

• Listen to KAMU 90.9 FM at 1:57 p.m. for details on the death of the College Station city manager's daughter in a car accident.

• Check out *The Battalion* online at battalion.tamu.edu.



• No Requests, Please

Album sales, not government or DJs, responsible for broadcasts

Page 3



Weather:

Partly cloudy with a high of 94 and a low of 73.

THE BATTALION

TUESDAY

August 1, 2000
Volume 106 - Issue 177
6 pages

106 YEARS AT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Lawmakers to change tax-free holiday

KIM TRIFILIO

The Battalion

Texas lawmakers are changing Texas' second tax holiday for clothing and footwear that will give Bryan-College Station consumers a break from state and most local sales

taxes August 4-6. Sheila Clancy, spokesperson for Texas Comptroller Carole Keeton Rylander, said that this year the state has opportunities to do more to relieve the tax burden, for example, including layaway items.

"This year is the first time you can put something on layaway tax free and when you get the item out, it will still be tax free," Clancy said.

Beginning Friday at 12:01 am and ending Sunday at midnight, Texas Legislature will exempt most clothing and footwear priced less than \$100 from sales taxes. Shoppers will save about \$8 for

every \$100 that they spend. Customers will receive the break on individual items regardless of the amount they buy. The exemption applies to most clothing and shoes, but not jewelry, sporting goods or school supplies.

Clancy said Rylander favors legislation that would prolong the sales-tax holiday to a week or more in order to avoid one hectic weekend.

"Comptroller Rylander would really like to extend the three-day tax holiday to a week to give families more opportunities to take advantage of it," Clancy said. "Rylander does not have a definite proposal yet, but she will have a firm proposal in January."

Clancy said the comptroller also would like to add to the list of exempted items.

"Rylander also wants to include backpacks in the list because most schools require them," Clancy said. "Also, she thinks sewing items should be included like fabric, buttons and zippers."

Texas consumers will not be able to purchase tax-exempt school supplies this year. However, that soon may change. Fred Brown, state representative for District 14, said there has been discussion about including school supplies in next year's tax holiday.

"We have talked about including school supplies in the tax-free weekend," Brown said. "I know someone will be introducing a bill in this next session, but I don't know if it will get passed because we don't know about the moneys available."

Clancy said the Legislature is not considering including school supplies to the list of tax-free items at this time.

"Some people would like to see school supplies, but the Legislature looked at it last year and decided against it," Clancy said.

Local businesses are preparing for many consumers to advantage of the tax break.

See TAX on Page 2.

Sales-Tax Holiday

1999: Consumers saved \$32 million from tax cut

2000: Consumers expected to save \$37 million from tax cut

SUSAN REDDING/THE BATTALION

ExCEL to aid students

ADRIENNE BALLARE

The Battalion

The ExCEL Conference, to be held Aug. 25-26, aims to help incoming students and parents of various ethnic backgrounds make a smooth transition to Texas A&M. The conference has increased diversity among conference participants entering the University this fall.

Roderick Moore, adviser for the ExCEL Conference, said the conference also helps students develop leadership skills.

"We seek to enhance the students' academic and leadership skills in promoting preservation in students' cultural identities," Moore said.

Herbert Sims, executive director for the ExCEL Conference, said that, unlike past years, the representation of ethnic groups is more balanced.

"This year it may be 50 percent African-American and 50 percent Hispanic," Sims said. "The ExCEL Conference is not just for African-American students; it's for all students."

Chris Cason, co-director of student programs, said this year's staff is aiming to embrace various ethnic groups and make ExCEL a multicultural experience.

"We seek to enhance the students' academic and leadership skills in promoting preservation in students' cultural identities."

— Roderick Moore
adviser for the ExCEL Conference

Apartments take fire-safety measures

CHRIS CUNICO

The Battalion

Early last Saturday morning, the University Commons fire safety system was put to the test when a fire started in the dryer of a third-story apartment. Lisa Michael, manager of University Commons Apartments, said the fire is believed to have originated in the motor area of the dryer because a lint buildup or a butane lighter possibly came into direct contact with the motor.

The fire was contained to the laundry room. The entire building was evacuated in an orderly fashion after a pull-down alarm was activated, and no one was injured. Besides the actual fire damage, the rooms on the first and second floor directly below the fire suffered water damage from the sprinkler system.

"We've had reports of residents accidentally starting a fire when they were cooking, but nothing became out of control."

— Carol Cienega
manager of Briarwood Apartments

Heather Knox, University Commons resident and junior speech communication major, said the living room of her apartment was drenched. The fan and ceiling lights filled with water, and the carpet had to be restretched and shampooed. Knox said her books and other personal belongings were severely damaged.

"Our place was soaked," Knox said. "After the carpet cleaning crews left, we waited for someone else to come and finish the cleaning, but no one ever came. There is still visible damage to the ceiling, and my roommate and I were forced to move all of the furniture back to its original place with-

out assistance. The girls whose dryer caught on fire were very upset because they weren't given any help finding a hotel or somewhere to stay when they were waiting for the repairs to be made."

Apartments in the University Commons have a water-sprinkler system in the living room, each bedroom and the laundry room — a safety feature not found in many apartments. Each building contains six pull-down alarms, two per floor, that produce a sound loud enough to warn all the building's residents. Emergency buttons that automatically notify the fire department, police department, and the security company of an emergency are located in each room. In each hallway, smoke detectors monitor the air to alert residents so they can quickly evacuate the premises in the event of a fire.

"We've had one other fire," Michael said. "In February, a female resident lit candles before taking a bath. She eventually fell asleep and the candle in turn ignited the polyethylene sink and faucet. Our complex was not deemed responsible for either of the fires."

Carol Cienega, manager of Briarwood Apartments, said most of the apartments have one smoke detector, and some of the larger ones have two. Briarwood does not provide emergency or pull-down alarms to warn residents of possibly hazardous situations. Cienega said that in the 10 years she has been employed by Briarwood, there has not been a substantial damage as a result of fire.

"We've had reports of residents accidentally starting a fire when they were cooking, but nothing became out of control," Cienega said. "Last spring, an apparent grease fire started and was easily controlled without the assistance of the fire department. All of the dryers are housed in areas away from occupied buildings, so they do not pose a threat to dangerous fires."

Tim Griffith, asset manager for Melrose Apartments, said his complex goes to great lengths to ensure the safety of its residents. In addition to six pull down alarms in each building stairwell, Griffith said his complex provides a

See SAFETY on Page 2.

Fly away home



Dennis Bridges, a Texas A&M Physical Plant worker, fires blanks into the air in front of the Doherty Building Friday evening. Plant workers do this each night to stop birds from roosting in the trees and buildings on campus.

Disasters cover East and West Coasts

1/2 million acres burn in 10 states

RIDGECREST, Calif. (AP) — Wildfires raged in 10 Western states Monday, crackling through a half-million acres of timber, bush and brush. One of the biggest fires burned untamed after incinerating seven homes in a Sierra Nevada hamlet.

Nearly 50 blazes have blackened 537,791 acres in Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Washington and Wyoming in the past two weeks.

It's the worst fire season since 1988, when 5 million acres burned in the West, said Michelle Barret, spokesperson

for the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho.

"There were 2.2 million acres burned year-to-date in 1988. We're already at 3.5 million and we're just coming into fire season in most of the West," Barret said.

"The West is just in a terrible time," Barret said. "Dry lightning doesn't bode well for us. You couldn't write a more dangerous situation than the one we have right now. In this game, weather is everything."

With at least 10,714 firefighters deployed and resources stretched thin, the Pentagon ordered up soldiers from Texas and Calif.

Flooding evacuates Pa. homes

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Dozens of people were rescued from about 100 flooded homes and vehicles after heavy rains turned streets into rivers and washed out bridges.

Some 25 to 30 people were evacuated from homes Sunday in southeast Bucks County. Red Cross spokesperson Ed Meyers said about 100 homes were affected by the flooding.

Station 6 Fire Chief David Whitaker, in Lower Southampton called the flooding "horrendous" and said it was worse than the problems caused by Hurricane Floyd in September.

"It's the most I've seen come down at one time,"

Whitaker said. An evacuation center had been set up at the station but no one had come yet, he said.

At the height of the storm, about 12,000 customers were without power in Delaware, Montgomery and Bucks Counties, said PECO spokesperson Michael Wood. About 3,700 remained without power at 11 p.m. and were expected to regain power by early morning, he said.

The storm system parked itself over Pennsylvania after picking up moisture from the southern Great Lakes, said Rich Kane, a National Weather Service forecaster in suburban Pittsburgh.

News in Brief

Court rules abortion law unconstitutional

CINCINNATI (AP) — A federal appeals court agreed Monday that a Kentucky law banning certain late-term abortion procedures is unconstitutional.

The 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a 1998 decision by a federal judge who ruled that the Kentucky law went too far, was too vague and effectively would outlaw some abortion procedures that are legal.

The decision comes in the wake of a Supreme Court ruling in June that a Nebraska law very similar to those in Kentucky and 30 other states was unconstitutional. The laws are aimed at what opponents call partial-birth abortions, a rarely used procedure. Kentucky's law made it a crime for doctors to perform such procedures, but the 1998 ruling had prohibited state authorities from enforcing it.