



NEWS



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Man shot and killed on St. Patrick's Day in Adelanto; investigation underway

By Staff Writer, Victor Valley News Group

March 17, 2023



ADELANTO, Calif. (VVNG.com) — A homicide investigation is underway in the City of Adelanto after a man was shot and killed on St. Patrick's Day.

On Friday, March 17, 2023, at about 6:14 p.m., deputies from the Victor Valley Sheriff's Station responded to the 14400 block of Clemson Court for a report of an assault with a weapon call.

Sheriff's spokeswoman Gloria Huerta told VVNG deputies arrived and discovered a male subject had been shot.

San Bernardino County Fire responded to the scene and requested a helicopter to land at the nearby fire station and airlift the gunshot victim to a trauma center.

"The victim was transported to the hospital where he was pronounced deceased. The investigation is ongoing and the scene is still very active," Huerta stated.

Witnesses reported hearing anywhere between 10-12 gunshots before a pause that was followed by even more gunfire.

The crime scene area is blocked off with crime scene tape and detectives have arrived and are conducting the investigation.

This is a developing story and additional information will be updated as it becomes available.

<https://www.vvng.com/man-shot-and-killed-on-st-patricks-day-in-adelanto-investigation-underway/>

23-year-old killed in rollover crash on northbound I-15 freeway in Hesperia

By Staff Writer, Victor Valley News Group

March 17, 2023



HESPERIA, Calif. (VVNG.com) — A 23-year-old from Hesperia was killed in a single-vehicle rollover crash on the I-15 freeway in Hesperia.

It happened on March 17, 2023, at 2:28 am, on the northbound I-15, south of Joshua Street.

For reasons still under investigation, the 2007 Honda Civic traveled off the roadway towards the east asphalt shoulder. The Honda left the roadway and entered the concrete culvert (drainage ditch) on the shoulder of the freeway.

According to the California Highway Patrol, the Honda collided into the concrete support beam for the Joshua Street overcrossing, causing the Honda to overturn a number of times. The Honda came to rest on its roof within the shoulder of the freeway.

CHP and San Bernardino County Fire personnel arrived on scene and located a restrained male (solo occupant) in the driver's seat with visible injuries to his head. Firefighters extricated the male from the vehicle and he was pronounced deceased at 3:05 am.

His identity is being withheld pending next of kin notification by the San Bernardino County Coroner's Office.

The collision prompted a closure of the Rancho Road offramp as well as multiple lanes on the I-15 for a couple of hours.

CHP officials said alcohol does not appear to be a factor in this crash. The investigation is ongoing and anyone with information should contact Officer G. Garcia at 760-241-1186.

<https://www.vvng.com/23-year-old-killed-in-rollover-crash-on-northbound-i-15-freeway-in-hesperia/>

Agencies respond to storm hazards

By Staff Writer, Daily News

March 17, 2023



BULLHEAD CITY — Local agencies responded to hazardous conditions throughout the Tri-state caused by Wednesday's strong storms.

Three swift water rescues — one each in Bullhead City, Laughlin and Needles — kept fire departments busy during the storm.

About 4 p.m., Bullhead City Fire Department crews were dispatched for a swift water rescue of a man stranded in the wash near the 600 block of Highway 95.

The man was uninjured, said Lori Viles, BCFD spokeswoman in a release. After rescue, he was taken to Western Arizona Regional Medical Center for evaluation.

Clark County Fire Department in Laughlin responded to a swift water rescue at 4:05 p.m. Five people were rescued from a Chevrolet Tahoe on Casino Drive in the area between the Bay Shore Inn and Harrah's Laughlin Casino.

The stretch of roadway was "completely washed out," said Assistant Chief Scott Carnahan and closed to traffic in both directions by 6 p.m. Four units responded to the rescue.

San Bernardino County Fire Department Chief Mike McClintock said the only call they received in California was a report of a swift water auto rescue at 6:45 p.m. south of Needles near mile marker 50 on US Highway 95.

"We had a report of people trapped in their vehicles due to storm water," he said. "Crews arrived on scene to find multiple vehicles essentially stuck in the mud due to the fact that water and mud and debris had flooded across the 95."

Multiple parties were pulled out of their vehicles and the roadway was blocked until California Highway Patrol could do a hard closure, he said. No one was injured.

Bullhead Police were stationed to assist with traffic control and diversion where roads were closed due to excessive flooding, said Emily Fromelt, Bullhead City Police Department spokeswoman.

"There was one motor vehicle accident during this time, which also contributed to the traffic congestion," she said.

Roads closed due to flooding included Highway 95 and 7th Street, Highway 95 and Laughlin Ranch Boulevard, McCormick Road and Indian Head, and the area at Laughlin Ranch Boulevard and Bullhead Parkway.

"Once the rain eased, the debris was removed from the storm drains, and the flood waters were cleared off the roads, the police department began reopening the roadways for motorists to travel safely," Fromelt said.

In Laughlin, flood waters spilled debris and mud into many streets along the Colorado River — including Bruce Woodbury Drive and the open portions of Casino Drive — and into parking lots in the casino area.

Some of the worst flooding swept by the Aquarius and Edgewater Casino Resort properties. Fortunately, neither casino suffered any damage said Taylor Goldberg, spokesperson for Golden Entertainment. Goldberg confirmed properties' parking lots clean up would be completed by Thursday afternoon.

The eastbound Interstate 40 J Street off ramp at Needles had flooded temporarily but did not cause any damage, said California Highway Patrol Public Information Officer/Training Officer Clinton Burrows.

"Then I'd heard of another incident at River Road cutoff where it meets Needles Highway, they had some flooding over there," he said. The J Street off ramp and Needles Highway are open, but southbound Highway 95 is closed just south of 5 Mile Road "until further notice until Caltrans can do a proper assessment and then figure out how to fix that roadway so it's safe."

Bullhead City road crews were also out in response to the storm.

Clean up efforts began last night at highway 95 and 7th St where the Bullhead Police Department closed the highway due to flooding reaching 10 inches of depth, said Mackenzie Covert, Bullhead City spokesman. Crews cleaned up the road last night after flood waters subsided and the highway was reopened before 6 p.m.

Public Works crews then moved on to the Punta De Vista Neighborhood in northern Bullhead where rainfall and storm damage were significant.

"We're taking a triage approach to cleaning up the streets," said Public Works Director Angie Johnson. We've started at the northern end of the city generally, and we're proceeding south."

City crews are still engaged in cleanup efforts along McCormick Boulevard as well as Landon Drive and Sun River Road, and the in the Riverbend area at Forest Drive and Forest way and Rio Grande Rd and Whitewater Drive. As they move south, the city will focus on the river district and some of the areas that need attention including Ramar Road, Johnson said. "It'll be a few days before we're done cleaning up."

McCormick Boulevard in the vicinity of Indian Head Drive was briefly closed to through traffic and has since been reopened.

“While the wash ran heavy and undermined the road, it did not cause any failures in the actual roadway,” said Pavement Preservation Manager David Witzel.

Mohave Electric Cooperative reported only two small outages between 10:30 p.m. Wednesday and 7:15 a.m. Thursday — “very fortunate,” considering the severity, Chief Communications Officer Allison Ellingson said.

The storm caused an outage in Fort Mohave that affected 43 people from 10:30 p.m. to 11:04 p.m, Ellingson said. The second storm, at approximately 3:17 a.m. Thursday morning, caused three people in Mohave Valley to be without power for about four hours.

“MEC crews were on high alert all night with the rain, hail and even the tornado warning,” Ellingson said.

The National Weather Service confirmed a funnel cloud was formed in Golden Shores Wednesday evening, which prompted a tornado warning. However, meteorologists could not confirm if the tornado touched ground as of Thursday afternoon.

<https://mohavedailynews.com/news/145746/agencies-respond-to-storm-hazards/>

Communities in Orange, San Bernardino counties brace for further damage as another storm approaches

By Nathaniel Percy, Daily Breeze

March 18, 2023



People walk along S Broadway in downtown Los Angeles, Wednesday, Mar 15, 2023. (Photo by Hans Gutknecht, Los Angeles Daily News/SCNG)

Officials in San Bernardino and Orange counties were bracing for the possibility of more damage and chaos as another storm was set to bring rain and snow to Southern California, possibly as early as Sunday afternoon.

The storm could potentially bring 1 to 3 inches of rain to coastal and valley areas and 2 to 5 inches of rain to the mountain areas this coming week in the areas of western Riverside and southwestern San Bernardino counties as well as Orange and Los Angeles counties, with snow expected at higher elevations, according to the National Weather Service.

The NWS office in San Diego said light rain is expected on Sunday until Monday afternoon. From there, heavier rain will arrive on Tuesday and Wednesday throughout Orange County and the Inland Empire.

In the Los Angeles area, light showers are expected to begin on Sunday with the more intense rain happening on Tuesday and Wednesday, according to Carol Smith, a meteorologist for NWS Oxnard.

According to Brandt Maxwell, a meteorologist for NWS San Diego, a flood advisory may be issued later, depending on rainfall levels.

The storm might not be the last one of the year as another could come around next week, Smith and Maxwell said.

In a Saturday statement, San Bernardino County officials warned residents to be prepared “for a new round of rain and snow expected to arrive as early as Sunday afternoon.”

Officials said the storm was expected to peak Tuesday and Wednesday and could bring as much as three feet of additional snow to communities already hit hard in late February and early March.

Residents in some mountain communities like Crestline and Lake Arrowhead were snowed in under 10 feet of snow during the worst of the storms in late February, leaving many searching for ways to replenish food supply and get essential medicines. They also became frustrated with county officials who struggled to get equipment up the mountain to plow roads.

County officials on Saturday said they were preparing for the storms by having all public works operations employees, seasonal employees and all on-call contractors activated for snow plowing and storm control on split shifts for 24-hour coverage.

In addition, County Flood Control District crews, swift-water rescue teams and extra San Bernardino County sheriff's deputies were being assigned to handle various issues that could arise due to the storms, officials said. The San Bernardino County Fire Department made a request to the State Office of Emergency Services for 10 engine crews from other California agencies to be dispatched as needed.

County officials were also prepared to activate the Telephone Emergency Notification System to warn residents who might be in danger.

Residents were urged to limit travel, maintain at least a two-week supply of food, water, medications, essential equipment, and fuel, stay clear of moving water and keep an eye out for snow and ice sliding down from rooftops, county officials said.

More information and recommendations would be made available through the county's information line at 909-387-3911.

The storm could have impacts on Orange County areas like Newport Beach and San Clemente, which have suffered devastating landslides in recent weeks that led to one home being demolished in the Dover Shores neighborhood and several others close to the edges of cliffsides.

Those slides were bad enough that President Joe Biden declared a federal emergency Thursday.

"(It's) a very serious concern for the city," San Clemente Mayor Chris Duncan said Saturday. "This will be additional moisture on the slope and that consistent rain over several hours, that is what has destabilized the slope.

"We're concerned there's going to be further movement and potentially further damage to the patios and the structures themselves," Duncan added.

Geologists have surveyed the slope behind homes in the 1500 block of Buena Vista, but officials were still waiting for the full briefing because of additional movement since the initial slide Thursday morning, Duncan said.

Residents throughout the city were asked to be observant and to pay attention to cracking and top-level vegetation moving, Duncan said.

"Immediately report that so we can get on the scene as soon as possible because now we know the signs of potential land movement," Duncan said.

In Newport Beach, officials Thursday said city crews installed temporary pumps to divert water away from homes and down to the Back Bay.

City officials were not immediately available Saturday to provide updates or comment on concerns regarding whether the upcoming storm could lead to further damage.

<https://www.dailybreeze.com/2023/03/18/communities-in-orange-san-bernardino-counties-brace-for-further-damage-as-another-storm-is-set-to-roll-in/>

Financial relief for San Bernardino Mountains residents after blizzard may take months

By Beau Yarbrough, The Sun
March 18, 2023



A man walks by Linder Tires, where the roof collapsed due to the weight of the snow in Crestline on Friday, March 3, 2023. (File photo by Watchara Phomicinda, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

State and federal relief may be coming to San Bernardino Mountain communities after weeks of devastating snow and rain, but it won't be immediate and may only partially cover damages caused by the storms.

But property owners who have suffered damage must first seek help elsewhere.

"Homeowners should be contacting their insurance company and working through them," advised Daniel Muñoz, San Bernardino County's emergency operations director.

Government relief, if and when it happens, supplements insurance coverage and doesn't replace it, Muñoz said. That relief may come from the local, state and federal level.

As of Friday afternoon, March 17, the San Bernardino County Fire District has identified more than 626 structures in mountain communities that have been either damaged or destroyed as a result of the storms, including:

Single-family homes: 546 damaged, 41 destroyed

Multi-family homes: 5 damaged, 9 destroyed

Commercial properties: 18 damaged, 7 destroyed

According to fire district spokesperson Eric Sherwin, the department is still weeks away from completing its survey of the mountain communities.

At its meeting Tuesday, March 13, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors voted to waive up to \$5,000 in fees for property owners wanting to repair or rebuild structures damaged or destroyed by the storms.

In the meantime, the county has already started the process of getting state relief, both for its own expenses and for residents, using damage information provided by businesses and residents in the mountain communities.

The county is “aggressively advocating with our state partners for any and all support,” Muñoz said.

The California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) will look at the amounts and types of damage being reported to see if residents qualify for state disaster reimbursements. CalOES, in turn, passes the information along to the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

At that point, mountain residents should expect to see county, state and FEMA officials touring sites hit by the storm, doing preliminary damage assessments.

“We provide a guided tour to our state and federal partners,” Muñoz said. “That’s our opportunity to tell our story to our state and federal partners.”

California has already asked FEMA to participate in a joint assessment, according to FEMA spokesperson Robert Barker, but that will have to wait until the immediate emergency has passed.

When the tours begin, FEMA will visit “every single home, every single state, every single bridge and we look at that damage in person,” Barker said.

Assuming the agencies determine the damage claims are accurate — something state officials famously got wrong with pandemic-era unemployment insurance claims, many of which went to inmates in California state prisons — the state and federal governments will determine what resources they may provide.

The tours should begin “in the next couple of weeks,” according to Muñoz.

Business owners, meanwhile, may also be eligible for grants or loans from the Small Business Administration when the time comes.

San Bernardino County will probably also get its storm-related expenses partially reimbursed, with the federal government likely to pay up to 75% for road repairs and similar expenses, according to Barker. That process takes longer than it does for individuals and business owners.

Muñoz wants those making claims to have realistic expectations.

“There isn’t one state, federal or local program that’s going to make a person whole,” Muñoz said. “There’s no silver bullet.”

Most people who get disaster assistance from one or more government programs aren’t likely to get a complete new house or have 100% of their shop replaced by Uncle Sam.

“Getting them to 100% is the goal, but it may not be a realistic expectation,” Muñoz said.

Mountain residents will have to wait weeks, at least, for this process to play out.

“It’s going to take a minute to work its course,” Muñoz said.

But President Biden declaring an emergency in California on March 10 will almost certainly speed things up.

In the meantime, San Bernardino County will be coming to the mountain communities to make accessing various county programs easier.

“As we work through this process, the county continues to work on around-the-clock basis,” Muñoz said. “We’re not just waiting for additional support to come in.”

Local assistance centers will be set up in the mountain communities in the coming days, letting residents and business owners connect with county Land Use, Public Works, Building and Safety and other departments in a one-stop shop close to home.

For more information on the county’s snow emergency and available resources, visit snowinfo.sbcounty.gov. For more on federal disaster assistance, visit DisasterAssistance.gov.

<https://www.sbsun.com/2023/03/18/financial-relief-for-san-bernardino-mountains-residents-after-blizzard-may-take-months/>

SoCal mountain communities still clearing snow from rare blizzard, others trapped weeks later

By Ashley Soriano, Fox News

March 18, 2023



Residents in the area are used to wildfires, not snowstorms

LAKE ARROWHEAD, Calif. – A winter wonderland just ahead of spring blasted most parts of the United States in the past few weeks, from the Nor'easter in the northeast to a rare blizzard in southern California.

In the San Bernardino Mountains, where residents are used to wildfires, not snow storms, some are still trapped, and others are left without a home three weeks since up to nearly 10 feet of snow pounded homes, businesses and roads. At least 13 people died. And now, a slushy mess and slow melting snow is what's left.

The last time the area received similarly significant snowfall was in 1991 during the "March Miracle," when up to six feet of snow fell.

"We do not get blizzard warnings in this area. I wouldn't even say it happens rarely," said Eric Sherwin, the public information officer with the San Bernardino Fire Department.

San Bernardino County, the largest in the United States, stretching more than 20,000 square miles, hasn't been under a blizzard warning in decades.

"This storm was very different. We're looking at record level snowfalls in many of these communities, such that life pretty much ground to a halt," Sherwin said.

About 15 miles east of the hardest hit communities from this year's storm is Big Bear Valley. Residents were buried under over five feet of snow in late January 2010. From the winter season's first storms in November 2009 to March 2010, that area received nearly nine and a half feet of snow. In comparison, mountain communities in the San Bernardino National Forest were trapped in the same amount of snow in days.

One Crestline, California, woman and her husband woke up to a wall of white surrounding their home.

"We had two gazebos on our decks just smashed to smithereens on top of all of our patio furniture, and a fire ring and all kinds of things just took everything out. That sound really brought us up. I thought, Oh my gosh, what's next? What's going to go next?" Paige Renfro said. "At that time, our roof had at least four feet on it, and this is a big house with a lot of roof space."

She couldn't even see the house across from hers a week ago.

She and her husband have lived in Crestline, California, for 38 years in the San Bernardino Mountains, living in their "treetops." Their home, which rests on a steep slope, wasn't damaged, but not everyone was so lucky.

Paige said that with a generator, food and even their snowplow, the Renfro residents became a "command post."

"We have a couple of girls that live two doors down, and they and their cats could not get out to get help... They put a little sign in their window that said 'help us trapped,'" Renfro said. "And the problem was, we couldn't see the sign because the drifts were higher. So finally, we were digging, and my husband looked in and saw that sign and they dug them out."

The storm impacted a 52-mile area from end to end, and the San Bernardino County Fire Department received well over 1,800 calls.

They maintain a fleet of eight snow cats equipped with fire gear, the largest fleet in the region. With a "complete loss of road structures," the snow cats were the only vehicles used during the worst of the icy roads.

"Because of these, we did not have a single person call 911 who we could not access. And it's thanks in no small part to the snow cats," Sherwin said.

They returned to the traditional fire engines and ambulances in the past few days as the snow melted. In the days following the storm, they used ATVs on the ground and fire boats on the lakes.

Officials are still assessing the damage, but residents are faced with rebuilding destroyed homes, digging their submerged cars out, and ensuring all people have successfully gotten out. Most of the damage was to carports, sheds, garages and other structures not built to withstand the weight of multiple feet of snow.

Michael Rachau is originally from Crestline but currently lives in Topanga Beach, California. He broke his ribs while visiting, and now he's riding out the aftermath at a friend's house.

"You know, weeks later, we're snowed in. I haven't seen this much snow since I lived here," Rachau said.

Goodwin's, one of the only grocery stores serving the Lake Arrowhead and Crestline communities, is still closed after the snow damaged the property. It's been open since 1946.

"It's about five minutes down to go and get bread or go and get milk, and that we're going to miss that for a while," Renfro said. "They (the owners) have a really positive attitude toward it, so it made me feel better to hear them being so positive. They're not giving up. They're going to rebuild. And we need a grocery store up here."

The closest Walmart is about 17 miles away -- and inaccessible during the storm.

With help from multiple agencies, as far south as San Diego and as far north as Santa Barbara, the county has cleared most of its county and state roads.

But some in more remote parts of the mountains, like the Renfros, live on private roads that the county is not responsible for plowing. If they're not plowed, power companies can't get to them. Their neighbors were out of power for nine days.

"The roads down below us were a network of darkness," she said. "There was no way they were getting out, and they had no power, so it was cold, dark and no communication."

She compares it to the Titanic.

"After the rowboats rode out, (they) waited for the ship to sink, and then they came in to try to rescue people. They looked around and they said, 'We waited too long,'" Renfro said. "And I believe that because 13 people passed away up here."

She says officials should step in regardless because their roads are private, though paved, which she and her husband paid for out of pocket for the neighborhood.

"I'm not down on the county by any means. I think that they followed their protocol," Renfro said. "Clearing a path to safety is paramount. That should actually trump the protocols that the county or anybody else has in place during a disaster. That should actually be the primary thing. And I'm sure it was, but I think that the forgotten few of us didn't feel that way."

She says she would like to see an amendment to change the approach to who's responsible for plowing private roads during a natural disaster.

"They have to generate people to come and get access to all roads, private, state, county roads," Renfro said. "If another disaster comes, I don't want 13 people to die because of it."

The fire department says it approached the snowstorm similarly to its approach to wildfires exhausting all resources available.

They created a prescription delivery program in response to this year's snowfall. All local pharmacies participated, and the fire department helped facilitate delivery to those trapped. And food and firewood distribution were organized as well.

"The county had every apparatus and personnel at its disposal assigned and committed to this incident," Sherwin with the fire department said.

Schools reopened, and life was almost normal in Lake Arrowhead Village, the main shopping and dining center, Thursday -- 20 days after the Feb. 24 blizzard.

But the snowplowing carries on for the Renfro's, who are still clearing their private roads with a snowcat they've had to repair multiple times.

"Everybody is equal on this mountain. There are lives on every road, whether they're deemed county or not," Renfro said. "

The next steps are insurance claims and damage assessment.

"We look at these communities that live under the constant threat of wildfire and pay significant premiums for fire insurance," Sherwin with the fire department said. "And then it's a winter storm that comes and takes people's homes. And that's been a hard, hard pill for me to swallow."

<https://www.foxnews.com/us/social-mountain-communities-still-clearing-snow-rare-blizzard>