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Slow food stamps push food banks

United Press International

AUSTIN — A combination of computer failures, telephone line problems and bad luck is to blame for a delay in getting food stamps to thousands of poor Texans, the Department of Human Resources said Tuesday.

Charity food banks and shelters in Houston, San Antonio and the Rio Grande Valley, where the worst delays occurred, reported their stores of food were nearly depleted by people who had not received food stamp authorization cards. The cards allow recipients to pick up their food stamps.

"We have seen an increase," said Linda Tippins, social services director at the Ellas Austin Community Center in San Antonio. "They're complaining that they're not receiving stamps until after the first of the month. It has strained us. At this time of the month, we usually don't see that many (people)."

A similar situation existed in Brownsville, where Catholic Social Services said it had nearly depleted its store of food.

"We have a pantry but it's running pretty low and we're asking people for donations," said Maria Gracias. "In the last couple of days we've seen about 78 individuals who haven't received their (foodstamp) authorizations."

"Our phones have been ringing off the walls since last Thursday," said Rina Rosenberg of the Houston Interfaith Hunger Coalition. "Nine-

teen of our pantries in the poorer sections of town are already out of food entirely, and others are beginning to run really low."

About 3,000 Houston food stamp recipients have failed to receive their authorization card from the DHR, officials said.

Workers at another emergency food pantry in Houston were surprised by the large numbers of people coming for help.

"We usually handle about 800 hungry people a month," said Betty Wiederhold of the North Main Pantry. "Just during the three days we were open last week, though, we had more than 300 people come in looking for food. We were just shocked."

Most of the people affected were new food stamp applicants or those who filed some sort of change in their household status, said Martin Duckler, deputy commissioner for programs in Austin.

He said computer failures in both Houston and Austin caused most of the delays but that the situation was exacerbated by problems with telephone lines that link the agency's computers.

The telephone line problems cropped up, he said, when the state agency moved its massive computer system from its old headquarters in Austin to a new location.

Dukler said a "very, very small" percentage of the state's food stamp recipients were affected by the technical problems.

Texas bees to get relief from mites

United Press International

WASHINGTON — The Agriculture Department Tuesday put into effect regulations to prevent spread of the acarine mite, a pest recently found in Texas that attacks honeybees.

The mite, an internal parasite of honeybees, was detected last month in Weslaco in the lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. It was the first time the mite had been found in the United States.

The mite can substantially reduce pollination by bees and interfere with bees' ability to fly. Infested hives also have been found at other locations in the lower Rio Grande Valley and in the Houston, Pecos and Three Rivers areas of Texas.

Bert Hawkins, administrator of the Agriculture Department's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, said, "Honeybees are responsible for pollinating billions of dollars of U.S. crops, so we are particularly concerned about new pests that may cause damage to honeybee colonies."

The new federal regulations, together with parallel state regulations, will restrict movement of bees, beeswax, used beeholding equipment and certain related articles from regulated areas.

Regulated areas include all or part of Texas counties of Bee, Briscoe, Cameron, Chambers, Floyd, Hale, Hall, Harris, Hidalgo, Live Oak, Starr, Swisher and Willacy.

Precautions stop burglars

United Press International

WASHINGTON — Burglars strike millions of American homes annually, but homeowners using common sense while on vacation or away for a summer weekend can put the squeeze on one of the nation's most profitable criminal industries.

"Burglars hit a house, apartment or condominium every 15 seconds," the State Farm Insurance Safe Home Guide says. "But if a burglar picks your place instead of the one next door, you probably helped invite him there."

"He looks for what the police call 'targets of opportunity.' In other words, easy pickings."

To burglar-proof a home, think about the outside first.

Burglars like the dark. Keep porches, patios and yards well lit, especially when away from home.

Thieves do most of their work in the rear of a house. Spotlights work, but other types of lights are more economical — and can be just as effective.

Prune tree limbs that could help a burglar climb in a window. Trim shrubbery, which can provide cover for a thief.

When away on vacation, have the lawn mowed and don't let newspapers stack up. Lock up ladders and tools. Keep a light on inside the house and leave the drapes open, so it appears someone is home.

Also leave a radio playing, but turn the telephone bell down.

"A prowler will be less likely to hear an unanswered call," the State Farm booklet says.

On the inside, think about doors, locks and hinges.

"You wouldn't put a padlock on a paper chain ... so don't put good locks on a hollow wooden door," says the "How to Crimeproof Your Home" pamphlet, distributed by the National Crime Prevention Council.

"If the door is flimsy and weak, or doesn't fit securely into the frame, locks won't help."

Burglars like sliding glass doors for which special locks are manufactured. But an old broomstick lodged in the track of a closed sliding door prevents it from being opened — even if the lock is ripped apart.

"Chances are your locks were stalled with economy — not security — in mind. Most houses and apartments have inexpensive key-in-the-lock," the council's pamphlet says. "They are easy to open with a credit card or break open with a screwdriver."

A deadbolt lock provides the best protection. The lock mechanism slides a strong metal bolt from the door into the frame. To be effective the bolt must extend at least an inch from the edge of the door.

Door hinges are safe from a burglar's tools if they are not exposed. It's easy to remove the hinge pin and the door, if the hinges are on the outside.

22 arrested in sting operation

United Press International

BATON ROUGE, La. — Federal indictments unsealed Tuesday accused 20 people in 10 states of manufacturing or distributing counterfeit clothing and jewelry purchased since February in a Secret Service sting operation financed by the legitimate manufacturer.

U.S. Attorney Stanford Bardwell said the bust was a major crackdown

on counterfeit trademark merchandise. The investigation stemmed from a tip agents picked up on a wire tap used last year to break up a \$6 million counterfeit currency ring involving football hero Billy Cannon.

"The indictments are believed to be the first of their kind directly charging the manufacture and sale of counterfeit trademark items as

fraud," Bardwell said in a news conference.

In a sting operation coordinated by counterfeit experts from the Secret Service's Washington office, agents spent \$37,000 provided by legitimate manufacturers to buy phony goods whose street value is estimated at \$420,000.

Value of the genuine articles placed at over \$1 million.

What's up

Wednesday
TAMU SAILING CLUB: will meet at 7 p.m. in 137 MSC to discuss upcoming activities. A windsurfing video will be shown.

Retail sales drop 0.9 percent in July

United Press International

WASHINGTON — Retail sales slumped 0.9 percent in July, pulled down by the worst setback for department and discount stores in 17 years, the Commerce Department said Tuesday.

Sales of automobiles, construction supplies, furniture, clothing and gasoline all slipped in the first overall sales decline of any size since March.

"This is information that the economy is really slowing down, perhaps a quarter after most people expected it," department chief economist, Robert Ortner, said.

But analysts in and out of government also said they believed spending on merchandise could rebound later this year.

"I don't think it's the end of the world," said economist Sandra Shaber of the Chase Econometrics analysis firm. "I actually think we'll see some more growth in consumer spending."

Sales in July were worth \$161 billion, \$975 million less than June after seasonal adjustment. The decline was even steeper before adjustment.

The report suggested that demand is weakening, a development that could keep the unemployment rate from improving even as it encourages Wall Street that interest rates will fall soon.

But because consumer spending has increased so much for so long during the economic recovery, the one-month decline was less than convincing evidence consumers are suddenly becoming more cautious.

"Slower growth of consumer spending should help to ease pressure on the credit markets," Commerce Secretary Malcolm Baldrige said.

"However, because of continuing gains in real disposable income and high levels of confidence, we still look for the consumer sector to remain good."

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