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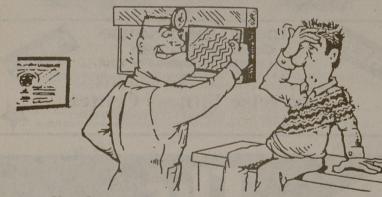
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Judge orders Brenham explosion site review

The Associated Press

HOUSTON - A Washington County judge wants state officials to review with a "fine-toothed comb" a gas company's application to resume operations where a 1992 gas explosion killed three people.

Maybe we can't do anything about the past, but we can sure watch out for the future," Judge Dorothy Morgan said after the National Transportation Safety

Board's report was released last

Page 4

In that report, Seminole Pipeline Co.'s safety system which failed to detect a

sparked the April 7, 1992 blast, was criticized as badly designed. Brenham is 53 miles northwest of Houston.

Morgan and other county residents say the Texas Railroad Commission should hold Mapco Natural Gas Liquids accountable for the accident before deciding on the company's request.

Seminole is a division of Mapco, a Tulsa, Okla.-based firm that is seeking approval from the Railroad Commission to reopen the facility about eight miles south of Brenham.

'The findings (of the federal probe) don't come as any sur-

prise," Morgan said. "The bottom line is that it looks like Seminole was very, very careless. That has been verified with the federal investigation.

One activist group battling a new permit is the Brenham Area Concerned Citizens, represented by San Antonio attorney Jon Alworth, who failed to persuade the commission to delay its hearing until the federal investigation is completed.

superior to

those of the

Railroad

Commission

to investi-

gate and find out the

'The NTSB has resources far

"Maybe we can't do anything about the past, but we can sure watch out for the future."

real facts,"
Alworth
said. "And
their find-- Judge Dorothy Morgan

ings confirm our worst suspicions about the Seminole operations. The early-morning explosion occurred after a cloud of the

leaking gas had accumulated over a large area.

A passing car ignited the gas and the resulting blast registered between 3.5 and 4.0 on the Richter scale.

Killed in the explosion was 5-year-old Derrick Meinen, who was sleeping in his family's trailer home.

The blast also injured Gloria Diver, 46, and her daughter, Delores Medve, 27, both of whom died several days later.

STATE FAIR OF TEXAS -

Brownwood teen's animals draw fair's record proceeds

The Associated Press

DALLAS - A 17-year-old Brownwood youth - with his lamb and cow - have taken the State Fair by the horns, drawing in record proceeds at the livestock auction.

Hilton Wise made a record \$35,000 off his grand champion livestock - a top-prize steer named Possum and his champion

"This is the biggest day I've ever had," Wise said, as he wait ed for the sale of his third entry, a nameless lamb that adde \$1,100 to the \$30,000 selling price of Possum and the \$5,000

The previous record sale prices, set last year, were \$17,500 $\rm fm$ a steer and \$2,000 for a lamb.

Auction organizers also said it was the only time they could remember one person winning both the steer and lamb categorie at the annual State Fair livestock competition Saturday, In all, 100 steers were auctioned for \$240,370, and 73 lambs

brought \$48,937, said Nancy Wiley, fair spokeswoman.

Possum, the best of 217 steer entries, had a real-world market

value of about \$700. Dale Wamstad, better known as Del Frisco, owner of the Dou

ble Eagle Steak House, bought the animal at 42 times that price. "It's a great piece of beef," he said. "But it won't end up in the

He donated the animal to the Salesmanship Club of Dallas for consumption at a youth facility. Slick the lamb was purchased by Jack Evans Jr., president of

Tom Thumb Food Stores. The auction price was about 100 times the animal's \$50 market

value. The lamb will be sold and the proceeds given to charity, Evans said.

Hilton, a high school junior, is a member of Future Farmers of America. He said his winnings would help pay for him to attend the Texas A&M University School of Veterinary Medicine. Hilton said he spent two to three hours daily grooming, feed-

ing and doting on his six steers and two lambs. Upbeat after the sale, he revealed not a hint of sadness at having patted his 18month-old cow for the last time. 'It's just, 'So long,"' he said. "It's part of the business."

State News Briefs

Renovations disturb Corpus Christi residents

CORPUS CHRISTI (AP) - Downtown Corpus Christi is undergoing a face lift, but some residents say that the changes — rather than improving the city — may instead leave

In the past five months, five old buildings have been demolished by a development company that owns 25 percent of downtown property. The same company is now in the process of tearing down a landmark restaurant.

The move is designed to clear the cityscape of unsightly, deteriorated structures and to minimize insurance liability, said Jim Caldwell, president of TRT Development Co.

"We are trying to give downtown a better look," Caldwell said. "We're of the opinion will be quicker to come up with new ideas for using those spaces. By starting with a clean slate, you open a lot of possibilities."

Mayor Mary Rhodes and a prominent downtown developer, Charles DeCou, say the demolitions probably make good business sense and will improve the appearance of the downtown area.

Officer rescued from car as it burst into flames

HOUSTON (AP) - Authorities are crediting quick-thinking residents with saving a Houston police officer from his wrecked patrol car just as it burst into flames

Officer R.A. Lowe was pursuing a drug suspect at about 1:30 p.m. Saturday when he swerved to avoid another motorist and struck a utility pole, said Alvin Wright, a Houston police spokesman.

Wright said three alert residents dragged Lowe from the car just as it burst into flames near a southwest Houston restaurant. The offi-

cer, who was not seriously injured, was treated by Hermann Hospital and released Saturday.

Al Walters, a diner at Doneraki Restaurant, ran to the scene and with an unidentified high school teacher and a jogger, pulled Lowe from the patrol car.

We finally got the window cracked open a little and then we got it open enough to pull him out through the window," said Walters, 43. 'It was starting to get really warm at that

Mitch Thompson, a marketer with a local television station, was jogging in the area when he saw the cruiser slide out of control.

'We pulled him out and dragged him down the street," Thompson said.
Seconds after the trio pulled Lowe out, the

car went up in flames.

"The car was totally engulfed," said Walters. "Then all of a sudden it went poof and it incinerated."

The drug suspect surrendered a half-block from the wreck scene and faces charges of pos-session of a controlled substance. His three companions were also arrested and face charges of drug possession.

Community uneasy about illegal dumping

FOUR CORNERS (AP) - In its heyday, this small unincorporated community southwest of Houston was a thriving cotton and rice farming center.

Now residents say, it's quickly becoming the trash capital of Texas.

Garbage trucks making their way to a nearby dump already compete with school buses. Illegal dumping is rampant and dumpers are often bold. Some residents have given up trying to free the ditches and road sides from old tires, construction debris and household garbage.

'Look how we live around here. Our

streets are not wide. The trash trucks don't respect the school buses. People dump all the time," said Donald Blake, a Four Corners res ident. "We might complain, but ... this is the way it always has been

With another landfill on the way, courted of Houston businessman Donald Poarch a partner Joseph Swinbank, residents in this area about 30 miles southwest of Houston are even more riled.

Winona waste company to resume operations

AUSTIN (AP) - The Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission has given an East Texas hazardous waste processing company approval to resume operations.
The agency had banned Gibraltar Chemi-

cal Resources of Winona in September from receiving any more waste pending a review of operations

The order resulted from a Sept. 9 chemi cal reaction at the plant, which occurred be cause incompatible wastes had been mixed.

A state investigation revealed Gibraltar workers failed to do basic testing before the mixing occurred. In addition, officials found that Gibraltar delayed reporting the acciden to the TNRCC for a day and lacked expedi ency in turning over all records once agency investigators arrived.

Gibraltar said it has since upgraded oper ating procedures and retrained staffers.

The company will be allowed to receiv

waste in increasing amounts over a five date period, state officials said. During the first 24 period, state officials said. During the first 24-hour period, the company will be allowed to process no more than 30 percent of its average capacity. The percentage will be increased over subsequent days until the it reaches 70 to 75 percent of the plant's average capacity.

"This will allow implementation of their revised operating in a highly regimented and controlled fashion," said Tony Grigsby, TNRCC executive director.

TNRCC executive director.

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