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 Thurs., March 30, 7:30p.m. - Rudder 504

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Winds delay efforts to clean up oil spill off Alaskan coast

VALDEZ, Alaska (AP) — Strong winds Monday delayed efforts to control a huge oil spill in Prince William Sound, and the president of Exxon Shipping said the company was "a little overwhelmed" by the magnitude of the cleanup.

Federal investigators piecing together the sequence of events leading up to the spill said they planned to interview the captain and other bridge officers of the tanker Exxon Valdez.

The captain, Joseph Hazelwood, was not on the bridge when the vessel left shipping lanes to avoid ice, rammed a charted reef and ran aground early Friday. The third mate, who did not have proper certification, was in charge, Exxon Shipping Co. President Frank Iarossi said.

A National Transportation Safety Board spokeswoman in Washington, D.C., said the captain, third mate, quartermaster and bridge lookout are among those who will be questioned.

Investigators said at a news conference that the results of drug and alcohol tests on crew members will be made public when officials receive them, possibly in two or three days.

But according to one source close to the investigation, it is questionable whether the tests will be of much value. Drucella Anderson, an NTSB spokeswoman, said preliminary indications are the tests may have been administered as long as 10 hours after the accident.

"I don't know how good the (tests) will be," said Rachel Halterman, another spokeswoman for the NTSB in Washington. The board plans to open a formal inquiry in Anchorage sometime in the next three weeks.

The 987-foot tanker, carrying 1.2 million barrels of North Slope crude oil, apparently struck a glancing blow against a rock, kept going and hit rocks a second time, then ran aground, Iarossi said.

About 240,000 gallons spilled through the hull, creating an oil slick that has since covered about 100 square miles, according to the Coast Guard.

The accident closed the Port of Valdez, the southern terminus of the Alaska Pipeline, and crude oil prices rose sharply on Monday.

Meanwhile, gusts up to 70 mph idled most aircraft, including one that was to spray chemicals to break up the oil slick.

Iarossi said the wind damaged some of the containment booms used to corral the oil, including some around the stricken tanker.

The vessel remained stuck on Bligh Reef, about 25 miles from Valdez. Iarossi said the wind pivoted the ship 12 degrees to the north, and that the crew said the new position felt much more stable.

Workers continued pumping operations to remove the 1 million barrels of oil left on board the Exxon Valdez. By Monday morning, about 100,000 barrels had been transferred to the Exxon Baton Rouge. Iarossi said Exxon hoped to have about 95 percent of the remaining oil off the vessel in three or four days.

He said he cannot guarantee that all the oil will be removed from the tanker nor that all of the slick will be cleaned up.

"There's no way I can keep the oil from impacting more beach area," Iarossi said, adding that he thought workers were making headway.

"Frankly, we are a little overwhelmed," he said. "We still have a major problem ahead of us, but we feel we are gaining."

Lawmaker retirements would get boost with bill

AUSTIN (AP) — A proposal to raise the annual base pay of district judges by more than \$15,000 also could boost lawmakers' retirement benefits by 27 percent for every year they serve in the Legislature, a newspaper reported Monday.

The proposal will come under consideration this week by Senate and House committees. But in previous considerations, lawmakers have been able to avoid publicly discussing the retirement boost because it is connected to the pay increase for judges.

The Texas Supreme Court is backing the proposal.

Currently, lawmakers' retirement pay grows by only \$1,145 for each year they have served.

Under a 1965 law, the retirement of lawmakers is connected directly to judicial salaries, a link that some legislators now regret.

"Having our retirement system linked to judicial pay is an unwise policy that is potentially embarrassing to every lawmaker," said Sen. Kent Caperton, D-Bryan, head of the Senate panel that twice has reviewed the proposed pay hike for judges without publicly discussing the effect it would have on legislative retirement.

Under the existing system, legislators receive 2 percent of the state-funded base pay for judges for each year they serve in office, up to a maximum of 60 percent of the basic judicial salary.

Currently, a lawmaker with 10 years of service would receive \$13,741 in annual retirement pay. If the judicial pay raise bill under consideration by the Senate Finance Committee is approved, a retired legislator would receive the same amount of service would receive \$17,442 annually.

The last time a proposed pay raise was on the ballot in Texas, voters defeated it. A public outcry earlier this year forced Congress to retreat from a substantial salary increase.

Lawmakers are considering asking voters in November to approve a constitutional amendment that would raise their salaries from \$7,200 to nearly \$22,000 a year and tie their pay to the governor's salary in the future. However, because only the Legislature can raise judges' salaries, voters have no say over parallel increases in lawmakers' retirement benefits.

Premarital sex may be related to divorce rate, professor says

By Holly Beeson
 REPORTER

Involvement in extensive premarital sexual activity may be related to divorce, says Dr. Jeff Simpson, Texas A&M assistant professor of psychology.

"People who have more sexual partners before marriage may be more likely to end up in divorce," Simpson says.

One-half of all first marriages end in divorce in the United States — the highest divorce rate in the Western world.

Simpson says other telltale signs exist that may indicate a rocky marriage for certain couples.

Having a past divorce in the family may teach kids divorce is an acceptable way to deal with adversity in a marital relationship, he says.

Also, marriages between young people tend to end in divorce.

Peggy Love-Clark, psychologist at HCA Greenleaf Hospital, says the ideal age to marry is in the late 20s or early 30s.

People are a little more worldly and experienced by that time, she says, and there's an element of responsibility that usually develops during that age frame.

"Those marrying young have a greater chance of getting a divorce," Love-Clark says.

Couples may not know what they want when they are young, she says. Younger couples often act on impulse or may think they are in love when it's only infatuation.

An recent article in "U.S. News and World Report" said a survey of 346 newlyweds showed that before the wedding, 41 percent doubted they were marrying the right person.

Six months into the marriage, the article said, about half the newlyweds admitted that marriage was more difficult than they had expected, and 51 percent believed their unions might not last.

Love-Clark says bringing a baby into a troubled marriage can hinder instead of helping a relationship.

"It just adds more responsibility, more stress and more time limitations to the marriage," she said. "Usually there's much more of a financial obligation as well."

Simpson said people expect more out of relationships than they did in the past.

"It's easier to get out of a marriage relationship than it used to be," he says.

The social, economic and legal changes in society have allowed divorce to become more prevalent, Simpson says.

It used to be that women couldn't have their names on legal documents, couldn't own property and didn't have jobs independent of their spouses.

"There was a much stronger stigma against divorce 30 to 40 years ago than there is today," he says.

Some couples contemplating marriage are enrolling in pre-marriage classes as a divorce-prevention method. Classes may be directed by specialists in psychology or religious counselors.

Love-Clark says she definitely would recommend taking the classes, especially if the couple is experiencing doubt, hesitancy or concern about marriage.

For people considering marriage she advises the participants to understand they are making a life-long commitment, to be certain of the choice and not to act impulsively.

The MSC Wiley Lecture Series presents

THE MIDDLE EAST: Peace or Powder Keg

THE PROGRAM SYMPOSIA

Dr. Clement Henry
 U.S. Policy in the Middle East
 March 28, 7 p.m.
 Room 701 Rudder

NO ADMISSION FEE

The Honorable William Crawford
 Fmr. Amb. to Yemen-Arab Republic, and Cyprus
 Islam: Culture and Religion
 March 29, 7 p.m.
 Room 206 MSC

The Program Symposia are preparatory lectures for our April 12th panel discussion. Dr. Henry is an authority on Middle Eastern affairs, especially Egypt, at the University of Texas. The Honorable William Crawford spent twenty-nine years in the area with the Foreign Service, and has remained at the forefront of his field through his work with the Middle East Institute's Islamic Affairs Programs.

We would like to thank the Middle East Institute and the MSC Jordan Institute for their support and funding

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