

# State / National

Rare form of lightning is powerful

## 'Superbolts' studied on prairies

**United Press International**  
**NORMAN, Okla.** — Researchers are concentrating in Oklahoma and surrounding states in their efforts to locate and study a rare form of "super" lightning bolts, scientists at the National Severe Storms Laboratory said.

The "superbolts," previously thought only to strike tall towers or in mountainous areas, have been recorded striking the prairie lands, researchers said.

David Rust is a member of the Storm Electricity Group, headed by three storm experts at the NSSL, that is conducting pioneer research on the bolts.

Rust, a physicist, said 31 of the bolts have been documented in severe Oklahoma storms in the last two years.

He said the lightning team once documented six positive bolts within eight mi-

minutes in a storm near Norman and 18 others in 50 minutes in a severe thunderstorm in the Texas Panhandle.

The superbolt research is centered in Oklahoma, the Texas Panhandle, and parts of Arkansas and Kansas, he said.

The bolts have been linked to aviation accidents during winter storms near Japan, he said.

The power-packed bolts now found in severe storms can cause explosions or can melt objects, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration scientists believe.

Rust said the superbolts can carry 10 times the 20,000 to 50,000 amperes found in normal lightning and can cause rapid heating that could trigger an explosion or melt an object.

Common lightning is a discharge from a negatively charged cloud base to the positively

charged ground or from cloud to cloud, he said. But the superbolts are a strike from a positively charged cloud to the positively charged earth.

He said it has not been determined why the charge jumps from the positive cloud to the positive earth, but he suspects it's because the ground charge is much less than that of the cloud.

Rust said the superbolts look like any other lightning to the naked eye and the team has been unable to determine where the bolts have struck to investigate the damage caused.

The study group uses measurements of the electrical fields around the storms and optical and video recordings of the lightning to document the positive bolts, he explained.

He said the bolts aren't something new, but the research on them is.

## A study W.C. Fields would appreciate

**United Press International**  
**SOUTH KINGSTOWN, R.I.** — Drinking for "medicinal purposes" — the excuse comic W.C. Fields used on more than one occasion — has some basis in fact for middle-aged men.

A University of Rhode Island study, released Wednesday, found middle-aged men who down the equivalent of up to five beers a day have fewer nutritional inadequacies than their teetotaling counterparts.

"We expected just the opposite," admitted Susan S. Percival, instructor of Food Science and Technology, Nutrition and Dietetics at URI. "We expected alcoholic beverages might replace some foods in the diets,

thereby causing a greater number of nutritional deficiencies."

The study suggests the consumption of alcoholic beverages may supply some necessary nutrients — niacin, riboflavin and phosphorus — that are missing in nondrinkers' diets, Percival said.

Percival stressed URI researchers don't recommend people improve their diets by drinking alcohol. Rather, they suggested people eat the right kinds and proper amounts of food and drink alcohol in moderation.

The Percival study started out as research into the caloric and nutrient composition of the diets of 61 Rhode Island men, with an average age of 48.

Researchers wanted to learn more about the eating and drinking habits of middle-aged men and the causes contributing to overweight. Eight of 10 men, 40 to 65, are 10 to 20 percent overweight.

The reasons for midriff bulge weren't that mysterious: A less active pace during middle age rather than more eating added pounds to the men's waistlines, Percival found.

While the drinkers were just as prone to a thick middle as the non-drinkers, she found they were getting a larger share of their recommended dietary intake of nutrients established as adequate for healthy people.

## Bald eagle stolen from Uncle Sam

**United Press International**  
**BROWNSVILLE** — Whoever snatched an American bald eagle from the Gladys Porter Zoo was literally stealing from the government.

"Whoever did this is in trouble," zoo deputy director David Thompson said Tuesday. "That bird belonged to the U.S. govern-

ment and they (the thieves) are in possession of stolen property."

Thompson said the 10-year-old male northern eagle, considered one of an endangered species, was taken from a pen in which zookeepers had placed the bird for shipment to Florida.

Thompson said the bird, which had not been on display at the zoo

for a year, was to be shipped to Florida, for display in a "living museum" when it was taken Monday. He said the bird had required surgery on its wing several years ago and was unable to fly.

"It's either the first thing they (the thieves) saw or they were only interested in the bird," Thompson said.

Although it is illegal to sell American eagle feathers, Thompson said the bird's plumage can bring at least \$25 per feather on the black market.

He said when the bird sheds its feathers each year, the zoo was required to turn the plumage over to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

## Pusser wanted his own funeral home, mom says

**United Press International**  
**ADAMSVILLE, Tenn.** — Buford Pusser, the clubswinging sheriff of "Walking Tall," actually wanted to be a mortician and "could have gone right to the top" in the box business, his mother says.

Helen Pusser, 72, said in a copyright interview Wednesday in The Memphis Commercial Appeal her son was the opposite of the volatile Buford Pusser portrayed in the movies.

"The movies are just bug dust," she said. "Buford wasn't anything like the pictures. He never treated people like that. He wouldn't hit you unless you hit him first three times. But if you hit him that third time, you better look out because you'd be on the floor."

"It's like that car of his that they've got in a museum with a bullet hole in it. People think somebody was shooting at Buford.

Well, he came home one night and told me what really happened: "He said he was chasing another car and he was going to shoot the tires out with his pistol. He was driving with his right hand and trying to shoot with his left hand. But he missed."

"Mom," he said, "you know what I did last night? I shot a hole in my own car."

Mrs. Pusser spends most of her time telling a mother's version of the sheriff, who died in a car wreck.

"Buford's whole heart's desire was to be a mortician," she said. "He'd come home from the Marines with asthma, then had been in a wreck. I got him a job at the funeral home. The man in charge said he was the best hand he ever saw."

"Buford embalmed a man all by himself three months after he went to work," she said. "I believe

if Buford had lived long enough he'd have got himself a funeral home."

Instead, her son left the funeral home bound for Chicago, where he worked in a bag factory and took wrestling lessons.

"Buford needed a good thing for ever quitting his job with the bag company. He could have gone right to the top making boxes. But he wanted to be a home. He never wanted to be from here."

"I wish I'd never heard of the movies — they got things wrong," she said. "In 'Final Chapter,' they show Buford out of work, boys beating him up with sticks, him having to work on old cars."

"Shoo, Buford never fixed up an old car in his life. He drove a new one every year. He wanted the newest cars and the best clothes — and he had them."

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## Tarleton student's death follows 'near drowning'

**United Press International**  
**STEPHENVILLE** — An autopsy report indicates a Tarleton State University football player died from complications of near drowning, police said Wednesday.

Garry Dean Wright, 24, a senior from Mart, Texas, died early Tuesday, six hours after he was pulled from the swimming pool at the off-campus apartment complex late Monday.

About 20 Tarleton students were "horsing around" and throwing each other into the pool at the Royal Manor Apartments after the apartment's private club closed, police said.

When it was noticed that Wright was in trouble in the water, he was taken from the pool, and two other students tried to revive him.

Wright, who was scheduled to graduate in May, was a Texas Intercollegiate Athletic Association all-conference defensive end last year.

Sgt. Pat Davis of the Stephenville Police Department said a final ruling in the death would be made later by Justice of the Peace Sarah Miller.



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**Rep. Delco receives recognition for Texas public school ed bill**

**United Press International**  
**AUSTIN** — Rep. Bill Haley, D-Center, paid tribute Wednesday to Rep. Wilhelmina Delco, D-Austin, for her efforts to change the curriculum in Texas public schools, although Haley said he was the one receiving the credit for the effort.

"My name and picture are in the papers, but it should be Rep. Delco," Haley said during a rare personal speech on the House floor. Haley said Delco had been responsible for the bill because she had sought to get similar legislation done during the last session. He said he and Delco had "almost identical bills" this session, but the House Public Education Committee had decided to report his bill out.


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