

State and Local

Program cracks down on fraud

Aliens getting public aid being targeted

Associated Press

EL PASO — A new program targeting alien commuters who collect public aid is expected to save thousands of dollars to agencies in Texas and New Mexico, immigration officials said Thursday.

There are about 7,000 people who are legal United States residents but who live in Juarez, Mexico, and commute daily to the El Paso area to work or attend school, said Al Guigni, district director for the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service.

It is illegal for them to benefit from public assistance programs, such as food stamps or Social Security. Operation Mail Drop, a pilot project started in this border city last week, aims to identify them, said Guigni.

"If people are residing out of the country by their own choice, then they give up the right to some bene-

fits," said C. W. Thompson, a special agent of investigations with the INS.

Operation Mail Drop, so called because offenders often give agencies an address in the United States at which they don't reside, is part of a nationwide INS program called Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements, or SAVE.

SAVE and its offshoots are de-

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signed to identify fraud of benefit programs by aliens.

For example, U.S. residents must be educated free of charge at public schools. But a commuter alien would have to pay about \$285 a month tuition to the El Paso school district,

Guigni said. That's the amount a foreign student would pay for public elementary and secondary education in this district.

"On Friday we met with city, county and state officials to advise them that we would provide them with names of commuter aliens," Guigni said.

During a two-week period in July,

ing about \$200 a month in benefits," Thompson said.

"We're examining the commuter group because we have some kind of control over them," he said. "They have to register with us every six months."

In the July investigation, INS officials identified one commuter alien who was using two names and social security numbers to obtain benefits from three agencies.

"There's also double-dipping," Thompson said. "That's when they get the same benefits from agencies in New Mexico and in Texas."

Thompson estimates that 2 percent of commuter aliens in El Paso are committing some kind of benefit fraud.

"But I wouldn't be surprised if that figure were 6-8 percent," Thompson said.

INS officials identified food stamp fraud by commuter aliens in El Paso that translated into \$40,000 in benefits over a one-year period, Thompson said.

"The average recipient was get-

CS Council OKs permit in spite of liquor law

By CRAIG RENFRO
Staff Writer

The College Station City Council Thursday night overrode a city ordinance and approved the application to sell alcoholic beverages within 300 feet of a religious institution.

John J. Loffarelli, representing Emilio's Pizza at 317 Patricia St., received the 5-2 decision for approval after several minutes of deliberation by the council.

The application now has to go before the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission to receive complete licensing.

Emilio's Pizza is located 210 feet from A&M Methodist Church and according to a city ordinance effective June, 1983, falls 90 feet short of the required distance to sell alcohol.

Mayor Gary Halter said although it is in violation of the ordinance, each case must be looked at separately.

"If it were going to be a bar that's one thing, but since it's a restaurant and many people enjoy drinking with their meal, I think we should consider the nature of the area (Northgate) before making a decision," Halter said.

Councilman James Bond said if the application was allowed this could open the gates for more businesses to ask for a license.

"I fear once you do it we will open the opportunity for anyone and the next thing you know White's Auto will want to have a beer garden," Bond said.

In other action Halter proclaimed the week of Feb. 3-7 as "Exceptional Children's Week" in College Station and the week of Feb. 10-16 as "National Vocational Education Week" and "National Office Education Association Week."

Construction worker survives being buried in trench for 2 hours

Associated Press

DALLAS — A construction worker was buried for two hours Thursday when a south Dallas city sewer trench caved in trapping him in the 15-foot pit.

Rescuers from a nearby fire station revived the man with oxygen

while they dug with their hands and shovels to free him from the trench.

Firefighters pulled him from the muddy clay by strapping him to a rescue jacket and hoisting him by rope from the trench.

A hospital spokeswoman at Methodist Medical Center identified the

man as Estaben Yenten, 18, and said he was in good condition. But a spokeswoman for Holt and Son Contractors, the man's employers, identified him as Estaben Tiscarino.

Firefighter Robert Camplen said the man was without air for about four minutes and was "within two

minutes" of death when rescuers cleared away enough dirt to uncover the man's head and revive him with an oxygen mask.

"It makes me feel pretty good when you save one like that," said firefighter Robert Verver, one of the first rescuers to reach the worker

from a fire station about a block away.

Officials said the man was trapped shortly after 8 a.m. as he retrieved a shovel from the hole where the company had been contracted to replace an 8-inch sanitary sewer.

Rescuers had to use shovels and their bare hands because backhoes

could not be safely used, Camplen said.

The cave-in is the second to occur in a Dallas area project in little more than a week. A man, 27, was killed Jan. 13 when an earthen trench wall collapsed. Both projects were routinely inspected by city officials.

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