

## Committee hears testimony at AIDS hearing

AUSTIN (AP) — State money for the AIDS battle could be imperiled because many sufferers get the disease from illegal activities, the chairman of the House Public Health Committee said Monday.

Rep. Brad Wright's comments came after his committee heard more than three hours of testimony, much of it dealing with the disease's rapid spread. Experts told the committee the disease is commonly spread through intravenous drug use and unsafe sexual practices.

"I don't think you can ignore a problem because the behavior which may be largely the source of the transmission is prohibited, but I do think it's a consideration," said Wright, R-Houston. "If we are talking about the amount of money we are going to commit to helping intravenous drug users vs. helping the crippled children's services, that's a choice that is not a difficult one to make."

He said lawmakers must decide which state programs will be funded from the shrinking treasury.

"I think intravenous drug users have to assume some of the risk for their conduct," he said.

Acquired immune deficiency syndrome destroys the body's ability to fight diseases.

Wright said the state should educate the public about AIDS, including schoolchildren. But he added that some point after education, the state's responsibility ends.

The committee gathered information about AIDS Monday and did not consider any bills on the disease.

## Roof collapses at drug store, traps victims

PAMPA (AP) — A rescue crew used heavy equipment to search under debris in a drug store for victims after the roof collapsed Monday morning under snow accumulations, authorities in this Panhandle town said.

At least one person was injured and as many as three were believed trapped inside Revco Discount Drugs in the Pampa Mall after the roof fell in about 11 a.m. during blizzard conditions, police and fire officials said.

The injured woman, 27-year-old Kathy Smith, was taken to HCA Coronado Hospital, where she was treated and released.

Assistant Fire Chief Ray Fisher said a store customer who managed to escape after the collapse told officials there were two customers and an employee trapped inside.

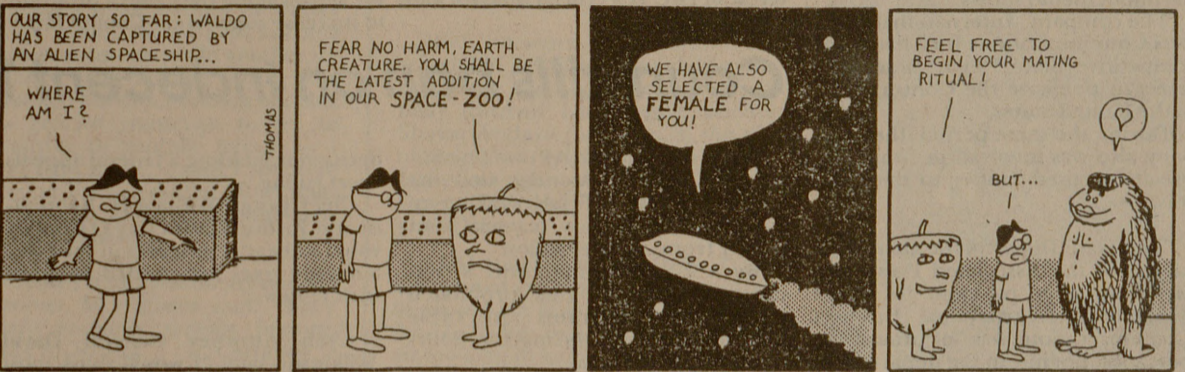
Officers evacuated shoppers in the rest of the mall as a precaution when workers began clearing debris.

Pampa is located 60 miles north-east of Amarillo.

## Warped



## Waldo



## CS fire official blames rise in arson cases on economy

By Sandra Voelkel  
Reporter

There has been an increase in the number of intentionally set fires primarily because of today's economy, College Station Deputy Fire Marshal Bland Ellen says.

Arson includes the intentional burning or exploding of a vehicle, building or habitation and is considered to be a second degree felony. The violation carries a prison term of two to 20 years, with a maximum \$10,000 fine.

The incidence of suspected arson has increased locally within the past two years, but not as much as in other areas, Ellen says.

"I don't think this area has been hit as bad economically, and has suffered less from arson, than other places," he says.

Areas such as Houston and West Texas have seen a dramatic increase in arson because the declining oil prices have worsened the economies of those oil-producing areas, he says.

"The economy is slow and many people are financially hurt," Ellen says. "Arson is an easy way to get rid of things without losing them if that person is insured."

People who are in debt sometimes destroy their homes or businesses with fire with hopes of eliminating their financial burdens, Ellen says, but College Station doesn't have the fire damages and lawsuits that other towns have.

Many towns the same size as College Station average five to six deaths a year from fires, he says, but

the College Station area has not had any fire deaths since 1978.

However, A&M has had several cases of arson resulting in a substantial amount of damages in the last few years, and the fire department doesn't handle campus cases unless it's assistance is specifically requested.

Arson is a difficult crime to detect or prove, he says.

"Economically, arson is a good deal if a person can burn something

*"The economy is slow and many people are financially hurt. Arson is an easy way to get rid of things without losing them if that person is insured."*

— Bland Ellen, CS deputy fire marshal

without getting caught and then get reimbursed by his insurance," he says.

While Ellen says revenge is another reason for arson, he also says education about arson is the best preventive measure, he says.

"We try to educate people on what to do and what to look for and how to safeguard against arson," Ellen says.

The fire department spends sev-

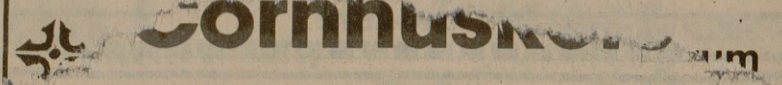
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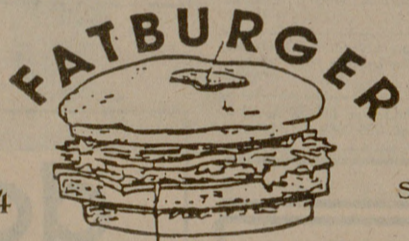
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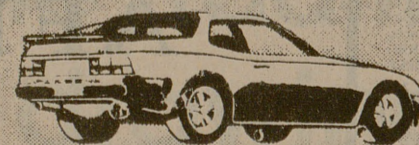
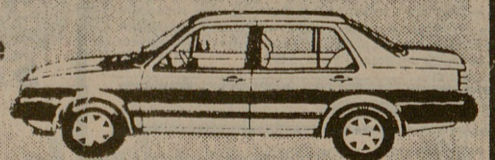
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