

Fort Worth social workers fear for safety in response to nationwide reports of violence

The Associated Press

FORT WORTH — More than half of the social workers in North Texas responding to a recent poll say they fear for their safety, a threat that officials say is a growing reality across the country.

"We're on the front lines of a general breakdown in society," John Brogden, a risk-assessment coordinator for Child Protective Services in North Texas said in a report in Monday's Fort Worth Star-Telegram.

"We've seen an increase in violence. But until recently we really hadn't studied it, had a consistent way to report it, or thought about safety."

Nationwide, the newspaper reported, assaults on social workers are increasing at alarming rates. There is no official tracking system, but experts said the problem is most acute in New York state, where five case workers have been killed by clients in the last five years.

"These jobs are becoming more and more hazardous," said Peter Grupp, a professor of social work at the University of Texas at Arlington and

chairman of the advisory committee for the Tarrant County Department of Human Services. "You are dealing with people who are desperate and at the end of their rope."

A CPS survey of 219 North Texas workers — about a quarter of the agency's work force in the area — showed that nearly half fear for their safety. Nine said they had been physically assaulted in the last year, 71 reported threats of violence, and 36 said they had been verbally abused.

It also found that some social service workers were not reporting attacks because they feel they have somehow failed the client if he or she becomes violent.

"CPS line staff feel that they are playing a kind of Russian roulette, repeatedly entering threatening settings without any clear plan or means of escape," the survey said.

Among the more recent attacks in North Texas, a case worker looking for the parents suspected of abusing their newborn was knocked down and repeatedly kicked by a group of youths as she and her co-worker fled the apartment of the baby's irate father.

Russia, Houston corp. sign gas agreement

The Associated Press

HOUSTON — With the Russian prime minister looking on Monday, Houston-based Enron Corp. and R.A.O. Gazprom, the major natural gas company of Russia, signed the framework of an agreement to develop new markets for natural gas.

The signings, completed with toasts, came as Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin and U.S. Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary huddled in Houston to try to ease the way for American energy companies to do more business with oil- and gas-rich Russia.

"I think there are unique challenges," O'Leary said. "We are taking on a partner which for the

last 50 years has had no normal framework. The challenge is quite difficult — to put a system in place. To expect it to happen overnight is unrealistic."

The Enron-Gazprom agreement was announced as Chernomyrdin, second in power to Russian President Boris Yeltsin, began a week-long U.S. visit with a stop in Houston.

The trip, which includes stops in Florida and Washington, is intended to increase trade and cooperative space ventures between the nations.

Under Monday's framework, Enron and Gazprom will cooperate to deliver Russian natural gas and develop projects to use the gas in European countries. Enron

already operates 44,000 miles of pipelines and is one of the largest independent power producers in the United States and United Kingdom.

Chernomyrdin also visited with officials of Marathon Oil Co., which is involved with Shell Oil Co. and other partners in a \$10 billion project developing two offshore oilfields off Sakhalin Island.

"He was very encouraging," Marathon spokesman Bill Ryder said. "He reaffirmed his support and his government's support for the consortium."

O'Leary said she and Chernomyrdin followed up items discussed earlier in the year when Yeltsin and President Clinton met in Vancouver, Canada.

Record dry streak ends after 63 days in San Antonio

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — A two-month dry spell has finally ended, but residents of San Antonio aren't exactly singing in the rain.

One-hundredth of an inch of rain, the smallest amount that can be accurately recorded, was measured at 6:10 p.m. Sunday in three official rain gauges at the San Antonio International Airport.

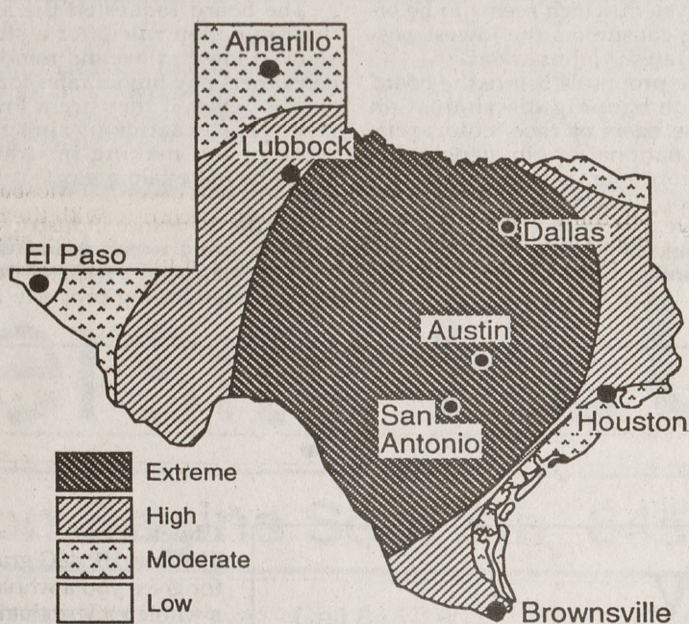
The rainfall officially ended a 63-day record dry streak.

Clouds covered San Antonio early Monday, holding out hope for more rain. The National Weather Service said there was a 20 percent chance of showers or thunderstorms Monday and Tuesday.

Although Sunday's precipitation didn't do much practical good, it was met with sense of relief and wishes for more of the same.

"It's over. ... It's over. ... It's over. ... It's over. ... It's over. ... The longest period of consecutive days without measurable rain in San Antonio has officially ended," stated a National Weather Service bulletin.

Wildfire Danger Report



Grass fires across Central Texas are straining available firefighting resources.

Source: Texas Forest Service and Texas Agricultural Extension Service 08-25-93

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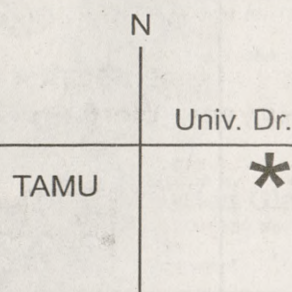
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