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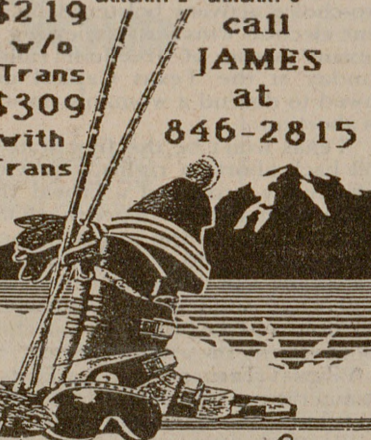
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Chemical spill in Dallas sends 30 to area hospitals

DALLAS (AP) — A half-mile stretch of an industrial area in northwest Dallas was evacuated and about 30 people were taken to hospitals Sunday after a 55-gallon drum of a noxious chemical ruptured on a trucking company's loading dock.

Three firefighters were among those who complained of difficulty breathing after the incident at Yellow Freight in the 4500 block of Irving Boulevard, about three miles southeast of Texas Stadium, officials said.

The chemical was described as

ethylene diamine, a highly flammable liquid used in photographic processing.

A city bus transported 18 people to Methodist Medical Center, and other people were taken to Parkland Memorial Hospital, said Capt. Jack Hickey, assistant fire chief with the Dallas Fire Department.

Nineteen plant employees were taken to the hospital after they complained of nausea and weakness, officials said. None of the injuries appeared serious, hospital officials said.

Authorities evacuated about 70 people in a stretch of Irving Boulevard between Mockingbird Lane and Regal Row north and northwest of the plant. The Trinity River is only three blocks from the plant. Although the area is mostly industrial, there are a few residences in the area.

Fire department officials said sand was being used to absorb the leaking chemical.

A vapor cloud formed, but officials said those upwind of the chemical were in no danger.

Study: Poverty continues to fuel infant death rate for Houston, health system inadequate to help

HOUSTON (AP) — Poverty continues to fuel the city's infant mortality rate, and the public health system is inadequate to deal with all the hazards that poor women and their unborn babies face, a newspaper reported Sunday.

"Infant mortality is our failure," Dr. John E. Arradondo, the city's health director, told the Houston Chronicle in a copyright story.

A Chronicle computer study analyzed Texas Department of Health data tapes linking birth certificate information to the death certificates of 2,842 Houston infants who died between 1980 and 1986 — the most recent period for which the tapes are available.

According to that analysis, there was a strong relationship between infant mortality and factors indicating poverty, the newspaper reported. That relationship has not changed significantly since 1986, said Joe Rubio, local director of community services for the March of Dimes, a non-profit group that raises money to fight birth defects and infant mortality.

Repeated cuts in budgets and personnel.

In 1987, the city of Houston Health Department recorded 142,448 visits to family planning, prenatal and child-care clinics. That figure dropped to 113,848 in 1988 and are projected to be no more than 109,900 this year — a result of a series of city budget cuts.

The Chronicle's analysis showed that from 1980-86, almost 40 percent of women whose babies died received inadequate prenatal care. Because clinics saw fewer patients in

1988 and 1989, Rubio and other health experts expect this percentage to go even higher.

Arradondo said he is trying to increase staff and strengthen the health department's ability to meet the need for prenatal care. But the department, he said, "is unable to provide adequate service levels to meet federal, state and local mandates."

Arradondo does not deny that a infant mortality strikes most often the group he is charged to serve — the poor.

News director creates group to fight post-polio syndrome

LUBBOCK (AP) — When C.A. "Skip" Watson swaggers toward one of his reporters with that nononsense look on his face, someone's usually in trouble.

Watson is news director at KCBD-TV. His tough demeanor comes from his intolerance to careless mistakes. His swagger is the result of a bout with polio and eight operations by the time he was 16.

The effects of polio — the limp in his walk and the ineffectiveness of his right hand — are becoming worse. Watson, like more than 300,000 others who contracted polio as children, is suffering from post-polio syndrome.

Post-polio syndrome is a newly diagnosed condition. It strikes one in four polio survivors, robbing them of the movement for which they had worked so hard.

People who contracted polio during the epidemics of the 1940s and '50s — before the vaccine was developed — are finally coming of age. The syndrome was first diagnosed as a part of growing old. Research is indicating it may be much more serious.

Many experience extreme fatigue as well as increased pain and deformities in their joints. They also feel the effects of the normal aging process 15 to 20 years earlier

because of the nerve damage caused by polio years ago and the extra strain put on other muscles and joints.

Polio attacks about 50 to 80 percent of the neurons. As people age, they lose approximately 20 percent of their motor neurons without much loss of function. For post-polio patients, the loss during the aging process erases their already small supply of neurons.

"I'm not going to let it bother me until I find some answers," Watson said. Two-mile walks, once a pleasurable way to relax, are too painful for Watson.

He said he doesn't know of any doctor in Lubbock who can diagnose and treat the condition. Watson and about 25 others are forming Lubbock Polio Survivors, a group that will bring in speakers knowledgeable about the progressive disease.

Watson was 3 when he woke up with what his family believed was a cold. He had a fever and his neck was stiff. The family physician prescribed medication and sent him home.

The next day, by his mother's account, he got out of bed and fell flat on his face. "My legs gave out." To this day, Watson's legs occasionally become like jelly while walking.

The analysis showed that mothers whose infants died were far less likely to have received adequate prenatal care than were those whose babies lived; babies with teen-age or unmarried mothers were at increased risk; black babies died at a rate almost double that of white and Hispanic infants; and babies who died were nearly 10 times more likely to have low birth weights, another indicator of poor prenatal care.

Rubio said those factors are all diagnosed indicators of poverty and give credence to the argument that babies die in Houston because they and their mothers lack adequate access to health care.

Houston's infant mortality rate has not decreased significantly since 1982, averaging about 11.5 infant deaths per 1,000 live births. The rate is even higher in the inner city — more than 13 per 1,000 — and in some census tracts, in which about 3,000 people live, rates have approached 30 per 1,000.

Many women who live in these areas look to public clinics for their preventative care, but that has proved difficult in recent years with

because of the nerve damage caused by polio years ago and the extra strain put on other muscles and joints.

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New Fort Bend County sheriff works to fill void left by George

RICHMOND (AP) — The death of Gus George, a long-time law enforcement official and the well-liked sheriff of Fort Bend County for five years, has left a void that some local residents believe will be hard to fill.

Perry Hillegeist, the late sheriff's hand-picked successor, shares that notion.

"No one will ever walk in Gus George's boots," said Hillegeist, who had been George's chief deputy. "Gus George was a legend, and I wouldn't make a pimple on his arm. I understand that."

"But just for him to have touched my life and given me some of his experience is really going to be beneficial to me from now on. I have to walk in my own shoes."

At 38, Hillegeist is younger than most of his top staff in the 180-member department. He started his career as a corrections officer in the Texas prison system and left in 1985 after rising to the post of assistant warden at the Central Unit.

After George was elected sheriff in 1984, he told Hillegeist he wanted him for his chief deputy.

George, 68 when he died, was sheriff here for five years and served more than 30 years with the Harris County Sheriff's Department. People said his charisma, fairness and sense of justice were unmatched.

On Nov. 4, he died after a long battle with cancer.

Aware he was dying, George wrote letters to county commissioners, the county judge and the Democratic and Republican party chairmen last month recommending Hillegeist be appointed as his replacement.

The sealed, notarized letters were locked in a safe at the jail and hand-delivered after his death. Commissioners unanimously supported Hillegeist as interim sheriff and he was sworn in two days after George died.

"He was quite proud of his department, and he wanted some continuity," Commissioner R.L. "Bud" O'Shieles said of George.

By law, the appointed sheriff will serve until the next general election in 1990. Then voters will elect a replacement to serve until the next scheduled sheriff's election in 1992.

After taking his oath of office, Hillegeist vowed to carry out George's goals.

Some of his immediate concerns involve the soon-to-be-completed

study of what the Sheriff's Department needs to do keep pace with future growth in Fort Bend County. Already, the jail has a daily count of 300 inmates though it's designed for only 232.

Currently operating on a \$6.4 million budget, the department is requesting \$7 million in the fiscal year beginning Jan. 1. Most of those expenses are "beyond our control," Hillegeist said, including utilities and fluctuating food costs.

In addition, the department is seeking a few more patrol and jail positions.

Hillegeist said George set up the department almost like a corporation, with a staff of eight or nine top people who met weekly.

Dallas turns to parents for help in curtailing gang-related crimes

DALLAS (AP) — School district officials in Dallas plan to turn to parents for help in the battle to keep gang violence under control.

An increasing number of street gangs and gang-related crimes in Dallas are prompting more concern among school officials, the Dallas Morning News reported.

The bilingual education department of the Dallas school district will work with parents next weekend on dealing with the negative influences of street gangs, which now number more than 55 in Dallas.

An assistant psychologist at Skyline High School, Gerald Angerstein, said he believes three recent deaths of students can be attributed to gang-related activities.

School officials say many parents in the district do not realize their children are involved in gangs. But many of the gang members dress in readily identifiable clothing or have haircuts that brand them as a member of a particular group, school officials said.

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