

NEWS

National and world news in brief

By Patrick Webster
assistant managing editor
paw175@psu.edu

West Virginia governor orders mines to close for safety inspections

CHARLESTON: The governor of West Virginia, Joe Manchin, has called for a complete shutdown of the state's coal mining industry until a battery of safety inspections and new safety legislation is implemented after two more mining deaths. The latest deaths bring the total for just the last month up to 16, a sharp rise after only three deaths being reported for the entire year of 2005.

"We're going to correct any unsafe conditions before we mine another lump of coal," the governor told reporters in a televised news conference. "There's not going to be another miner going in a mine until this is done."

Senior vice president for the West Virginia Coal Association, Chris Hamilton, promised that the group would cooperate fully with initiatives taken by the state government to determine the causes of increased accidents and help take steps to rectify them.

Mine officials will "engage the miners ... try to solicit their ideas and their recommendations, as well as take the opportunity to go over the mining plans ... safe work procedures and habits, and...bring everybody up-to-date over these," Hamilton said in an official statement.

While no coal companies have publicly stated that they will refuse to close, many people are looking for someone to affix the blame to. In the last five years, the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) has been drastically reduced, and federal authorities are issuing fewer citations and collecting less due fines. Liberal groups are feeding speculation that the recent reduction in mine safety enforcement in West Virginia has less to do with better conditions and more to do with raising large amounts of money for certain political candidates.

"It makes me furious," said Janice Nease, a retired teacher who became an anti-mining activist after her village, which included about 30 homes, was purchased and razed to make room for a mine. "We keep on plugging away, but it's harder."

Strong weather damages hurricane-hit areas

NEW ORLEANS: Officials in Louisiana are struggling to determine the extent of damage to the Louis Armstrong International Airport and surrounding areas after a possible tornado ripped through the area.

The unseasonable weather system also tore through some areas that were the hardest hit by the numerous hurricanes last year and cased the disruption of ongoing repair efforts.

"There are numerous houses that collapsed, roofs damaged, power lines down," said New Orleans police officer Sgt. Michael Brenckle.

Several concourses of the Louis Armstrong International Airport were damaged to various extents and the more badly damaged sections were closed down, with operations being moved to adjacent areas.

Government forces destroying cocaine crops run afoul of mines

BOGOTA, Colombia: Colombian government forces in a marching campaign to eradicate the thousands of acres of illegal coca plants being raised in the country ran into a snag when they discovered the fields were being sown with land mines.

The government program to eliminate the illicit drug-producing crops was massive; over four thousand infantrymen and workers were sent to march directly through the coca fields and manually uproot, slash or otherwise destroy as much of the illegal agriculture as possible.

Spokesmen for the government said the operation had to be cut back after land mines were discovered to be littered about the countryside and government troops were forced to engage armed rebels under the employment of local drug lords.

"It was necessary to modify the program," spokesman Samuel Salazar said.

The United States has provided over \$4 billion in aid to the Colombian government in the last decade as efforts are continually renewed to fight the trade of illegal drugs flowing from the country.

Bird flu vaccine developed

LONDON, England: Scientists have developed the first vaccine that shows promise for the prevention of the human infection of the H5N1 avian flu.

The new vaccine, temporarily named H5HA, has shown promise in protecting inoculated mice that were subsequently exposed to the H5N1 virus.

"This vaccine may protect humans against newer viruses," Dr. Suryaprakash Sambhara of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said in an interview on Thursday. "Our goal is to move it forward to Phase 1 clinical trials."

The new vaccine is exciting many medical scientists because it can be grown independently of a chicken egg, the usual means in which vaccines are produced. This could allow a vaccine to be produced in a much faster time frame than is usually required. Additionally, it is grown in such a way that it is not so specific in which types of phage (virus) it is effective against.

"This H5 adenovirus vaccine is an egg-independent and adjuvant-independent strategy," said Sambhara.

The medical journal *The Lancet* was optimistic for human trials of the vaccine and its ability to forestall a pandemic of human-transmittable viruses. "This approach is a feasible vaccine strategy against existing and newly emerging viruses of highly pathogenic avian influenza to prepare against a pandemic," the scientists said in the journal.

Source: CNN.com, Yahoo! News

Saving at the expense of safety

By Christopher LaFuria
sports editor
csl5005@psu.edu

posts that were eliminated. Among the positions that were cut by the city were detectives and investigators for the juvenile division and for certain traffic officers.

Erie resident and wife of an Erie police officer Sarah Walker said, "There are other places that cuts could have been made: street's department, clerical, mayor's staff, etc. Instead, Mayor Sinnott and the City Council have decided to risk the safety of the city of Erie residents."

As of Jan. 25, the Erie fire department has been under much scrutiny as citizens watch to see Sinnott's layoffs in action. A fire on East Fifth Street, which claimed the life of 63-year-old Judith Ziegler, may have occurred because the Erie fire department may have been lacking in number.

Some citizens claim that Ziegler's death may have been avoided had more firefighters been available. However, in recent weeks, the quick and decisive action of the Erie firefighters has been more effective. Two fires that broke out last Friday have proven that the Erie firefighters are still reliable. A fire at 405 Cherry Street, which injured one Erie man, was reported to the firefighters who arrived only two minutes after the call. Later that day, Belle Valley firefighters responded to a call on East 11th Street nine minutes after it was called in. Many agree that these quick actions show potential for the limited numbers of fire crews.

As Erie approaches Act 47 and struggles to bandage their financial bleeding, Sinnott and his staff are very cognizant of what they must do to keep Erie afloat. The layoffs of the police officers and firefighters are one step in Erie's plan to ameliorate their financial status.

The Erie City Council attacked a laundry list of financial problems during its last session on Wednesday, Jan. 25. Led by president Rubye Jenkins-Husband, the council addressed the financial problems that have already plagued newly elected Mayor Joe Sinnott in his young mayoral career. During the session, many citizens professed their concern over the many layoffs endured by the city's police and firefighting staff, one of the most controversial decisions made by Sinnott and the council.

After police and firefighters agreed to make changes to their health care coverage, which the city says may save \$1.1 million, Erie made the decision to layoff 36 firefighters and 24 of the city's police officers. While the judgment may not have an immediate effect on the city, many citizens are already expressing their concern. Many feel that a lack of coverage may be a future danger to all Erie residents. One citizen spoke out at the meeting saying, "If yours or my house was burning to the ground, would we feel that we are being protected?"

Many other citizens feel that the lack of safety coverage has potential to make create more danger for residents. Another citizen spoke to council saying, "We, as Erie residents, need to feel protected by our police and firefighters. It is not happening." With some recent fatal fires, the city is still working to make the firefighters and police officers more content.

A reason for Erie citizens to be concerned is not only the amount of police officers that were laid off, but also the

Entertainment around Erie

Monday		Thursday	
Antlers	Quarter Drafts Quarter Wings	Calamari's	\$1.75 Domestic Bottles 1/2 Price Appetizers
Calamari's	\$1 Bud/Bud Lights 2 for 1 wings	Cellblock	\$2 Mixed Drinks
Cornerstone	\$1 Domestic Karaoke Night	Plymouth	\$1 - \$1.50 Imports Free Peanuts!!
Papa George's	1.50 Domestic	Sherlock's/Park Place	Quarter Drafts \$1.50 Bud Select Bottles
Plymouth	Quarter Drafts 2 for 1 Wings	State Street Tavern	\$1.50 Bud/Bud Light Karaoke Night
Tuesday		Friday	
Antlers	\$2 Greek Dogs	Antlers	\$1.50 Bud Bottles
Calamari's	2 for 1 wings	Calamari's	\$1.75 Bud Light Bottles
Cellblock	\$.75 Domestic Bottles Cash Prize Beer Pong	Cellblock	\$2 Pitchers \$1.75 Miller Light Bottles
Cornerstone	\$1 off Anheuser-Busch	Plymouth	\$1 Mixed Drinks
Dockside	\$1.50 Bud/Bud Lights	Sherlock's/Park Place	\$1.50 Domestic
Plymouth	2 for 1 Pizza's Team Trivia - PRIZES!	State Street Tavern	\$1 Pint Drafts
Sherlock's/Park Place	\$1 Jumbo Drafts		
Wednesday		Saturday	
Antlers	\$2 Bud Pounders \$2 Personal Pizzas	Cellblock	Quarter Drafts
Cellblock	1/2 Off Everything	Cornerstone	Quarter Drafts
Cornerstone	Quarter Drafts	Plymouth	\$1.50 Labatts \$1 Margarita's
Plymouth	1/2 Off Everything Shellfish Spectacular	Sherlock's/Park Place	\$1.50 Domestic

Please check with establishment for times of specials. The Behrend Beacon does not support underage drinking. Please drink responsibly and do not drink and drive.

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"Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'"

~ Martin Luther King Jr.

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