

THE BATTALION

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Police target seatbelt safety

By Nicole M. Jones
THE BATTALION

About 30 traffic fatalities have occurred this year in the Brazos Valley, said Rhonda Seaton, master officer for the College Station Police Department.

Some of those deaths could have been avoided with the use of safety belts, officials say, which is why CSPD and other law enforcement departments across the country are participating in the nationwide "Click It or Ticket" campaign.

The Click It or Ticket campaign, created by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), encourages law enforcement agencies to focus on safety belt violations. This two-week campaign, which began last week and ends Nov. 30, is designed to create public awareness about seat belt laws nationwide.

Many U.S. states have secondary laws, which only allow law enforcement officers to issue a citation for failing to wear a safety belt if the driver has already violated another traffic law. In Texas and some other states, primary laws are in effect, allowing officers to

Thanksgiving Travel Safety Tips

Travelers hitting the road this week are advised to follow these recommendations for a safe holiday trip:

- Get plenty of rest before starting out
- Allow adequate time and plan your route
- Wear safety belt restraints
- Don't drink and drive, and don't allow someone else to
- Obey posted speeds and adjust to road, traffic and weather conditions

Pay attention to weather and traffic reports before departing



SETH FREEMAN • THE BATTALION
SOURCE: OREGON DEPARTMENT OF STATE POLICE

pull over a driver simply to issue a citation for not wearing a safety belt.

The NHTSA has found that primary laws are effective for increasing safety belt usage. In 2002, seatbelt use in states with primary laws was 80 percent, compared to 69 percent in states without primary laws.

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E-Walk



JOSHUA HOBSON • THE BATTALION

Junior Yell Leaders Paul Terrell and Ryan Bishop lead the Class of 2003 in the "Aggie War Hymn" at Albritton Tower Tuesday afternoon for Jr. E-Walk.

Electrical appliance causes Koldus fire

By Sarah Szuminski & Elizabeth Webb
THE BATTALION

College Station firefighters determined that an electrical appliance was the cause of a fire that broke out in an Athletic Department office in the John J. Koldus building early Tuesday morning.

Peter Warden, a manager for the men's basketball team, was in a nearby office working on a film from Monday night's basketball game around 2 a.m. when the fire started.

"The fire alarm went off, and when I walked into the hallway I saw a ton of smoke," Warden said. "When I went outside, I saw flames coming from the Athletic Department office."

Firefighters were able to put out the flames with a fire extinguisher, cutting down on damage costs by avoiding additional water damage to the offices.

Cynthia Lawson, director of University Relations at Texas A&M, said damages were mostly limited to smoke and particle damage.

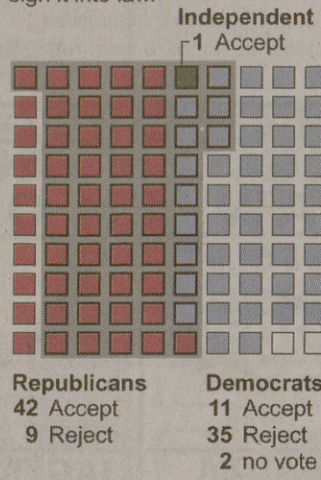
"You can see just one area of the wall that is black," she said.

Because the Athletic Department is in the process of shifting its offices around, Lawson said the small office where the fire was located did not contain many valuable items.

"The good news is that (the fire) was pretty small," Lawson said. "No one was injured — pretty much everyone was gone for the night."

MEDICARE BILL How they voted

The Senate passed the most sweeping changes to Medicare bill since its creation in 1965. The 54-44 vote sends the bill to President Bush, who is eager to sign it into law.



SOURCE: Associated Press AP

Congress sends Medicare overhaul bill to president

By David Espo
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The Republican-controlled Congress sent President George W. Bush historic Medicare legislation Tuesday, combining a new prescription drug benefit with measures to control costs before the baby boom generation reaches retirement age.

Bush is expected to sign the bill with a flourish, then trumpet its enactment during his bid for re-election next year. "Because of the actions of the Congress, the actions of members of both political parties, the Medicare system will be modern and it will be strong," he said in Las Vegas shortly after lawmakers broke years of gridlock on the issue.

But within hours of a 54-44 Senate vote, Senate Democratic leader Tom Daschle introduced legislation to repeal

several of the bill's most controversial provisions and to allow the importation of lower-priced prescription drugs from Canada and Western Europe. "This debate is not over, it's just beginning," said the South Dakota Democrat.

Apart from a new prescription drug benefit, the legislation invites private firms to sell insurance coverage to 40 million Medicare beneficiaries.

While some supporters praised the bill in glowing terms and some critics denounced it with equal vehemence, many lawmakers said the far-reaching legislation had confronted them with a difficult choice.

"This was not an easy vote for me," said Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California, one of 11 Democrats who

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India, Pakistan armies reach first cease-fire in 14 years

By Nirmala George
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW DELHI — India and Pakistan began a cease-fire between their armies at midnight Tuesday — the first such accord in 14 years.

The agreement, however, did not cover Indian security forces and Islamic militants in Kashmir, and there was no indication how long it would last or how effective it would be.

The two nations' armies — which trade machine-gun and mortar fire almost daily — would observe the cease-fire along

their entire frontier, the governments said. That includes the international border that covers several western states in India, the Line of Control dividing Jammu-Kashmir, and the frontier at the Siachen Glacier.

The start of the cease-fire coincides with the Eid-al-Fitr festival that ended the Islamic holy month of Ramadan.

In Islamabad, Pakistan Foreign Ministry spokesman Masood Khan confirmed military chiefs agreed on the cease-fire, which he said was indefinite and "a positive development."

Neither side specified how long the truce would last. India said Monday an enduring cease-fire would depend on

Pakistan ending the infiltration of Islamic militants into India's portion of Kashmir.

The largest Pakistan-based militant group battling in India's portion of the divided Himalayan province said its men would keep on fighting.

"This will not make any difference for mujahedeen activities," Salim Hashmi, a spokesman for Hezb-ul-Mujahedeen, told The Associated Press from Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan-controlled Kashmir. "The mujahedeen will continue their operations."

In contrast to the Kashmiris, who were joyful over the cease-fire as they crowded bazaars for their Eid shopping, Salim said it was "not something to get excited about."

India has accused Pakistan of using artillery fire as a cover to help militants sneak into Jammu-Kashmir to attack government forces and civilians in the past 14 years, and more than 65,000 people, most of them Muslim civilians, have died in the fighting.

"Certainly to that extent, the infiltration will be a more risky proposition for those attempting it," said G. Parthasarthy, former Indian high commissioner to Pakistan, commenting on the cease-fire.

"In terms of atmospherics, it is a good development. The litmus test of Pakistani

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India, Pakistan to observe cease-fire

Indian and Pakistan armies agreed to stop firing across their frontier and to observe a cease-fire along the international border and the Line of Control dividing disputed Kashmir.



SOURCE: Associated Press AP

A&M vs. U.T. Yell Practice

WHEN: Thursday, 8 p.m.
WHERE: Kyle Field



Texas A&M President Robert M. Gates, head coach Dennis Franchione and TAM captains will address the crowd.

Yell leaders and the Aggie Band will march through campus prior to yell practice, starting at the Corps quadrangle.

Friday's game will be this season's official "Maroon Out" game. The Aggies are 5-0 in Maroon Out games since the tradition began in 1998.

RUBEN DELUNA • THE BATTALION
SOURCE: TEXAS A&M YELL LEADERS

New Iraq combat roles ahead for National Guard, Reserve

By Robert Burns
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The National Guard and Reserve will take on more of the combat burden in Iraq next year, replacing some Army troops with a smaller, lighter and more mobile force equipped with fewer tanks and more Humvees.

Nearly 40 percent of the American forces in Iraq will be from the National Guard and Reserve after the Pentagon completes a massive switchout of troops starting in January — up from about 20 percent now.

Three National Guard infantry brigades will go, at least two of them slated for combat duties.

Overall, the Pentagon's plan for replacing the 130,000 American troops in Iraq with a fresh

contingent will shrink the force by 20 percent and result in a more mobile force, perhaps better suited to the guerrilla war that has been taking a sobering toll in U.S. deaths and injuries.

The first changes will be seen even before the newly designated replacement force gets there. A contingent of 5,000 soldiers in a combat team called the Stryker Brigade, from Fort Lewis, Wash., is training in Kuwait in preparation for duty in Iraq. They are equipped with a new, speedier, lightly armored troop carrier and sophisticated communications tools to enable soldiers to locate guerrilla threats.

The Stryker Brigade is likely to see action in the so-called Sunni Triangle, the area between Baghdad, Ramadi and Tikrit where the resistance to U.S. forces has been deadliest.

"It is absolutely optimized for this kind of fight," said Lt. Gen. Richard Cody, the Army's deputy chief of staff for operations, who oversees the Army's provision of fresh forces.

Nearly 40 percent of the 105,000 troops in the new force will be National Guard and Reserve after the switchout ends in April. That compares with about a 20 percent share in the current force of 130,000 troops.

And it won't be just Army reservists; the Marines plan to use about 6,000 of their citizen-soldiers.

The main replacement force will arrive over a period of about four months, from January

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