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Holiday deaths hit 3-year high

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Seven accidents on Texas roads that killed two people each during the Labor Day weekend contributed to the highest death toll for the holiday in three years, a Department of Public Safety spokesman said Tuesday.

The 46 deaths shattered the agency's prediction of 34 fatalities during the 78-hour weekend counting period, DPS spokesman Mike Cox said.

"We're certainly disappointed that the count went that high," Cox said.

The highest number of deaths in recent years during Labor Day was in 1982, when 57 were killed. Last year, 32 people were killed. In 1987, the tally was 28 and it was 51 in 1986.

Cox noted that no fatal traffic accidents were reported in Dallas, Corpus Christi, the Panhandle and most of West Texas during the weekend.

He said, however, that 10 of the accidents involved pedestrians and 13 were what authorities term alcohol-related.

Eleven fatalities were reported in the final few hours of the counting period.

Maria Carmen Castillo of Houston was killed Monday evening while riding in a pickup involved in a three-vehicle collision in Harris County. Officials say a traffic light malfunction caused the accident that injured six others.

A Fort Worth pedestrian, Jose Jimenez, 46, died of injuries suffered when he was struck by a vehicle. The driver fled the scene and has not been arrested, investigators say.

David G. Kimball, 26, of Houston was killed when he lost control of his motorcycle and struck a stop sign. Houston officials say he was traveling at a high rate of speed and wasn't wearing a helmet. A mandatory helmet law went into effect in Texas on Friday.

Mario Vaiero, 60, of Alpine was another pedestrian killed Monday evening when a pickup truck hit him while he was walking down a pine street.

Patricio Adam Nava, 24, of Rockport, killed Monday evening in one-vehicle accident about four miles west of Rockport. Authorities said the lost control of the vehicle, crashed through a fence and was pinned in the area for 40 minutes.

Gorden Randall Dover of Texas City killed Sunday evening when the vehicle he was riding in went out of control and skidded off road and into a ditch in Harris County.

Eddie Leroy Tillis and Cassandra Faye Layton, both of Houston, died Monday evening in a motorcycle accident. Harris County authorities said three of four stop signs had been taken from an intersection, causing the driver to lay the motorcycle down in his attempt to stop.

Marine experts stay hopeful for survival of beached whale

GALVESTON (AP) — Marine mammal experts at Sea-Arama Marineworld remained hopeful Tuesday an infant 900-pound sperm whale that washed up on a beach over the weekend would adapt to an artificial whale nurser and a formula.

"He's not getting any worse, but not getting any better," said Cheryl Snyder, senior trainer at the park. "He's holding his own."

The whale, estimated to be no more than two weeks old, was found ashore on the Bolivar Peninsula Saturday. When volunteers from the Texas Mammal Stranding Network couldn't find his mother, the 12-foot whale was hoisted onto a flatbed truck, smeared with zinc oxide sunscreen and wet down for the trip to the marine park.

Snyder said park personnel, after consulting experts from other marine parks around the country, were constructing an artificial nurser and had come up with a whale infant formula they were hoping the whale, named Odie, would eat.

"We got diagrams from marine parks who had raised baby killer whales," she said. "We're getting a very strong suckling response. He's sucking hands or anything that comes in his mouth."

"I'm real excited. This is an amazing animal. It's an animal that researchers and scientists — that no one gets much contact with. It's extremely exciting to have one this close. Mostly, we're all cautious because although we're enthusiastic, you're realistic. (Survival) statistics for a stranded animal are very low."

Odie was young enough to nurse and has not yet cut his teeth. A sperm whale will nurse for six months after birth.

Until he adapts to the artificial nurser, Odie was being fed fluids every four hours through a stomach tube.

Experts were making a simulated formula from a powder milk that contains no lactose, which marine mammals are not capable of digesting.

"He's able to float and hold himself in the water," Snyder said. "His equilibrium is off. Volunteers are in the water with him 24 hours a day. They gently hold on to him to keep his blow hole above water."

The discovery of a whale on the Texas coast is quite rare. Since 1984, only two whales have been found.

A 500-pound, 9-foot-long male sperm whale was found dead in Corpus Christi two years ago.

In 1984 a pygmy sperm whale died at Sea-Arama 11 days after it beached. It died of peritonitis caused by eating a garbage bag, a bread wrapper, a corn chip bag and parts of two other plastic bags.

Sea-Arama officials said they hoped to be able to release Odie once he begins feeding himself whole foods, normally squid. That was not expected, however, for several months, although by then he likely would double his size.

Cigarettes may be cause of forest fire

HENLY (AP) — Youths playing with cigarettes are believed to have started a raging fire that charred more than 700 acres of ranch land near the Pedernales Falls State Park, authorities said.

The stubborn fire was brought under control late Monday after a 28-hour battle, officials said Tuesday.

An army of at least 80 firefighters from across Central Texas and beyond had to overcome flames, rugged terrain, 101-degree temperatures and gusty winds in battling the blaze.

"There is not enough people, not enough water and too much wind," Tommy Holder, a volunteer with the Blanco Volunteer Fire Department, said at the height of the fire.

The fire was brought under control by 8 p.m. Monday, but firefighters remained on the scene to douse rekindling hot spots.

No homes or other buildings were burned, and no one was injured.

Some boys playing with cigarettes near a subdivision just north of Henly — a Hays County community of about 60 people — are believed to have started the fire about 4:30 p.m. Sunday, said Arkie Byars of the Johnson City Fire Department.

Winds blowing at 15-20 mph fanned the fire north from Henly along the Hays-Blanco county line.

Firefighters with the Blanco Volunteer Fire Department were the first on the scene. As the flames consumed more and more land, reinforcements were called from 18 other departments. Firefighters from the Texas Forest Service in Lufkin also responded.

Although the fire was thought to be under control several times, it continued to jump past fire lines, Blanco volunteer firefighter Mickey Cougot said.

"We had it out in areas, but the wind kept blowing it," Cougot said.

Sixteen forest service officers arrived at the fire about 2 p.m. Monday and began organizing units and setting up command posts, Sam Logan, a spokesman for the Texas Forest Service, said.

Residents fear radioactive dump threatens homes, family health

MANVEL (AP) — Garbage dumped as far back as 1962 in a landfill near this north Brazoria County town included radioactive materials that now threaten homes, water and health, residents say.

"We've had problems ever since we moved out here in 1976," said Marvin Pomfrey, 52, who lives across from the abandoned dump he claims caused the death of several of his dogs.

"We didn't know there was a landfill that was radioactive," Pomfrey said. "When we moved out here, there wasn't a word said about contamination."

For 10 years, companies and individuals dumped trash ranging from household garbage to radioactive waste at the six-acre tract, which served as an open dump for the city of Pearland. The city asked only for a small user's fee, but filed no records of the debris. The landfill was

closed in 1987 because it was filling up and would be too costly to operate, City Manager Ron Wicker said.

"We used to go berry-picking along the road," said Walter Ferguson, 45, who used to live across the street from the dump. "There are berry vines all along the fence. We didn't know anything about radiation or that this was a dump."

The Fergusons moved to Houston after a radioactivity sign was posted at the dump in 1986. Since then, their son was born with Down's Syndrome and they have filed a \$6.8 million lawsuit claiming endangerment to him.

Joe Rost, 49, moved his college-age daughter to Houston, but told the *Houston Chronicle* he cannot afford to move the rest of the family.

"When you put your family on the front lines, you can't take any chance," Rost said. "We're stuck in a corner. I can't sell, and I can't sup-

port two homes; otherwise I would have been out of here a long time ago."

An Environmental Protection Agency study done in 1986 concluded there was insufficient evidence to evaluate the extent of contamination. Higher-than-normal surface readings of radioactive materials were recorded, but nothing else considered dangerous. No soil surface readings were done.

Soil samples taken from the dump revealed extensive PCB contamination. A total of 29 compounds were identified and detected in concentrations, as well as high concentrations of lead and barium.

Barium, a toxic metallic element and manganese, also toxic and tough to toughen steel, were located in three residential water wells higher than normal levels.

Problems from money to marriage plague millions of gambling addicts

HOUSTON (AP) — Joe is a bright, successful, prototypical yuppie. At least, he appears to be.

But his wallet is padded with credit cards charged beyond the limit. He owes the Internal Revenue Service several thousand dollars. He owes his boss. He owes his friends and relatives.

He amazes himself with how he keeps coming up with more money, money that is begged, borrowed and stolen. He won't leave his house unless he has at least \$2,000 cash in his pocket.

The money goes fast. He enjoys the everything-is-wonderful rush of cocaine. But even more than that, he loves the thrill of a heavy wager, the danger of a defeat that will leave him penniless again and challenge his ingenious mind to devise new ways to raise money.

He plays the riskiest sector of the stock market, the puts and calls that greatly magnify every gentle swing in the index.

He also gambles on sports. He subscribes to a television cable service so he can watch several games a day. He goes to bed with his radio on as he tries to pick up the last scores from the West Coast.

He wins some but loses more. Finally, he no longer can replace what he loses. He can't make the minimal credit-card payments. And no matter how much he lies on his financial statements, he can't coax more loans.

His wife has left, and now the bookies are leaning on him, making not-so-veiled threats that harm will befall him if he doesn't pay his debts.

Now, Joe is desperate. He sees his life as hopeless and worthless. He ponders suicide. He has struck bottom.

Joe is not an actual person but a composite of typical compulsive gamblers as described by members of Gamblers Anonymous and counselors at the New Spirit Clinic in Houston.

Compulsive gambling is one little-known aspect of the Age of Addiction, which is the logical extension of the Me Generation of the 1970s.

In this era of self-indulgence, the quest for thrills and euphoria too often becomes a compulsion. Alcohol, cocaine, sex or food can overwhelm a person's life. And can gambling?

The National Institute of Mental Health estimates 4.5 million Americans are compulsive gamblers. According to Gamblers Anonymous, the figure exceeds 8 million.

One of these compulsive gamblers, addiction expert suspect, could be Pete Rose, manager of the Cincinnati Reds.

"He looks like a good case of it," says Dr. Thomas Clocher, a Houston psychiatrist and licensed addictionologist who heads New Spirit.

Arnold Wexler, director of the Council on Compulsive Gambling in New Jersey, says, "From what I read, and if it's true, it sure sounds like Rose is a compulsive gambler who needs help."

Rose was barred from the game Aug. 24, but can apply for reinstatement next year.

Some of those who are knowledgeable about addiction decried lifetime banishment as unfairly harsh. The fault the baseball rule book, written decades ago, was out of benefit of modern research in addictionology, forcing a compulsive gambler to lie and make denials to maintain his employment.

While baseball and other sports give cocaine addicts second and third chances to rehabilitate themselves, Rose would be out after his first strike.

Wexler argues that major-league baseball should allow compulsive gamblers to "admit their addiction, begin treatment without fear of having their livelihood taken away from them." He contends that Rose is by no means an isolated case.