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Fires Cause Problems for Metro Employees and Loved Ones

- Some miss work to evacuate homes, but no one injured

By JIMMY STROUP

(Oct. 23, 2007) Like so many in Southern California in the last week, Metro employees were not immune to the fires that have raged through Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego counties.

On Monday, Sun Valley Division 15 employees seemed to have gotten the worst of it – the division lies only 20 miles south of the Buckweed Fire in Agua Dulce near Santa Clarita. According to news reports, 25 structures had been destroyed in the 25,000-acre blaze that doubled in size since Sunday.

“We have a large number of people who have been affected by the fires that are happening all over,” Sun Valley Transportation Manager Gary Spivack said Monday. “Eight people missed out because of the fires today.”

Spivack’s daughter, who attends college in San Diego, was forced to leave school because of fires in the area.

Division 15 Assistant Transportation Manager Barbara Maycott said fierce, 75-mph winds tore about half the shingle roof off her Canyon Country home and broke limbs on a 500-year-old oak tree in her yard. Nighttime skies were bright with flames from fires around her neighborhood.

Evacuations on Monday

Division 15 Maintenance Manager Jim Pachan’s family was evacuated from their home for a time on Monday, but was allowed to return home that evening.

Division Stenographer Darlene Blake owns vacation property that may have been destroyed in the Running Springs fire, where more than 200 houses were lost to flames. Her daughter’s family was evacuated from the area.

Other Metro employees affected by the fires included Wendy Gerhardt and Scott Lloyd of Human Resources, and Robert New of Purchasing. Communication Manager Bill Heard’s daughter and granddaughter complied with a voluntary evacuation order when heavy smoke from fires east of the city made it difficult to breathe at their Carlsbad home.

Meanwhile, service on Metro Line 534 – which normally serves stops along Pacific Coast Highway through Malibu, past Pepperdine University and as far as Trancas Canyon Road – has been curtailed at Sunset Boulevard.

"We did have to cut down on the number of buses going out there because there's hardly anybody riding them at the moment," Division 6 Transportation Manager Alva Carrasco said Monday. "We're basically running a shuttle service, it's such a shortened line because of the fire."

Metro also volunteered the use of its buses to aid fire officials in getting personnel and equipment to fire-affected areas, but has not yet been requested to provide emergency service. The agency helped fire efforts in 2003 by assisting with transportation of firefighters to blazes in Hesperia and San Diego.

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