

Local



Photo by Janet Joyce

Participants in the 52nd annual Texas Firemen's Training School, which starts next week, will be taught the latest in firefighting techniques in the three-week program sponsored by the Texas Engineering Extension Service.

School to begin 52nd year

4,100 firemen expected

Some people think Texas summers are just plain hot. But none will believe it more than the 4,100 firefighters about to don heavy protective coats in July and sidle up to flames that raise the temperature of everything for a hundred yards around.

The firefighters begin gathering next week to learn the latest in battling blazes at the 52nd annual Texas Fireman's Training School, the largest and best-known program of its kind in the world.

The number of volunteer instructors who pay their own way to the school plus the instructional staff of the Texas Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) which conducts the program and the expected influx of visiting mayors, city council members and other officials should boost the three-week training school enrollment to over 5,500 this year.

Chief Henry Smith, director of the TEEX Fire Protection Training Division, said about 2,900 students and instructors will attend the week-long municipal firefighters' course, always the largest, which starts Monday.

Classes for special industrial fire teams — those that battle flames in petrochemical plants, for example — should attract another 2,100 people while about 600 will show up for the international Spanish-speaking school which last year attracted firemen from 11 foreign countries, Smith said. Both courses are also a week long.

Morning classroom instruction is followed by fighting controlled fires set at Brayton Field — 60 acres of facilities valued at more than \$7 million which include mock-ups of a ship deck, a tank truck, crashed jet fighters, apartments and chemical storage equipment — adjacent to the Texas A&M campus.

Lectures are held on campus. Smith noted that since the firemen's school is the largest annual conference scheduled each year at Texas A&M, most of the university's conference facilities are reserved for the training.

Smith said three new training areas will be discussed during the upcoming municipal school — arson recognition and detection, techniques for battling grass and forest fires, and instruction in the use of the Texas Fire Incident Reporting System.

The reporting system uses computers to file information on fires. From the data banks, patterns may emerge regarding "hot spots," when and where flames are likely to break out and how personnel can best be used to prevent or battle the blazes.

TEEX is a state agency headquartered at Texas A&M with regional centers and classes statewide. In addition to the large annual firemen's school, the TEEX fire protection arm also conducts 24 regional fire schools annually and holds both industrial and volunteer training sessions year-round at Brayton Field.

The industrial and Spanish-speaking schools, beginning July 27 and Aug. 2 respectively, have expanded including equipment maintenance, he said.

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Police investigate attack in Briggs

By DENISE RICHTER

An assault and a burglary occurred over the weekend in Briggs Hall, University Police Chief Russ McDonald reported Tuesday. Police have not determined whether the incidents are related, he said.

According to the University Police report, a female student was sitting on her bed reading a book when two black men, one older than the average college age and one juvenile, entered her room.

According to the report, the older man sat down on her bed and pushed her down and held her. The report said she screamed and the subject placed his hand over her mouth. A person walking in the hall heard the scream and entered the room. The two men then fled from the dormitory, the report said.

The investigating officers checked the area but were unable to locate anyone matching the descriptions furnished by the witnesses, the report said.

Briggs Head Resident Patty Johnson said that after the men left the room, the two women chased them down the stairs. The victim fell on the last flight of stairs and was taken to the A.P. Beutel Health Center where she was treated for a sprained ankle and released. The incident took place at 11:05 p.m. Friday.

McDonald said he heard of another incident that occurred in the same area earlier that evening. He said a woman who was walking out of Briggs was confronted by two black men standing in the hallway. It was reported that one man grabbed her arm and she pulled away and ran into Aston Hall. McDonald said the woman then told her friends in Aston what had happened and several of them went back to

Briggs. When they arrived, they heard screams and were informed of the assault by other Briggs residents, McDonald said.

A burglary also occurred over the weekend. McDonald said sometime between 5 p.m. Saturday and 5 p.m. Sunday, someone entered a first-floor room in Briggs and stole over \$3,000 worth of jewelry and cash. The women who live in the room were gone for the weekend but said the window was locked when they left.

There was no sign of forced entry and there were no witnesses, McDonald said.

Johnson said a dorm security meeting will be held in Briggs Thursday at 6:30 p.m. She said she will conduct the meeting and will stress the importance of keeping doors and windows locked and being aware of strangers, particularly males, in the hall.

Research team makes fuel from waste products

A high octane fuel that may be better than gasoline has been produced from waste products generated in the effort to turn pine and other forest residues into liquid fuel.

Dr. Ed Soltes, a wood chemist and leader of a research team at Texas A&M's Forest Science Laboratory, said his group has taken the process of making fuel from plants one step further by turning the by-products of the fuel-making process into still more fuel.

"Tars, chars and gasses are created when plants are broken down using heat," Soltes said. "We have taken the tars and by using technology similar to that used in the petrochemical industry, have broken them down still further into hydrocarbons similar to those found in engine fuels."

The research, sponsored by the Texas A&M Center for Energy and Mineral Resources and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, greatly improves the technological feasibility and possibly the cost-effectiveness of producing liquid engine fuels from plants, Soltes said.

He said the technique can be applied to tars generated from any plant, including agricultural products such as corn cobs, wheat stems, wood chips or bark. "One advantage of fuels from plant residues over fuels from their plant material is that engines will not have to be altered," Soltes explained. "The stuff that we are producing is virtually the

same as the gasoline used in your automobile engine today.

"It might even be better than the gas found on the market because these hydrocarbons are very high in octane," he said. "It's conceivable that we could be producing an octane booster for gas, depending on how it is processed."

Until now, tars have generally been troublesome and unwanted by-products of thermal degradation processes that turn plants into fuel, said Soltes.

"The technology we're developing could permit the construction of less expensive processes that accept and even encourage tar production."

In addition to looking at the composition of tars from various plants, the Texas A&M researchers are assessing the role that the breakdown of pine residues can play in meeting diesel fuel requirements for industry operations.

"We started off looking at diesel fuel and found that the high-octane gas could be produced," said Soltes. "Both can be produced in the same process using tar residues."

The researchers are also identifying processes that produce significant yields of tars and oils, which would help establish direction for future research and development work.

"Right now we don't know whether diesel fuels can be produced in cost-competitive situations with conventional diesel fuel," said the Texas A&M forestry scientist.

"But the advent of fuels from residues to power equipment for agricultural purposes, much of which runs off of diesel, can make a significant impact on national priorities in the use of such residues and on diverting petroleum reserves to higher-valued uses."

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