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Committee to look into Houston case

# Sewer source of poison, M.D. says

United Press International  
HOUSTON — The doctor who diagnosed cyanide poisoning himself and 11 patients said the substance is coming from the city's sewer system and other chemicals.

Health was set up to aid the city in investigating the cyanide cases. "The committee will provide additional expertise and objectivity to the cyanide investigation," Bridgewater said. "It will review all lab results, analyze data and prepare a statement to be issued within 24 hours upon receipt of all data."

The committee will be headed by Dr. Marcus Key, professor of occupational medicine. Committee members will be given the lab results when they have been completed by the Harris County Medical Examiner's office. However, Bridgewater said she did not know when the results would be ready.

Oesch thinks a nearby company

that uses cyanide in its electroplating process could be responsible for allowing the substance to seep into sewer lines. When the cyanide mixes with water, he said, it turns into hydrogen cyanide, a poisonous gas.

However, officials at the General Electric Co. plant said their facility has been checked and rechecked by the city in recent weeks and no cyanide leakage had been found.

Public Works officials said their records show General Electric's inspections showed no cyanide leakage, said Dan Jones, spokesman for the city.

Oesch said his home and office is about 50 feet from a sewer line, where he thinks the hydrogen

cyanide is leaking. He said because his home is not air conditioned, air containing the poison has been circulating inside his house.

When he goes to air conditioned buildings, he said, his symptoms seem to get better.

The symptoms of cyanide poisoning are nausea, lethargy, burning eyes and a scratchy throat.

Oesch said one of his patients has been hospitalized. Shirley McGee, who had been tested by Oesch positively for cyanide poisoning, was hospitalized Monday at Hermann Hospital. She said additional tests were being run at the hospital, but no results were available.

Oesch said earlier this week that some of his patients may have contracted the poisoning from eating pecans from trees that grow in the near downtown neighborhood. He explained the trees breathe the air and use the water from the environment, and the chemicals are transmitted into the nuts.

Bridgewater said she was waiting for the results of tests performed by the health department, and she urged citizens not to become hysterical.

She said her office is being flooded with calls from citizens who think they may have the poisoning. She said the first 23 blood test results performed by the city proved negative.

# C&W stars help boost funds of gubernatorial candidate

United Press International  
FORT WORTH — Backers of Peyton McKnight, D-Tyler, picked up the fiddles, kicked up the heels and opened their pockets to the tune of Texas' largest fundraiser ever for a Democratic gubernatorial candidate.

led by Willie Nelson, a score of nation's top county and western recording stars entertained about 5,000 two-steppers who lined up across Billy Bob's Texas, a Fort Worth nightclub. Those present Monday wished McKnight on his 57th birthday and in his bid to unseat Republican incumbent Bill Clements.

McKnight, characterizing Clements as "a man who likes to play senior, but doesn't like to play," was at center stage and underlined by announcement earner that retiring Land Commissioner Bob Armstrong would also be seeking the Democratic nomination.

"I'm not surprised," McKnight said. "I expected it. I always expected him to be in the race. This doesn't change my plans at all."

McKnight deferred other comments about his Democratic opponent, but chided Clements for his "lack of knowledge about state government."

He said Clements was "essentially a man who has not performed or carried out his campaign promises."

He said the governor's plan to fire 25,000 state employees and return a billion dollars to taxpayers in a state with a growing population of a half million people a year were just two examples of Clements' shortcomings.

"I'll grant you, he's a smart man, and he knows a lot about big business," McKnight said at an informal gathering at the Americana Hotel, "but he just doesn't know anything about the operation of state government."

McKnight said he wanted to

clarify any misunderstanding about his candidacy should former Gov. Dolph Briscoe or ex-Attorney General John Hill enter the Democratic race.

He said an earlier statement was misinterpreted giving the impression that he may withdraw should Briscoe or Hill make bids.

"All I said was that it would be a big fight. But I see myself as a bridge builder and instead of getting out, I will be staying in," he said.

A third candidate — Prentice Tomlinson, a Houston oil and gas operator — has said he is contemplating entering the challenge for the nomination.

Members of McKnight's staff said the fundraiser would be the biggest in the party's history Texas. They said the event had grossed more than \$750,000 through Monday afternoon, with more donations to be added.

Nelson, who made a late appearance at the party in the

heart of the Fort Worth Stockyards, was joined by Moe Bandy, Jerry Jeff Walker, Rex Allen Jr., members of the Texas Playboys and a list of 20 other entertainers who performed for the \$100-a-ticket crowd.

# Nuclear commission to hold conference on Black Fox site

United Press International  
ARLINGTON — Supporters and opponents of the proposed Black Fox nuclear plant site near Tulsa, Okla., are expected to attend a federal conference examining whether hearings into the site should be reopened.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has scheduled the conference for next Wednesday at the federal courthouse in Tulsa, Okla., to determine whether to open new hearings on the controversial plant. Site work at Black

Fox was approved after consideration by the commission in 1978.

Hearings on radiological health and safety issues were held later that year and in early 1979, but the commission did not make a decision before the nuclear spill at Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania.

The government issued a group of nuclear plant standards this Au-

gust, inspiring the move to reopen hearings into Black Fox, officials said.

Applicants seeking permits to build the plant are Public Service Co. of Oklahoma and Western Farmers Electric Cooperative.

Representatives from Citizens Action for Safe Energy, a group opposed to construction of the nuclear plant, will attend the conference, officials said.

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