murphy said the group also funded the effort behind the upcoming initiative and collected 12,070 signatures last year.

Of those signatures, 8,868 were verified by the county Registrar of Voters, officials said.

<https://www.vvdailynews.com/story/news/2022/01/13/voting-fire-district-taxes-san-bernardino-county/6518447001/>

## Illegal marijuana operation found after massive fire in Adelanto, 2 arrested

Staff Writer, VICTOR VALLEY NEWS GROUP

Posted: January 13, 2022 at 2:13 pm



(Photo by Drew Rodriguez, for Victor Valley News)

ADELANTO, Calif. (VVNG.com) — A massive commercial fire in Adelanto resulted in two people being arrested after authorities discovered an illegal marijuana operation.

On January 12, 2022, at approximately 4:35 p.m., deputies along with members of the **San Bernardino County Fire** Department responded to reports of a commercial building on fire in the 11700 block of Bartlett Avenue in the City of Adelanto.

Upon arrival, responding personnel found the structure fully engulfed and quickly growing, threatening neighboring structures. The surrounding area was evacuated, and surface streets closed as a large contingent of Fire personnel combatted the blaze. The fire caused disruption to utility services for surrounding residences and businesses.

Personnel from the San Bernardino County Sheriff, Bomb/Arson Team responded and assisted in the investigation.

According to a sheriff's news release, "once the fire was contained, investigators located evidence of a butane extraction lab and a large quantity of processed marijuana at the scene. As a result, The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department, Marijuana Enforcement Team responded to process the scene. Over the course of the investigation, investigators recovered large amounts of processed and concentrated cannabis, a marijuana extraction system, cash and two unserialized firearms."

The suspects identified as Peng Wei, 41, a resident of Adelanto, and Jing Wei Ping, 39, a resident of Daly City, were arrested for Health and Safety Code 11379(b); possession of cannabis for sale and Health and Safety Code 11379.6; manufacturing a controlled substance. The case will be forwarded to the District Attorney's Office for review.

The investigation is ongoing and anyone with information is asked to contact Detective Chris Dekeyrel, at Victor Valley Sheriff's Station (760) 552-6800. Callers can remain anonymous and contact WeTip at 800-78CRIME or [www.wetip.com](http://www.wetip.com).

<https://www.vvng.com/illegal-marijuana-operation-found-after-massive-fire-in-adelanto-2-arrested/>

## 2 Arrested After Marijuana Grow Operation Sparks Massive Fire

Staff Writer, CBSLA

Posted: January 13, 2022 at 4:57 pm



Adelanto, San Bernardino City Fire Department

ADELANTO (CBSLA) – **San Bernardino County Fire** crews were able to knock down a major two-alarm commercial fire in Adelanto Wednesday evening.

Authorities said the fire crews responded to the large commercial blaze in the 18000 block of Baldwin Street at around 4:35 p.m. Wednesday and went into defensive mode to protect other nearby homes and a strip mall center.

Officials said they think the fire started at a nursery on Baldwin Street. There were reportedly several explosions, possibly from propane tanks used at the business where the fire raged.

About 50 firefighters were called out to manage the blaze. No injuries were reported, and fire damage did not extend to any homes or the neighboring strip mall.

Two people were arrested and accused of sparking the fire. According to the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department, Peng Wei and Jing Wei Ping are accused of running an illegal cannabis grow operation which sparked the massive fire. After the fire was knocked down, investigators found evidence of a butane extraction lab, a marijuana extraction system, cash, two unserialized firearms and a large quantity of processed and concentrated marijuana.

<https://losangeles.cbslocal.com/2022/01/13/arrest-men-marijuana-operation-sparks-fire/>

## Adelanto fire uncovers illegal cannabis manufacturing operation, authorities say

Cameron Kiszla, KTLA 5

Posted: January 13, 2022 at 4:19 pm



A fire on Jan. 12, 2022, claimed two buildings in Adelanto. (San Bernardino County Fire)

After firefighters were able to extinguish a large blaze at a commercial site in Adelanto on Wednesday, investigators discovered a marijuana processing center, and two people were arrested for the illegal operation, authorities said.

The two-alarm Baldwin Fire, which was reported at about 4:35 p.m., destroyed two buildings in the 18100 block of Baldwin Street, including the old Fire Station 321, according to the **San Bernardino County Fire** Protection District.

While firefighters were able to protect many other nearby structures, the blaze still “caused disruption to utility services for surrounding residences and businesses,” the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department said in a release.

“Once the fire was contained, investigators located evidence of a butane extraction lab and a large quantity of processed marijuana at the scene,” the release said.

Authorities did not say if they believe the fire began as a result of the extraction lab, and calls to the Sheriff’s Department were not immediately returned.

Authorities said they found “large amounts of processed and concentrated cannabis, a marijuana extraction system, cash and two unserialized firearms,” and 41-year-old Peng Wei of Adelanto and 39-year-old Jing Wei Ping of Daly City were arrested.

While they were arrested on suspicion of possession of cannabis for sale and manufacturing a controlled substance, their case will be forwarded to the District Attorney’s office for review, authorities said.

Anyone with information is asked to contact Detective Chris Dekeyrel by calling 760-552-6800.

To report information anonymously, contact WeTip at 800-78-CRIME or [www.wetip.com](http://www.wetip.com).

<https://ktla.com/news/local-news/adelanto-fire-uncovers-illegal-cannabis-manufacturing-operation-authorities-say/>

## Three FDs Battle Fire in CA Commercial Yard

Staff Writer, FIREHOUSE.COM NEWS

Posted: January 13, 2022



Firefighters use multiple aerial devices to control a massive fire in Adelanto.

Fire crews from **San Bernardino County Fire** Department and surrounding agencies battled a two-alarm fire on the in Adelanto Wednesday evening.

The massive fire 18100 block of Baldwin Street knocked out power in the area and threatened numerous nearby structures.

According to ABC7, crews attacked the fire using a defensive posture bringing in resources from Apple Valley Fire Protection District and the Victorville Fire Department to assist with the massive blaze.

<https://www.firehouse.com/operations-training/news/21252973/three-fds-battle-fire-in-ca-commercial-yard>

## Sheriff's investigators find marijuana, butane lab at site of massive fire in Adelanto

Martin Estacio, VICTORVILLE DAILY PRESS

Posted: January 13, 2022 at 5:53 pm



A massive commercial fire burns in Adelanto north of Bartlett Avenue on Wednesday, Jan. 12, 2022.

A massive commercial fire in Adelanto led to the arrests of two people after sheriff's investigators found marijuana, firearms and "evidence of a butane extraction lab" at the scene of the blaze, authorities said.

Adelanto resident Peng Wei, 41, and Jing Wei Ping, 39, of Daly City, were arrested on suspicion of possession of cannabis for sale and manufacturing a controlled substance.

San Bernardino County Sheriff's officials said the case will be sent to the county District Attorney's Office for review.

The fire broke out at about 4:30 p.m. Wednesday in a commercial building and yard in the 11700 block of Hardy Avenue, north of Bartlett Avenue and east of Highway 395.

When firefighters arrived, they found the "well involved" fire burning in the large yard threatening several homes, a strip mall and former county fire Station 321, **San Bernardino County Fire** Battalion Chief Mike McClintock said.

Power lines were downed and firefighters had to deal with a limited water supply.

A second alarm was requested while crews worked to keep the fire from spreading to the nearby buildings.

Firefighters were able to protect the strip mall and homes but two buildings were destroyed, including the old fire station "which served the area for many years," McClintock said.

The fire also heavily damaged an agricultural supply company before emergency crews gained control of the blaze after nearly three hours. A review of county records shows that eight connected parcels in the block where the fire started are owned by a person named Wei Ping Jing.

Members of the sheriff's Bomb/Arson Team responded and "located evidence of a butane extraction lab and a large quantity of processed marijuana at the scene," officials said.

Investigators also found processed and concentrated cannabis, a marijuana extraction system, cash and two firearms without serial numbers.

Officials did not give a cause for the fire and said the investigation was ongoing.

Butane — a highly flammable gas and liquid — can be used as a solvent to make a concentrated form of cannabis known as hash or honey oil. The process can be dangerous, however, and has been linked to several fires.

A May 2020 explosion at a downtown Los Angeles warehouse — which housed a smoke and vape shop — injured twelve firefighters.

A report later determined that an "excessive quantity" of nitrous oxide and butane containers inside the shop "fueled the fire," the Los Angeles Time reported.



<https://sports.yahoo.com/sheriffs-investigators-marijuana-butane-lab-003323000.html>

## Structure fire contained to chimney

Carl Baker, REDLANDS COMMUNITY NEWS

Posted: January 13, 2022 at 9:59 am



Photo courtesy of the Redlands Fire Department

The Redlands Fire Department responded to a report of a residential structure fire in the 1700 block of Stratford Circle Tuesday, Jan. 11. No injuries were reported.

Units arrived shortly before 9 p.m. to find a two-story residential structure with a chimney fire. Firefighters quickly made access to the roof and contained the fire to the chimney. The fire was extinguished in about 15 minutes, and crews remained on scene for approximately one hour for overhaul. Damage was estimated at about \$5,000.

Loma Linda and **San Bernardino County** fire departments responded.

[https://www.redlandscommunitynews.com/news/public\\_safety/structure-fire-contained-to-chimney/article\\_6d3fc2aa-7492-11ec-aed7-eba211610f45.html](https://www.redlandscommunitynews.com/news/public_safety/structure-fire-contained-to-chimney/article_6d3fc2aa-7492-11ec-aed7-eba211610f45.html)

## Major fire in Adelanto keeps community on edge of their seat; fire station destroyed

Andrew Caravella, HD DAILY NEWS

Posted: January 13, 2022 at 3:09 pm



Adelanto building fire, January 2022

Late Wednesday afternoon on January 12 was a spectacle that could be seen all over the Victor Valley.

Adelanto had a two-alarm fire that tore through the yard of a hydroponics business. Witnesses report that a transformer started to spark and it wasn't long after when sparks turned into smoke and fire. A powerline also caught on fire as the fire grew and started to slowly spread.

When firefighters from **San Bernardino County Fire** made it to the scene they noticed the large commercial yard well involved with fire and with plenty of materials to burn burn for fuel.

The giant, black plume of smoke filled the desert sky as sunset started to approach. HD Daily news arrived about an hour after the initial burn and crews still continued to fight the blaze.

Multiple exposures, including a strip mall, many homes and even an old fire station soon were threatened by the large fire. County fire jumped into action and mounted what they call a "defensive fire attack." Officials were careful to work away from downed power lines and keep the flames from spreading to surrounding buildings.

It wasn't too long when county fire declared the fire a two-alarm due to the large fire and threats it potentially posed. Limited water supply and downed power lines hampered firefighting efforts. Soon additional fire crews arrived to provide assistance including Victorville Fire and Apple Valley Fire.

In the fight to prevent more damage, two buildings were destroyed in the fire, including old fire station 321 which served the area for many years. It was burnt to the ground. An agricultural supply company that specializes in hydroponics named Johnson Solar suffered heavy losses to its products and yard.

Despite heavy fire conditions, power lines down and a limited water supply, firefighters pushed through to put down the flames. Eventually those efforts were successful in keeping the fire from spreading to a nearby strip mall and homes. Neighbors outside their homes watched in deep concern and intensity in the 45 degree nippy weather. The heat from the giant flames just across the street kept them warm as the fire raged on. Southern California Edison responded to mitigate the downed power lines. Fire officials reported that no firefighters or people were hurt by the fire. It took nearly three hours to gain the upper hand on the fire.

[https://www.hddailynews.com/news/local/major-fire-in-adelanto-keeps-community-on-edge-of-their-seat-fire-station-destroyed/article\\_1a57af38-742b-11ec-ab4c-8b81c96512b4.html](https://www.hddailynews.com/news/local/major-fire-in-adelanto-keeps-community-on-edge-of-their-seat-fire-station-destroyed/article_1a57af38-742b-11ec-ab4c-8b81c96512b4.html)