

Rushing Around Town...

Is There Accountability and Transparency in Butte County Law Enforcement?

Why did local Law enforcement officials withhold crucial evidence from the legal team representing the family of Tyler Rushing?

Fellow investigating officers interviewed the guards and officers involved in the killing of Tyler Rushing on July 24th, 2017, just hours after Tyler was killed at Mid Valley Title. Investigators recorded the interviews. The Rushing legal team requested from the defendants, Chico and Butte County, all the evidence in their possession, whatsoever, in 2018. In June 2021, these recordings, and a few related documents, were released to ChicoSol journalist Dave Waddell ...under the threat of a lawsuit from Mr. Waddell's attorney. It appears that without the threat of a lawsuit, the city and county would not have released the evidence. Concealing evidence is arguably a violation of SB1421. The Rushing family and legal team are shocked and believe the concealment of crucial evidence has compromised the Rushing family's legal filings.

I argue that the police should not investigate themselves when officers kill a civilian. Doing so is a conflict of interest in my point of view. The good people of Butte

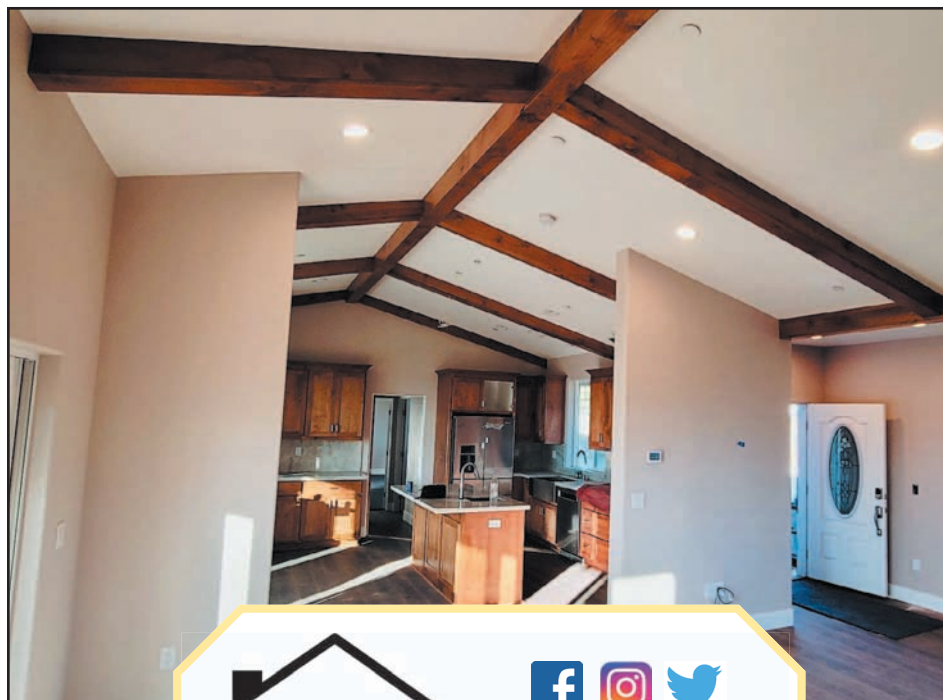
County, and the Rushing family, deserve law enforcement officials to be transparent, compliant with state laws, and to be ethical.

Any thoughts Chicoans?
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had been burning for weeks, the blaze became incredibly fast moving the day it made its run toward Berry Creek. The high winds that pushed it toward Berry Creek also grounded U.S. Forest Service planes, according to a video update shared on social media that day by the Plumas National Forest. In fact, Sjolund said that Cal Fire had to send out battalion chiefs to identify where the fire was in relation to Butte County, because it was progressing through areas outside their jurisdiction that were unstaffed.

That morning, Sjolund was the incident commander of a contingency team tasked with preparing a response plan if the fire entered Butte County. His team received a notification from Plumas National Forest representatives at 9:30 a.m. that the fire had escaped its containment line. At that point, however, it was still way outside of Butte County. For most of the day, predictions indicated the fire was headed toward La Porte, in Plumas County.

"This fire was in Quincy, 23 air miles away. It wasn't anywhere near Butte County. There was no immediate threat up until the point we started receiving calls that we needed to pay attention [from Plumas National Forest]," Sjolund said.

At noon, Cal Fire's Butte unit posted on social media that fire was not burning in Butte County, and the sheriff's office shared the post on its platform. While that info technically was true, just a few hours later the sheriff's office sent out an evacuation order, having issued no warning ahead of time to the foothill communities of Berry Creek, Brush Creek and Forbestown (only Clipper Mills and Feather Falls received a warning prior to an evacuation order).

Sjolund said his team did not receive notification from the Plumas National Forest, the lead agency on the North Complex Fire, that the fire was coming toward Butte County until 2:30 p.m. The official evacuation order from the sheriff's office went out about an hour later.

Dazed and confused

Kyle Bisping, a fire survivor who now lives in Magalia, said the series of communications was confusing. For those who didn't continually check for updates, the message that the fire was not in Butte County may have given a false impression

that the region was safe.

The fire didn't arrive in Butte County until around 8:30 p.m., but many were still caught unawares.

Berry Creek resident Ray Bartley and his wife, Teanea, were woken up at 11 p.m. by a firefighter friend banging on their door. Their power had been out due to PG&E's public safety power shutoff, so they had no television or internet.

Bartley said his wife charged her phone with their generator, but they received no notice of the evacuation order earlier that day. They turned to social media to try to figure out what was going on "because we didn't know," Bartley said. That's where they read in a foothills-area Facebook group that there was no fire in Butte County.

That night, they had just enough time to grab some of their animals and flee. Like all of the residents the CN&R spoke with, the Bartleys lost their home.

"If he wouldn't have come to our house, we probably would have been running out of the house with the back of it on fire ... with just the shirts on our backs," he said.

Erik House experienced a similar abrupt awakening—a sheriff's deputy pounding on the door and telling his family to get out. Like the Bartleys, his power had been shut off. His phone was barely charged, but he never got an emergency notification, he said. He'd

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The afternoon of Sept. 9, a PG&E wildfire camera captured the full scope of the wind-driven North Complex Fire as it established a foothold in Butte County
SCREEN CAPTURE VIA ALERTWILDFIRE.ORG