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Licenses get new look for minors

AUSTIN (AP) — New vertical driver licenses for people under the age of 21 were unveiled Tuesday by the Texas Department of Safety, where officials hope the new design will help deter underage drinking and tobacco use.

The design also comes with beefed up security features aimed at making it harder to make fakes.

The legal drinking age is 21 in Texas, where tobacco products can be legally sold to people 18 and older.

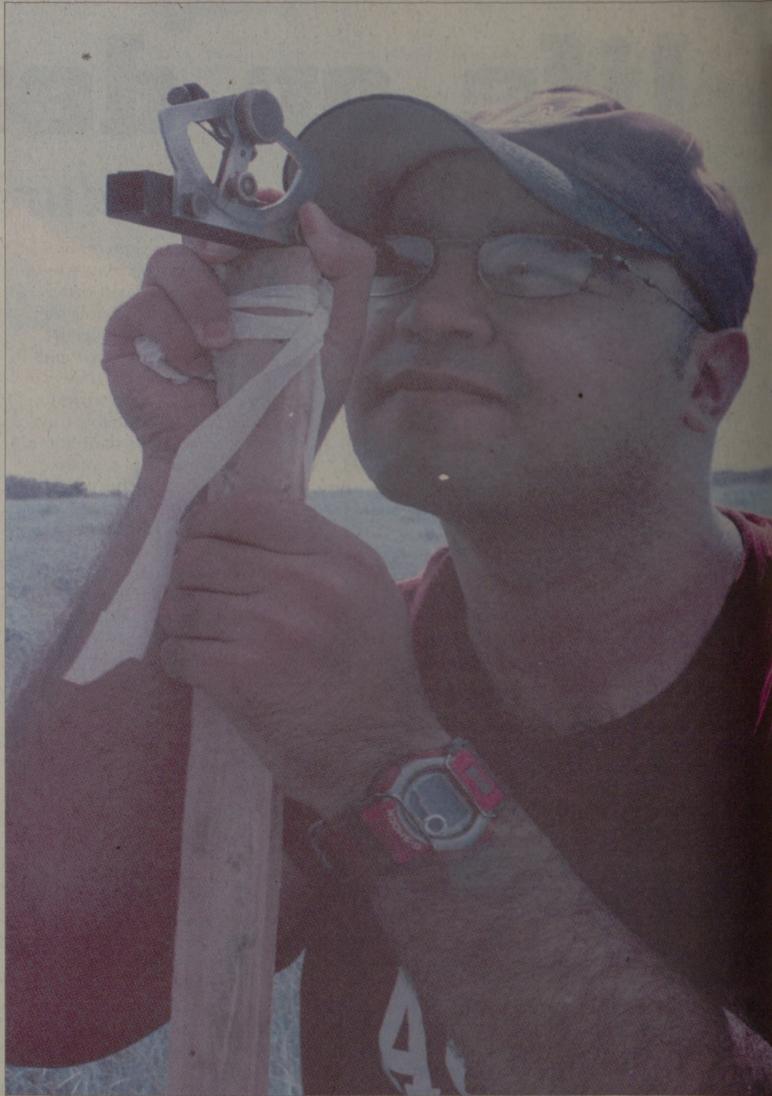
"We're hopeful the new under-21 design will make it much easier for merchants who sell age restrictive products, like alcohol and tobacco, to identify underage consumers," said Col. Thomas A. Davis Jr., DPS director. "Added security features will provide law enforcement with additional tools to more easily identify counterfeit and altered licenses."

The licenses will be up-and-down, compared to the current Texas driver's license, which is horizontal, like a credit card. The person's photo will be at the bottom, instead of on the right, and a picture of the Texas Capitol will appear in the background.

Licenses for people 21 and over will remain horizontal, but will include the new security features and Capitol design.

Last year, the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission issued 24,016 alcohol-related citations and warnings to minors in Texas. That does not count local law enforcement.

Outside the classroom



Ricardo Mena, a junior earth science major, studies a slope for a soil survey in his science class Tuesday morning. Mena is surveying the banks of the Brazos River Highway 60.

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Police find 8-year-old locked in dark closet

HUTCHINS (AP) — Police say a South Dallas County couple locked an 8-year-old girl in a dark, lice-infested closet for four months, where she lay on a urine-stained blanket and ate bits of bread and water.

The malnourished girl weighed only 25 pounds and was just 3 feet tall when she was rescued Monday night. The 4-by-8-foot closet was littered with human waste and soiled clothing.

Barbara Catherine Calhoun, 30, and Kenneth Ray Atkinson, 33, were arrested for investigation of injury to a child. They were being held in the city jail and were to be transported to the Dallas County jail Tuesday evening. Formal charges were expected late Tuesday.

Atkinson also was arrested for an outstanding charge of theft by check and probation violation.

The girl was taken to Children's Medical Center of Dallas for treatment of malnutrition. Police said the girl should weigh at least 50 pounds.

"It appears this suspected abuse may have been ongoing for several months or even years," said Hutchins Police Chief Gregory Griffin at a news conference Tuesday.

Child Protective Services spokeswoman Marleigh Meisner said she is in stable condition, although the girl may suffer from other medical conditions. The child's skin was peeling on her back and buttocks, and her stomach was bloated.

Five other children in the home, ranging from 22 months old to 11 years, were placed in emergency foster care. Police said it did not appear they were malnourished, although the mobile home they lived in was filled with dirty clothes, trash and pet feces.

ty judge Wednesday to take temporary custody of the six children.

Police did not identify the couple Tuesday afternoon, but said the mother was 30 and the stepfather was 33.

Hutchins Police Officer Gary McClain said the stepfather told a neighbor at the Pebble Creek Mobile Home Park about the girl Monday evening. Joe Rivers, the neighbor, then went to the fire station and contacted police.

When police arrived at the home, the mother was gone and

"When I looked in her eyes, it looked like she'd been in a dungeon for days and days. I thought, 'My God, how can anybody do that?'"

— Gary McClain
Hutchins police officer

the stepfather was feeding the girl spaghetti at the kitchen table.

"She was eating as fast as she could," McClain said.

The officer said the girl, who was filthy with matted hair, was the size of a toddler.

"When I looked in her eyes, it looked like she'd been in a dungeon for days and days. I thought, 'My God, how can anybody do that?'"

But the girl was talking and in good spirits, McClain said.

"She probably thought coming to the dinner table was the highlight of her night," he said.

The stepfather was cooperative and provided birth certificates and immunization records

for the children, McClain said. The mother was arrested and Rose Rivers returned home Monday a.m. Tuesday. Police did not say where she had been.

Rivers said he had befriended the man and that their children played together at the home park. But he didn't know until Monday that the man was living with the family.

He said he wished he had helped earlier.

"I sat at his kitchen table with playing cards," Rivers said. "That just makes me sick."

Rivers said the man had his wife for the abuse, and she continued in some form for months.

"He said that she (the mother) couldn't control the child. But if you'd seen the child, you'd know she was caused," said Rivers.

The stepfather did not help, Rivers said, because he feared authorities would take away all the kids, three of whom were his biological children.

"He feels terrible," Rivers said. "He said the night we found her, he was terrified of losing those kids."

Police said the 8-year-old girl appeared to have been neglected for some time. She told police she was 2 years old.

Police said they did not know if the girl, or other children, had attended school. Police had called to the home several times earlier to investigate an unattended child welfare case involving the 8-year-old girl.

Marleigh said the girl had died if the neighbor had acted quickly.

"Parents are to love, protect and nurture their children," McClain said. "But when they are negligent, the neighbors must step forward."