

National

Burning oil destroys 9 homes Containment of brush fires near

LONG BEACH, Calif. — Petroleum spewing from a ruptured pipeline exploded Monday night, demolishing nine homes and forcing residents to flee a river of flame gushing through their neighborhood.

"We've counted nine totally destroyed homes with a few others, three or four, damaged to some extent," said Robert Leslie, city fire captain.

The burned shells of a dozen automobiles smoldered in the street beneath 70-foot palm trees burning like giant torches.

"We know of only three or four injuries, and that seems kind of miraculous given the extent of the fire," Leslie said. "It happened at a good time. People were awake and aware and had the presence of mind to get out."

Long Beach Memorial Hospital and Pacific Hospital were placed on alert and four people reportedly were being treated. One unidentified man was burned critically.

It took two hours for 90 city and Los Angeles County firefighters to smother flames with a blanket of foam spread 3 feet deep over the block, where homes are valued at about \$70,000.

A helicopter dropped water on flames shooting 30 feet into the sky near the Long Beach Freeway.

Leslie said flaming fuel pouring from the 10-inch pipeline flowed "like a river of fire down the gutters of the street." He described the line as "an old pipe under pressure that probably just gave way."

Girl slain awaiting police aid

MIAMI—Rena Pollard, 13, dialed 911 and told the emergency dispatcher in a calm voice, "There's someone trying to break into my house right now."

Dispatcher Glenn Metzler asked her address and how to spell her name. Calmly, she answered. He classified her call as routine.

When a patrol car finally arrived 40 minutes later, Rena Pollard was dead — raped and stabbed.

Police weren't dispatched on an emergency basis until Rena's mother called to say her daughter had been killed.

Officials said Monday they are investigating the handling of the girl's emergency call last Friday afternoon.

Metzler, an 18-year Public Safety Department veteran with a good work record, may lose his job, Clyde Burdick, supervisor at the Dade Emergency Communications Center, said.

The girl was raped and stabbed as she babysat for her infant brother and sister, police said. Authorities are searching for a teen-age boy who lived nearby.

Metzler classified the girl's call as a "34," a routine disturbance in which no one's life is in imminent danger. For such calls, a police dispatcher may send "the first available unit" to respond. No cars were available at the time of Rena's call, Burdick said.

Either before or after calling 911, Rena called her mother at work. Mrs. Pollard rushed home to find her daughter's body. Only then were police dispatched, Burdick said.

The transcript of her call shows that among several questions Metzler asked the girl, including her address, how to spell her name and whether her home was a house or apartment, was this exchange: "Who's out there?" Metzler asked.

"Some kid. He's trying to get in," she said.

"She was extremely calm," Burdick said. "I'm not trying to make excuses or anything, but she was exceptionally calm. There did not appear to be any fear on her part."

Thieves take million dollar Easter eggs

OSHKOSH, Wis. — The famed Faberge Imperial Easter Eggs may be too famous for the thieves who stole them, says the director of the museum from which they disappeared.

Because the eggs are so well known, they may be very difficult to fence. The thieves may be forced to ransom them instead, Ralph Bufano, head of the Paine Art Center, said Monday.

The Eggs, laced with gems and gold, were created by Peter Carl Faberge for Russian nobility at the turn of the century.

The five eggs and some assorted jewels, valued at more than \$1 million, were stolen from the art center Oct. 22.

Shortly after the explosion, looters struck the area and police increased patrols.

Kem Loui, 34, a resident who lives 50 feet from the ruptured pipeline, was watching television when he heard the explosion.

"I was watching Monday night football on TV and I heard a real loud boom," Loui said. "When I went outside, there was fire everywhere and all I could do was watch it burn all those houses."

"Five or six months ago, men were working on oil pipes in that same spot. I don't know what they did or what they repaired, but it was definitely the same spot."

United Press International
SAN BERNARDINO, Calif.— Firefighters today neared full containment of the last of seven brush fires that burned for a week, killing five people and causing \$72 million worth of destruction.

Mike Mortenson, U.S. Forest Service spokesman, said a 28,200-acre fire, which has burned for a week in the Cleveland National Forest about 15 miles southeast of Orange, Calif., was 95 percent contained Monday night.

Firefighters had managed to save a 1,200-acre "island" in the massive blaze, he said.

Oregon fireman Steve Johnson, 33, died Monday at San Antonio Community Hospital of an apparent heart attack suffered while fighting a 6,000-acre brush fire in the Cleveland National Forest, 8 miles east of Camp Pendleton.

He was a member of a 20-man crew sent Nov. 26 from the Mapleton Ranger District of the Siuslaw National Forest.

The week-long series of fires killed four other people, destroyed 383 homes and blackened about 80,000 acres. Authorities reported the 4,000 firefighters from around the nation who battled the blazes suffered more than 26,000 minor injuries, such as cuts and bee stings, and 39 major injuries, including burns.

Two brush fires that burned of 5,655 acres in suburban Bernardino were fully contained Monday.

Rats, snakes and other wildlife, which had been searching for food, and Siuslaw police said they had found a dozen 10-inch-long rats in the rubble of burned out-

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