

Wednesday

May 26, 2004

Volume 1, No. 27

Covington, Georgia

50 Cents

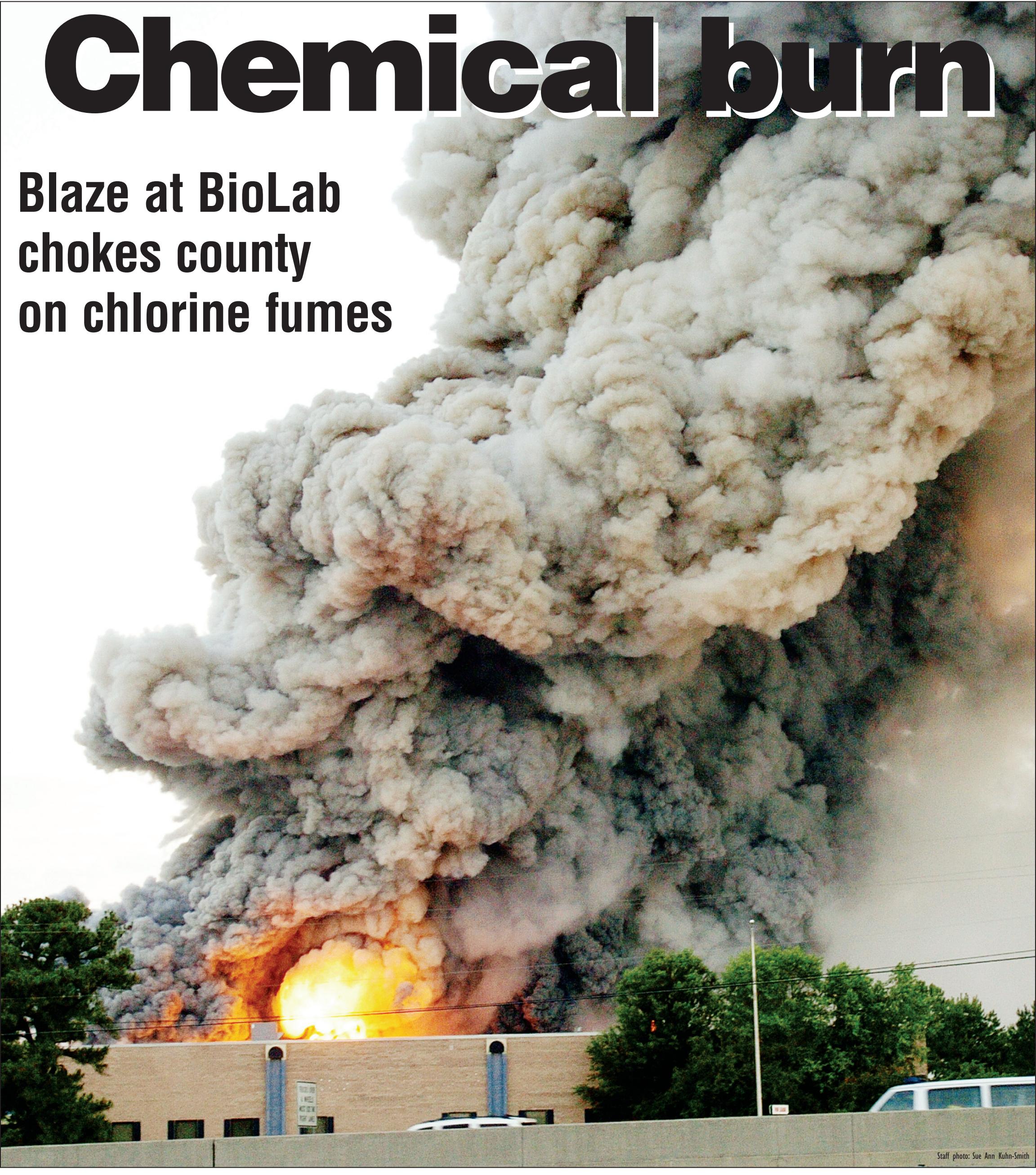
ATTENTION SUBSCRIBERS

Citizen newspapers' management realizes some subscribers might not have received their paper during the BioLab crisis. Regular delivery, plus issues missed, will be resumed as soon as our carriers can safely enter the affected areas.

Newton Citizen

Chemical burn

Blaze at BioLab chokes county on chlorine fumes



Staff photo: Sue Ann Kuhn-Smith

Hundreds forced to evacuate, curfew imposed, interstate shut down

BY CRYSTAL TATUM

STAFF REPORTERS

crystal.tatum@newtoncitizen.com

CONYERS — An early morning explosion at BioLab Inc., a Conyers chemical manufacturer, produced a thick gray plume of toxic smoke half a mile wide running parallel to I-20 into Newton County Tuesday, shutting down the interstate and forcing hundreds of residents to evacuate.

The explosion occurred between 4 a.m. and 4:30 a.m. in a 200,000-

square-foot distribution warehouse located at 1601 Rockdale Industrial Boulevard, where pool and spa chemicals were stored, according to Monty Eckles, vice president of manufacturing for BioLab. The cause of the explosion was unknown as of presstime.

About 10 of the plant's 450 employees were present at the time of the explosion, Eckles said. None were injured, he said.

As of presstime at 9 p.m. Tuesday, Sheriff Jeff Wigington of the Rock-

dale County Sheriff's Office (RCSO) and Chief Tony Lucas of the Conyers Police Department had issued orders for a mandatory curfew between the hours of 9 p.m. until 6 a.m. today. "Obviously, this is changing moment by moment," said RCSO Deputy Jodi Shupe. "Those who choose to go against the curfew will be stopped and questioned." The latest evacuated area is the Lakeview Estates complex off Lake Rockaway Road.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is still investigating a

chemical reaction that occurred at BioLab Inc. about six weeks ago. In that instance, intermediate chlorine ingredients began to decompose, creating a vapor cloud, according to Plant Manager Eusevio Roman. BioLab employees could not stop the reaction and contacted the company's emergency response team and the Rockdale County Fire Department. The situation was contained within 15 minutes, Roman said. BioLab reported the incident to the EPA. "That one's still under investigation," said EPA

spokeswoman Dawn Harris Young.

More than 100 firefighters from multiple jurisdictions worked to contain the fire. Fire officials did not release an estimate of how long it would take for the fire to burn out.

"This is going to be a major operation for a long time," said Capt. Eric Jackson, public information officer for the DeKalb County Fire Department.

By late afternoon, bulldozers were

• See Blaze, Page 5A

FOUR PAGES OF FIRE COVERAGE INSIDE

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WEATHER



Mostly sunny then becoming mostly cloudy. Highs in the upper 80s. Lows in the mid 60s to lower 70s.

More weather 2A

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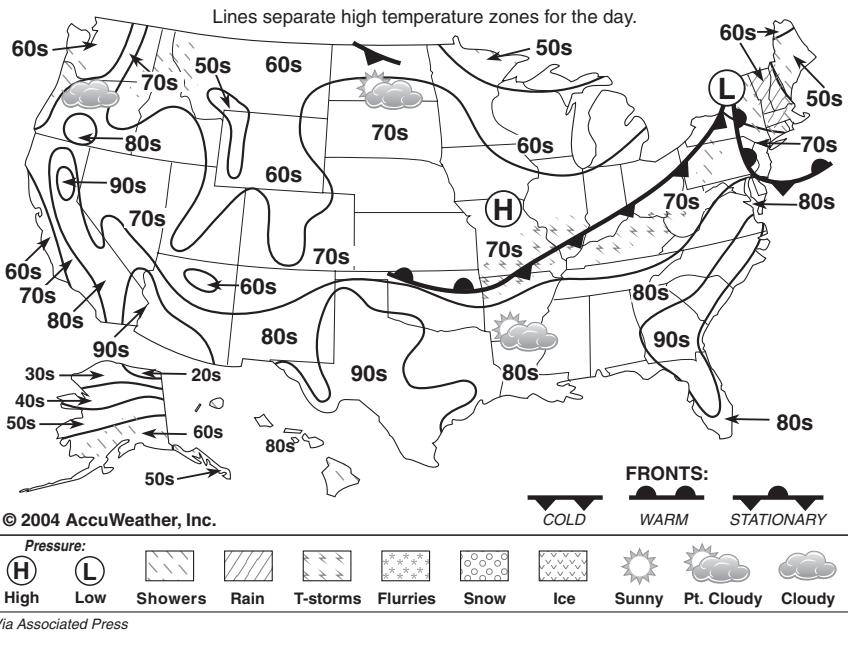


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WEATHER WATCH

NATIONAL

The AccuWeather.com forecast for noon, Wednesday, May 26.

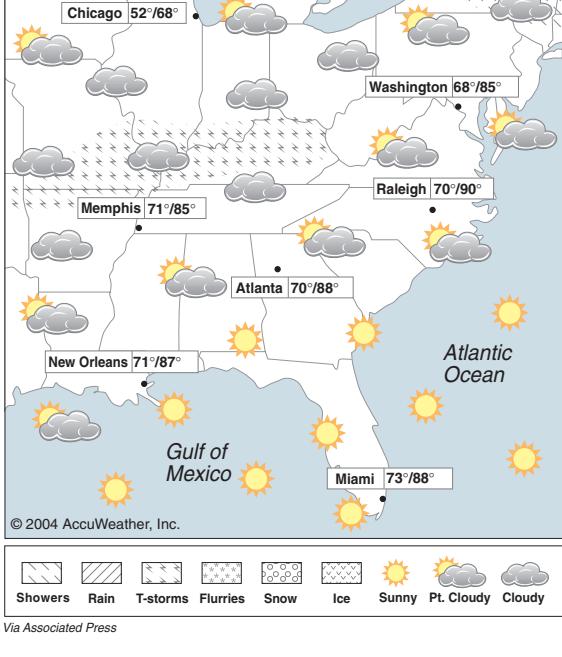


Via Associated Press

REGIONAL

Wednesday, May 26

AccuWeather.com forecast for daytime conditions, low/high temperatures



Via Associated Press

FIVE-DAY FORECAST

Today	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Partly cloudy. Highs in the 80s. Lows in the 60s.	Partly cloudy. A chance of showers. Highs in the 80s.			

THE WEATHER ELSEWHERE

City	Yesterday			Today			Tomorrow			City	Yesterday			Today			Tomorrow		
	Hi	Lo	Prc	Hi	Lo	Otk	Hi	Lo	Otk		Hi	Lo	Prc	Hi	Lo	Otk	Hi	Lo	Otk
Albany, N.Y.	77	60	.53	75	59	Cldy	69	53	Rain	Norfolk, Va.	90	75		87	71	PCldy	91	69	PCldy
Albuquerque	85	61		84	55	PCldy	81	54	PCldy	North Platte	75	47	.04	65	45	Cldy	78	49	PCldy
Amarillo	95	58		79	57	PCldy	88	57	PCldy	Oklahoma City	89	71	.02	87	65	Cldy	88	68	Cldy
Anchorage	52	49	.20	58	44	Rain	61	46	Cldy	Omaha	77	47	2.35	67	48	PCldy	74	57	PCldy
Asheville	85	57		84	61	PCldy	83	59	PCldy	Orlando	91	64		90	66	PCldy	93	70	PCldy
Atlanta	87	72		88	67	PCldy	88	67	PCldy	Pendleton	68	45		74	49	Cldy	70	49	Cldy
Atlantic City	91	66	.03	80	64	PCldy	82	62	Cldy	Philadelphia	90	67		84	67	PCldy	83	62	Cldy
Austin	88	72		88	71	Cldy	89	71	Cldy	Phoenix	95	73		94	68	Cldy	96	70	Cldy
Charleston, S.C.	91	71		91	71	PCldy	92	72	PCldy	Pittsburgh	83	52		78	61	PCldy	74	52	Rain
Charleston, W.Va.	84	67	.49	82	66	PCldy	78	60	Rain	Portland, Maine	50	47	.56	56	45	Cldy	53	44	Rain
Cheyenne	67	33	.11	54	41	Rain	67	44	PCldy	Portland, Ore.	81	55		81	56	Cldy	63	55	Rain
Chicago	64	47	.10	73	52	PCldy	70	51	PCldy	Salt Lake City	64	47		65	45	PCldy	70	54	PCldy
Cincinnati	82	62		80	62	Rain	75	56	Cldy	San Diego	68	62		68	59	PCldy	66	57	Cldy
Cleveland	73	51		75	58	Cldy	70	53	Cldy	San Francisco	66	55		66	53	PCldy	67	54	PCldy
Little Rock	87	73		85	70	PCldy	85	69	Cldy	San Juan, P.R.	82	73		88	74	Rain	89	76	PCldy
Los Angeles	71	61		70	60	PCldy	70	60	PCldy	St. Ste. Marie	55	43		53	39	Cldy	55	40	PCldy
Louisville	86	68	.01	78	67	Rain	80	64	Rain	Seattle	74	52		70	52	PCldy	60	50	Rain
Memphis	89	74		87	72	PCldy	85	71	PCldy	Sioux Falls	53	45	.53	60	41	Cldy	73	52	PCldy
Miami Beach	86	74		86	74	PCldy	87	75	PCldy	Spokane	62	41		70	46	Cldy	65	46	Rain
Midland-Odessa	99	70		94	69	PCldy	97	68	PCldy	Syracuse	82	53	.41	67	60	Rain	72	49	Rain
Milwaukee	57	44	.06	69	48	Rain	66	48	PCldy	Tampa-St. Ptsrbg	88	73		90	71	PCldy	90	72	PCldy
Mpls-St Paul	56	50	.01	63	64	Rain	68	48	PCldy	Topeka	84	56	.17	71	54	Cldy	76	60	PCldy
Nashville	86	68		87	68	PCldy	82	65	Rain	Tucson	94	68		92	63	PCldy	90	65	PCldy
New Orleans	87	71		89	72	PCldy	90	74	PCldy	Tulsa	87	75		82	63	Rain	83	65	PCldy
New York City	68	61	.05	77	63	PCldy	74	61	Cldy	Washington, D.C.	90	73		89	71	PCldy	84	61	Rain

GEORGIA LAKE LEVELS

Lake	Full	Yesterday	Lake	Full	Yesterday	
Allatoona	840.0		840.5	Lanier	1071.0	1070.8
Blackshear	237.0		236.8	Jackson	530.0	528.8
Blue Ridge	1690.0		1681.0	Oconee	435.0	434.9
Burton	1865.0		1865.0	Sinclair	339.8	338.2
Carters	1072.0		1068.8	Thurmond	330.0	328.2
Chatuge	1927.0		1924.7	Tugalo	891.5	889.8
Harding	521.0		520.7	West Point	635.0	633.9
Hartwell	660		658.3	Yonah	744.2	743.7

Readers Guide

Newton Citizen

photo, call photographer Sue Ann Kuhn-Smith at 770-787-7303, ext. 1307.

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Thought of the Day

"Love, I find, is like singing. Everybody can do enough to satisfy themselves, though it may not impress the neighbors as being very much."

— Zora Neale Hurston,

American anthropologist (1903-1960)

Lottery Numbers

Monday's Cash 3 Evening

0-8-5

Monday's Cash 4 Evening

9-8-4-4

Monday's Fantasy 5

4-8-25-29-36

Tuesday's Cash 3 Midday

4-0-2

Tuesday's Cash 4 Midday

0-5-1-5

Today in History

Today's Highlight:

On May 26, 1940

STATE & LOCAL

Newton lends helping hand during time of need

BY JOEY PETERS
STAFF REPORTER
joey.peters@newtoncitizen.com

COVINGTON — The Rockdale County Fire Department was not alone in its fight against a massive fire that engulfed portions of the Conyers BioLab building Tuesday.

Emergency personnel from Newton County reacted quickly to the blaze, thanks to an emergency management plan that officials said was ready to roll when word was received about the fire.

Tim Smith, public information officer for Newton County Fire Services, said trucks were dispatched to Rockdale around 7 a.m. to offer their assistance.

"We have one truck on stand-by at the Sigman Road Waffle House. Basically, they're there as a mutual assist to Rockdale," Smith said, adding that Newton County was essentially responsible for handling other calls coming into Rockdale while firefighters were at the BioLab scene.

"Right now, all the guys from Rockdale are at the scene. ... We're there to handle their calls," Smith said.

In addition to Newton Fire Services, fire trucks from the Covington Fire Department made their way up I-20 to assist, as well.

"We have sent Engine 1 with three men to the scene as part of mutual aid group assistance. DeKalb, Henry and Walton has units on the scene, as well," Christopher said. "We just learned that Engine 1 has been dispatched into the site and is pumping water. ... We're there, man."

According to police officials, approximately 100 firefighters did battle with the blaze throughout the day.

While area firefighters were busy fighting flames, local officials were busy assuring the safety of Newton County residents — many of whom were just waking up to the news.

"I was on the phone with (Sheriff) Jeff (Wigington) all



Staff Photo: Sue Ann Kuhn-Smith
Harold Maynard, 87, is interviewed by Adam Murphy of Channel 46 Tuesday morning after he fled Conyers to seek medical aid at Newton General Hospital in Covington. Maynard said his concern was for the entire community.

morning, and we have deputies on stand-by to assist if needed," Newton County Sheriff Joe Nichols said. "We have men stationed on the county line in the event, God forbid, that an evacuation had to occur. ... Panic might be the worst thing happening right

now. ... People just need to stay inside and turn off the A/C."

Reacting to the cloud's mammoth smoke plume towering outside, Nichols said the sight was terrifying.

"It's scary to see a cloud like that. It's even more terrifying because it involves chemicals,"

Nichols said. "It's the intangibles involved, I think. You ask questions like, 'What's in the cloud? What are my kids breathing?' ... It's scary for me, too. I can place handcuffs on a criminal, and I can control traffic. ... I can't control the wind."

Newton Emergency Management Director Trey Polk, who heads up the county's emergency response program, agreed the BioLab fire made for some tense moments.

"We met with Mike Smith and Sheriff Nichols at the 911 Operations Center at 8:15 a.m. about the fire," Polk said. "From what we gathered, it appeared that everything was going to be OK as far as Newton County is concerned."

After conversing with local officials, Polk said he contacted Rockdale County 911 call center director Carolyn Hunter and a decision was made.

"After we spoke with Carolyn, we learned that the fire may burn 10-12 hours but would contain itself. After hearing this, we decided to

take a wait-and-see attitude approach. ... An evacuation of Newton residents wasn't needed unless it was absolutely necessary."

Despite that fact that evacuations were not ordered, Newton County played a crucial role throughout the day — especially at Newton General Hospital.

According to Public Relations Director Sharon Barbour, affected residents started showing up at the hospital ER around 9 a.m.

"Rockdale Medical Center was on diversion for some time, so anyone affected by the fire was being sent to us," Barbour said. "So far, we have four, and I expect the number will climb as the day progresses."

Late reports indicated as many as 30 patients showed up for treatment at Newton General.

According to officials, most of those affected by the fire reported minor eye and skin irritations, but were treated and released.

House committee to examine Atlanta schools' computer spending

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATLANTA — The chairman of a U.S. House of Representatives committee says he will ask the Atlanta school system to turn over documents explaining how it spent \$73 million on building a computer network.

"It certainly wouldn't surprise me if certain members of that school district find themselves at a table facing a panel of congressmen in Washington," said Rep. James Greenwood, chairman of the investigations subcommittee of the

House Committee on Energy and Commerce.

An Atlanta paper reported Sunday that school officials built one of the nation's most elaborate computer networks, often choosing the most costly electronic gear on the market and buying far more than the district needed. The newspaper found more than \$3 million worth of idle electronics sitting in storage.

It also found that the school district, which used both local and federal funds, routinely paid too much because it did

not seek competitive bids.

The committee chaired by Greenwood, R-Pa., is investigating waste and mismanagement in the national E-rate program, which distributes up to \$2.25 billion a year to schools and libraries for the hardware necessary to wire classrooms for the Internet. The program, financed by a surcharge on telephone customers' monthly bills, does not pay for classroom computers.

Greenwood, who plans his first congressional E-rate hearings June 9, characterized the

newspaper's findings in Atlanta, compared with other school districts, as "pretty darn bad."

"We will have examples of school districts at our hearings who have done this right and school districts who have done it wrong," he said. "I don't think Atlanta is likely to be on the did-it-right panel."

In a newspaper column Tuesday, Atlanta school superintendent Beverly Hall acknowledged problems with the district's E-rate program, including poor record-keeping and contracting procedures. She

blamed most of the shortcomings on former employees and said she has beefed up E-rate oversight.

"I am not especially proud of our system's management of E-rate, but I am proud of the results," Hall wrote. "Children who would not otherwise have even basic Internet access are utilizing state-of-the-art technology to learn."

The Atlanta school board called the network a "state-of-the-art" system that can handle the district's technology needs for years to come.

But congressional critics of E-rate believe the program gave away too much money.

"It strikes me that if the Atlanta school board had decided to build this system with its own money, it probably could have built a good reliable Chevrolet," Greenwood said. "If it had been using federal monies, it might have opted for the Cadillac. But since these were free dollars from telephone subscribers, anonymous telephone subscribers all over the country, they went for the gold-plated Rolls-Royce."

Teachers on leave after students view beheading video

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HINESVILLE — Two south Georgia high school teachers were placed on administrative leave — a move that does not indicate wrongdoing — after their students watched videos of the beheading of American Nicholas Berg in Iraq.

Liberty County schools personnel director Wadyce Jenkins said he is unsure whether any other disciplinary action

will be taken against the teachers.

"When you first hear about it you are horrified that students saw it," Jenkins said. "But the more you find out about it, it's something the kids did and was not a part of the behavior of the teachers."

Jenkins said a student in a May 17 current events class at a Hinesville school accessed the video on the Internet after it was mentioned on a news Web site students were read-

ing. The class and the teacher then viewed the five-minute video.

Afterward, the video was again discussed in a world history class.

"Another student said he knew where to find the video," Jenkins said. "He got it. The teacher watched and said, 'That's enough.'"

Neither teacher has been named. School is out for summer, but Jenkins said both were at work this week.

A Wisconsin high school teacher is facing disciplinary action after similarly allowing juniors and seniors to watch the video in class on May 13 and a teacher was suspended in North Platte, Neb., for a similar incident.

Two teachers at Arkansas's Gravette High School were suspended after showing the video on May 18 and at least three California teachers were placed on paid leave for showing the graphic images.

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UGA and its fund-raising arm to part ways

BY LORI JOHNSTON

The Associated Press

ATHENS — The state Board of Regents on Tuesday ordered the University of Georgia to part ways with its official fund-raising group.

The move came after a year of controversy between the school and the UGA Foundation, starting with President Michael Adams' dispute with athletic director Vince Dooley, whose contract was not renewed.

The foundation, which acts as a not-for-profit corporation separate from the university, has been politically active recently beyond its fund-raising role.

The foundation ordered an audit last year that found shortcomings in the financial management practices of both Adams and the foundation.

The foundation also had

considered reducing the \$335,000 it contributes to Adams' \$575,000 total salary. But it decided in February instead to leave the matter to the regents after University System Chancellor Thomas Meredith met with trustees in a closed-door meeting that violated the state's open meetings act.

"The Board of Regents has watched this situation patiently for almost a year and has finally concluded that this action is necessary for the good of UGA and the University System of Georgia," Meredith said Tuesday.

The Board of Regents instructed Adams to send the UGA Foundation a letter terminating the school's relationship with it, which could cause the foundation to disband after it gets 90 days notice.

Adams had been scheduled to give a report to the founda-

tion's trustees Friday at the conclusion of its three-day annual meeting, said UGA spokesman Tom Jackson. But Adams will not attend the meeting in light of the regents' decision.

Adams attempted to reach foundation chairwoman Lynda Courts Tuesday afternoon.

"He intends to keep the lines of communication open with the goal of working to ensure an orderly transition," Jackson said.

Courts and foundation Executive Director Allan Barber did not immediately return phone calls seeking comment.

The regents also asked the university to seek a replacement cooperative organization as soon as possible.

The regents made their decision after a retreat Tuesday in which it discussed issues including UGA's accreditation and salary issues, said spokes-

woman Arlethia Perry-Johnson.

Last month, the foundation voted on a series of bylaws changes recommended by a consultant after the controversial audit.

One of the changes reduced the role Adams and other UGA administrators had on the foundation board. Another change reduced the size of the board from 56 to 35 members.

In a letter before that meeting, the regents warned the proposed changes could endanger the group's official recognition because they went too far in separating the foundation from the UGA administration.

The foundation, established in 1937 to manage the university's endowment, raises funds and handles assets of nearly \$400 million for the benefit of the university system's flagship school.

Malachi York, head of the United Nuwaubian Nation of Moors, was sentenced to 135 years in federal prison last month. His conviction in January was largely based on the testimony of cult members who said he regularly molested children and manipulated the sect's finances from 1998 to 2002, when federal agents raided their compound.

On Monday, York's attorneys asked U.S. District Court Judge C. Ashley Royal for a new trial, citing an affidavit from one of those members recanting her testimony that York molested her and then had her solicit other children to have sex with him.

York supporters had sent videotapes to several media

outlets on April 22, the day of his sentencing, showing the woman saying she had been coerced into testifying by York's son, Jacob York.

"I take her at her word," defense attorney Jonathan Marks said Monday. "She said she really didn't understand it would go this far and she wants to right this awful wrong."

Marks said she was one of several alleged victims who now say they were not molested by York.

"I haven't talked to every one of the victims who testified during the trial, but I have talked to some who were named as victims," he said. "Quite a number have said they were not victimized."

Federal prosecutors did not return phone calls seeking comment Monday.

York still awaits sentencing in Putnam County Superior Court, after he pleaded guilty in January 2003 to 77 counts of child molestation, aggravated child molestation and exploitation of children.

Principal turns over records of alleged abuse

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BUCHANAN — The principal of a Haralson County elementary school has turned over information to sheriff's officers investigating claims that an 11-year-old student fondled up to a dozen girls over a two-year period.

Principal Jerry Hood of

Buchanan Elementary School surrendered student files and computer records Monday, sheriff's Maj. D.S. Ratner said.

Later, a majority of the five-member school board voted to direct its attorney to get the records back so the school system could start its own investigation to determine if the girls' accusations were legitimate.

Cory Kirby, a Gainesville attorney who represents the board, said administrators at the elementary school only learned of the accusations this month.

Officers had been trying to

get the information from school officials since Wednesday, when two girls told deputies they had been touched inappropriately by a fellow student. The girls, ages 11 and 12, said they had reported the incidents to school officials as long ago as November.

Ratner said the girls reported that as many as 12 girls may have been touched inappropriately by the 11-year-old during the past two school years.

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Ratner said the girls reported that as many as 12 girls may have been touched inappropriately by the 11-year-old during the past two school years.

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WORLD & NATION

WORLD

Nordic countries crack down on child pornography

■ STOCKHOLM, Sweden — Police in Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland carried out coordinated raids Tuesday and charged more than 196 people suspected of obtaining and distributing child pornography.

Acting on shared information by the Nordic police forces, the raids began at 6 a.m. in all four countries, culminating a yearlong investigation.

Investigators targeted "people suspected of having taken possession of material documenting sexual abuse of children," Norwegian deputy police commissioner Siri Frigaard said from Oslo. "There has been good cooperation with police in the other Nordic countries."

Norway's National Criminal Investigation Service said it charged 153 people in the raids and that 105 of them acknowledged possessing child pornography.

Fake goods may finance terrorists

■ BRUSSELS, Belgium — Terror groups increasingly are turning to the lucrative trade in counterfeit goods — from brake pads to music CDs — to finance their operations, but governments are only slowly waking up to the threat, the head of Interpol warned Tuesday.

Interpol Secretary General Ronald Noble cited the seizure of \$1.2 million worth of counterfeit German brake pads and shock absorbers in Lebanon last October. A subsequent inquiry found that profits were destined for supporters of Hezbollah, considered a terrorist organization by Washington.

"Right now we're at the tip of the iceberg," Noble told The Associated Press in an interview at the First Global Congress on Combating Counterfeiting. "If law enforcement and governments focused on it more, we'd find more evidence of it."

Last year, Danish customs intercepted a container filled with counterfeit shampoos and other toiletries allegedly sent by a member of al-Qaida. Danish, British and U.S. investigators were unable to determine how much, if any, of the profits went directly to the terror group.

Karachi bomb kills 2, injures 5

■ KARACHI, Pakistan — A parcel bomb exploded Tuesday at a checkpoint in the port area of the southern Pakistani city of Karachi, killing at least two people and injuring five, police and an emergency worker said.

Police officer Raja Azhar said a man approached a checkpoint at a shipping yard of the state-run Karachi Port Trust and handed a parcel to a security official deployed there. The parcel exploded soon thereafter.

Rizwan Edhi, spokesman for the emergency relief agency Edhi Foundation, said two people were killed and five were wounded.

— From wire reports

Tropical storms take heavy toll

BY PETER PRENGAMAN
The Associated Press

JIMANI, Dominican Republic — Emergency workers dumped scores of mud-caked corpses into a mass grave Tuesday as the reported death toll from flooding of rain-swollen rivers in the Dominican Republic and Haiti rose to at least 245.

Frantic relatives used their bare hands to dig through the mud for loved ones missing after Monday's heavy rains lashed the island of Hispaniola, which is shared by the two countries.

At least 130 corpses were counted in the Dominican town of Jimani, near the border with Haiti, after shacks in the nearby village of Malpaso were swept away by flooding along the Solie River. An Associated Press reporter saw at least 100 corpses in a hospital morgue before families bearing wooden and metal coffins arrived to claim them.

Another 115 people were killed on the Haitian side in the towns of Jacmel and Fond Verrette, according to reports from Radio Metropole and Radio Vision 2000.

Emergency workers in surgical masks and white gloves watched as trucks dumped about 60 naked, bloated corpses into a 15-foot ditch outside Jimani that was left open to await more bodies. No relatives were present.

Many of the dead on the Dominican side of the border were believed to be Haitian workers living there illegally, and their relatives were afraid to claim their bodies. More than 50 of the bodies recovered were Haitian citizens, said Luis Gonzalez Fabra, a spokesman for Dominican President Hipolito Mejia, who was expected to travel to Jimani later Tuesday.

Rescue workers and families were still pulling bodies from the mud after daybreak Tuesday, said Juan Trinidad Dotel, president



A woman cries in the remains of her house destroyed by flooding and winds from tropical storms in Jimani, some 124 miles southwest of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, on Tuesday.

of the Dominican Red Cross.

U.S. Marines, who are leading a 3,600-member multinational task force sent to stabilize Haiti since the Feb. 29 ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, were heading to Fond Verrette to look for victims and help in emergency work.

Many roads on both islands remained impassable.

Few of the ramshackle homes in Malpaso, west of Jimani, remained intact.

Some corpses were left at the side of the road for relatives to identify and claim.

Stunned townspeople roamed the darkened streets. Some dug through mud in search of missing relatives.

"We can't find her anywhere," cried

Norma Cuevas, 32, as she desperately searched for her 63-year-old mother.

Elena Diaz, 42, sobbed as she waited in a long line outside the morgue where she went to look for her son-in-law and three grandchildren.

"They found my daughter. Now I have to see if I have some family left," she said, adding that her daughter's house was swept away.

Dominican officials sent about 300 soldiers and 25 ambulances from the capital of Santo Domingo, about 110 miles away.

The raging water carried some victims away. Bodies were found as far away as six miles downstream, said Maximo Noves Espinal, an emergency official in the town.

NATION

Pipeline expected to be fixed Tuesday

■ RENTON, Wash. — The operator of a 400-mile fuel pipeline system that was shut down after an explosion plans to complete necessary repairs and restart the line late Tuesday.

The repair and restart plan has been approved by coordinators for both the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the state Ecology Department, Olympic Pipe Line Co. spokesman Michael Abendhoff said Monday night.

The pipeline moves 12 million gallons of gasoline, diesel and jet fuel every day. The explosion and subsequent fire disrupted fuel deliveries throughout the system.

Earlier Monday, officials had asked airlines not to refuel their planes at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport because the explosion had shut down the pipeline that delivers the airport's jet fuel.

Nobody was injured in the blast Sunday at the Olympic Pipe pumping station in Renton, a Seattle suburb. Workers reported seeing 20-foot flames leaping from a test line that runs off the main pipeline.

Tobacco firms can be sued for \$280B

■ WASHINGTON — A federal judge ruled Monday the Justice Department can seek \$280 billion from the tobacco industry as part of the government's lawsuit against cigarette manufacturers, clearing the way for the biggest civil racketeering case in history.

The ruling by U.S. District Judge Gladys Kessler sent tobacco company stock prices tumbling.

The Justice Department alleges tobacco companies deceived the public about the dangers of tobacco and the addictive nature of nicotine. The government also claims the companies targeted children through



Washington State and Olympic Pipeline investigators examine the outside of a 3/4-inch sampler line in Renton, Wash., Monday after a leak caught fire on Sunday. The entire 400-mile stretch of pipeline from Blaine to Portland was shut down until investigators Tuesday.

advertising and then lied about it.

The industry had argued in a motion that the government should not be allowed to seek \$280 billion, arguing prosecutors failed to distinguish between money allegedly earned through fraud and money earned lawfully.

Murdered child's family can't sue

■ JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — Three state child welfare workers cannot be sued over allegations that they should have known that a foster mother who drowned a 17-month-old girl was dangerous, a federal appeals court has ruled.

The ruling by the Atlanta-based 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals threw out a suit filed by the drowned girl's family against E.J. Foltz, Deborah Jones and Nancy Corley, who screened foster homes for the Department of Children & Families.

The lawsuit was filed in February 2003 by Grace and Earl Ray, parents of Latiana Hamilton and her older brother, identified only as R.M.

The children were placed in Lena Cumberbatch's Jacksonville foster home in February 2001. Five months later, Latiana — covered from head to toe with

bruises, cuts and broken bones — was drowned in the bathtub.

Cumberbatch received a mandatory life prison sentence after being convicted of first-degree murder and aggravated child abuse.

The appeals panel ruled that government officials are immune from lawsuits if they did not knowingly violate anyone's rights, a legal concept known as "qualified immunity."

Calif. high court eyes mayor's order

■ SAN FRANCISCO — San Francisco's mayor had "completely taken away" the Legislature's power on the gay marriage issue when he issued licenses to same-sex couples earlier this year, an attorney for the state argued Tuesday.

The California Supreme Court began hearing arguments on whether San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom abused his municipal powers when he issued the 4,000 marriage licenses earlier this year.

The seven justices grilled opponents of the licenses, including the California attorney general, as well as attorneys for the city over how much leeway elected officials have to interpret state law.

Legal experts predict Newsom will lose, since the justices are virtually certain to avoid the legal anarchy that could result if local officials can choose which laws to follow.

However, the court used Tuesday's hearing to explore whether San Francisco officials had any authority to interpret the constitutionality of state family law.

Boston archdiocese to lose 65 parishes

■ BOSTON — The Boston Archdiocese will lose 65 of its 357 parishes, a massive restructuring brought on partly by the clergy sex abuse scandal that aggravated already shrinking Mass attendance and weekly collections.

Archbishop Sean O'Malley announced the parish closings Tuesday, completing a process that began in December when he said the Roman Catholic archdiocese would be forced to undergo a major downsizing.

He said the reduction was needed because of declining Mass attendance, a shortage of priests and the inability of the archdiocese to support struggling parishes in the midst of a financial crisis caused in part by the abuse crisis.

The announcement was dreadfully by parishioners and pastors, who received word about the fate of their churches in letters from O'Malley delivered Tuesday morning, just hours before he released the complete list of closings during a news conference.

Pittsburgh holds last AIDS walk

■ PITTSBURGH — Faced with declines in participation and missed fund-raising goals, organizers of the Pittsburgh AIDS Walk said this year's event will be the last.

The Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force blames competition from other charity walks, a tight economy and decreasing interest in AIDS, challenges also cited by organizers in other cities.

— From wire reports

PEOPLE

Beckham's say marriage sound

■ LONDON — David Beckham's wife says in a magazine interview that her husband has "always been faithful," despite the claims of two women who said they had affairs with him.

"Through all of this, I feel really sorry for David because it's his name that's been dragged through it, and he's done nothing wrong," Victoria Beckham tells the July issue of Marie Claire, which goes on sale Thursday in England.

"I really do believe that deep down that I have the most faithful husband I could hope for," the former Spice Girl was quoted as saying in excerpts of the interview released Monday by the magazine.

Mortensen goes to July 4th event

■ COPENHAGEN, Denmark — Viggo Mortensen, who played King Aragorn in the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy, will be the main speaker at Denmark's annual Fourth of July celebration.

Mortensen, whose father emigrated to the United States, will speak at the annual Rebild festival in northern Denmark — billed as the biggest Fourth of July party outside of the United States.

Born in New York City, Mortensen spent several summers in Denmark as a teenager and speaks some Danish.

"All Danes consider him to be nearly Danish," the organizers said in a statement Monday.

Mortensen will be joined by Etta Cameron, an 84-year-old American-born gospel and jazz singer who lives in the capital, Copenhagen.

Williams thrilled to meet Hanks

■ PARIS — En route to the French Open, Serena Williams paid a visit to the Cannes Film Festival. She enjoyed the glamour of it all, saw some movies, and

even chatted with Tom Hanks about acting.

The 22-year-old tennis star was thrilled to meet Hanks, a two-time Oscar winner.

"I saw that movie 'Turner & Hooch' at least 50 times. It took all my guts to go up to him," Williams recounted.

— From wire reports

China lets Hong Kong display Buddha's finger; motives unclear

BY MARGARET WONG

The Associated Press

HONG KONG — Beijing is lending Hong Kong one of the Buddha's fingers for public display, but critics belittled the move Tuesday as a political gesture to soothe anger over China's recent decision ruling out full democracy in Hong Kong.

"This is part of China's propaganda exercise," said pro-democracy lawmaker Lee Cheuk-yan. "Beijing is trying to get close to Hong Kong people and cool the

MUST READ

heated political atmosphere."

The relic, held in a bulletproof glass box, was flown in Tuesday afternoon — just in time for the Buddha's birthday celebrations here Wednesday. It will be shown for 10 days in this largely Buddhist territory.

Lee compared the event to the visit last year by China's first astronaut, Yang Liwei, which was seen by many as a heavy-handed public relations campaign

to bolster Hong Kong's lukewarm nationalism.

Many in Hong Kong are furious because China's top legislative committee ruled last month that the territory cannot elect its next leader in 2007, and all its lawmakers in 2008. The former British colony returned to Chinese rule in 1997 with a guarantee of a high degree of autonomy, but opposition politicians say Beijing has broken its promises.

Saffron-robed monks escorted the finger off an airplane that brought it from Xianyang in Shaanxi province. It was transferred onto a truck decorated in gold paneling and lotus flowers as a band played welcoming music. Senior monks prayed and sounded horns before the finger was driven to an exhibition venue.

Buddha died about 483 B.C. After his cremation, some historians believe his bones were saved by Indian monks and that a few pieces were brought to China later. The finger bone to be displayed in Hong Kong was among Buddhist relics discovered in an underground shelter at Famen Temple near the ancient capital of Xian in central China in 1987.

A senior Communist Party official, Liu Yandong, was set to officiate at an opening ceremony for the finger's display from Wednesday through June 4. The relic is believed to bring peace and luck.

While critics believe Beijing is playing politics with the religious artifact, it may not have any political effect.

"People will simply treat it as a religious display and they won't relate it to politics," said political scientist Ma Ngok, who teaches at Hong Kong's University of Science and Technology.

Blaze

• From Page 1A

knocking down the warehouse's walls and scraping the material together in the hopes of helping the burn to continue at a faster rate, thus preventing long-term smoldering.

"In a case like this, you want it to burn," Jackson said, explaining that the quicker the building burns, the quicker it will burn out.

As of presstime, a team from the EPA's National Response Center in Atlanta was still working to determine what chemicals might be contained in the smoke.

John Deutsch, an environmental scientist with the EPA, said preliminary reports indicate that as many as eight chemicals could be in the smoke, including as much as 1.5 million pounds of calcium hypochlorite, a chlorine compound used to chlorinate swimming pools and to treat water supplies and sewage. People on Lake Oconee, 45 miles east of the fire, reported smelling a chlorine odor. At least one person as far away as Columbia, S.C., some 200 miles east, said he could smell the odor.

Chlorine, used in World War I as a choking agent, can be extremely dangerous, damaging an exposed person's eyes, throat and lungs. About two dozen people went to Rockdale Medical Center and Newton General Hospital with respiratory and other complaints related to chemical exposure, according to spokespersons for the hospitals.

About 400 area residents were evacuated due to the fire. Deputy Jodi Shupe with the Rockdale County Sheriff's Office said evacuees would not be allowed to return Tuesday



The rising sun illuminates the toxic plume billowing across Conyers on the north side of I-20, giving commuters a view of trouble to come.

night.

"We are not letting people back into the evacuated area," Shupe said. "EPA has declared the area around the fire unsafe. We're at the mercy of this situation."

Officials were also worried that colder nighttime temperatures could cause the smoke cloud to drop, which could mean limited visibility and more respiratory problems for nearby residents.

The EPA sent a high-tech sensory package known as an Airborne Spectral Photometric Collection Technology (ASPECT), into the smoke Tuesday afternoon to determine what chemicals besides chlorine might have been released.

"ASPECT gives emergency first responders on the ground critical information regarding

the size, shape, composition and concentration of gas plumes emanating ... from a fire like this," said EPA spokeswoman Dawn Harris Young, adding that ASPECT gives more accurate readings than ground air monitors.

A full report on ASPECT's findings should be available today, Young said.

The EPA and Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) were also monitoring water runoff. A nearby pond had tested negative for contamination, said EPD Spokesman Kevin Chambers.

"Obviously, the goal is to contain the runoff from a big fire like this so that you don't have it running loose out there," Chambers said.

The agencies must determine whether the water is contami-

nated before deciding how to dispose of it, Chambers said.

"Either way, we'd pump it out of here," he said.

BioLab would most likely work with an environmental contractor to clean up the fire damage, Chambers said.

Newton resident Denny Dobbs, who has been an environmental contractor for 30 years and worked for the EPA for eight years, estimated that a fire of this scope could take a month or more to clean up.

"It takes a pretty good crew to clean up a building that big," Dobbs said. "It's going to take a week or two just to get everything sorted out and get everything ready to go in and start cleaning it up."

Barbara Knowles and Sarah Barnes contributed to this report.

DEATHS, FUNERALS

CLARK

The body of Mr. J. (Jean) Norman Clark, due to the chemical fire in Conyers, Ga., will lie in state from 10-11 a.m. today, May 26, 2004, at Union United Methodist Church, 4600 Ga. 138 in Stockbridge. The family will receive friends in the fellowship hall of Union UMC from 10-10:45 a.m. After the services, everyone is invited for lunch. Harry L. White Funeral Home, Conyers, 770-483-7216.

Rockdale/Newton Citizen
May 26, 2004

JONES

Mrs. Nina Mae Jones, age 89, of Oxford, Ga., died Saturday, May 22, 2004. Visitation will be held Thursday May 27, 2004 from 6-9 p.m. and Friday, May 28, 2004, from 6-9 p.m.

Funeral service will be held Saturday, May 29, 2004, at 3 p.m. at Macedonia Baptist Church, 108 Macedonia Church Road, Oxford, Ga. Rev. Danny Gordon and Rev. L. L. Kitchens will officiate. Inter-

ment will be held at Macedonia Baptist Church Cemetery, Oxford, Ga.

Mrs. Jones retired in 1985 after 15 years of employment with Newton General Hospital as a housekeeper. She was a member of Macedonia Baptist Church, where she was the oldest member at the church. She was preceded in death by husband: James Thomas (Tom) Jones; parents: Wilson and Lanoria Spear Moate.

Mrs. Jones is survived by daughters and sons-in-law: Mary and Alvin Lister, Bryon, Ga.; Katie Saunders of Chandler, Ariz.; Debbie and Burt Lanier of Lilburn, Ga.; sons and daughters-in-law: Bobby and Joy Jones of Macon, Ga., John and Vera Jones of Seneca, S.C., Jimmy and Shirley Jones of Oxford, Ga.; brother: Henry Lee Moate, Macon, Ga.; 15 grandchildren; 17 great-grandchildren; 4 great-great grandchildren; several nieces and nephews. Pallbearers will be Tom Jones, Derek Jones, Josh Jones, Jake Jones, Rodney Moon; Jimmy Jones.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in memory of Mrs. Jones to Macedonia

Baptist Church, 108 Macedonia Church Road, Oxford, GA 30054. Wheeler Funeral Home, Covington, is in charge of the arrangements.

Rockdale/Newton Citizen
May 26, 2004

PRICKETT

Mr. Omer Lee Prickett, age 77, of Conyers, died May 24, 2004. J.C. Harwell & Son Funeral Home, Covington, 770-786-2524, is in charge of the arrangements.

Rockdale/Newton Citizen
May 26, 2004

STEPHENS

Katherine Diana (Kat) Stephens, age 9, of Covington, Ga., died May 21, 2004. Caldwell & Cowan Funeral Home, Covington, Ga., 770-786-7062, is in charge of the arrangements.

Rockdale/Newton Citizen
May 26, 2004

STOCK EXCHANGE HIGHLIGHTS

NYSE

6,429.32 +95.19

GAINERS (\$2 OR MORE)

Name Vol Last Chg %Chg

TacoAut 12.07 +1.86 +18.2

BallyTotF 4.68 +.63 +15.6

LongF 12.39 +1.46 +13.4

Enterasys 2.04 +.23 +12.7

Calpine 3.60 +.37 +11.5

NewSkies 7.80 +.75 +10.6

Humana 17.18 +1.53 +9.8

Ethyl 20.93 +1.77 +9.2

ElPasoCp 7.70 +.63 +8.9

FstAccept 7.50 +.61 +8.9

LOSERS (\$2 OR MORE)

Name Last Chg %Chg

Dimon 5.67 -.50 -8.1

FrankCov 2.17 -.18 -7.7

CHC Hel g 29.09 -.236 -7.5

Wyeth 34.65 -.266 -7.1

ZahlGlbTR 18.60 -.140 -7.0

XcelE pC 65.00 -.375 -5.5

WcsfHosp 5.85 -.25 -4.1

Raytech 2.32 -.09 -3.7

Woorifn n 17.26 -.65 -3.6

MOST ACTIVE (\$1 OR MORE)

Name Vol (00) Last Chg

Genworth 3,963,600 19.50 +.00

Lucent 289,429 3.26 +.04

Medtronic 23,0063 47.12 -.23

GenElec 22,8869 31.21 +.43

Cisco 48,6183 3.14 +.05

Altria 43,6654 11.50 +.14

AaplMatl 34,1191 19.22 +.50

Yahoo s 24,6635 20.28 +.85

Textron 15,9620 25.33 +.48

Pfizer 15,3253 34.74 +.29

DIARY

Advanced 2,784

Declined 565

Unchanged 111

Total issues 3,460

New Highs 56

New Lows 17

Volume 1,812,304,110

AMEX

1,195.88 +10.02

MOST ACTIVE (\$1 OR MORE)

Name Vol (00) Last Chg

Nasd100Tr 143,142,235.96 +.71

SPDR 470,131 111.85 +1.58

SemiHt 21,9771 37.88 +.98

DJIA Diam 87,447 101.27 +1.41

iShJapan 75,075 +.29 +.18

WheatR g 70,111 112.50 +2.30

BemaGold 40,879 2.52 -.06

SP Fndl 29,516 28.34 +.40

RetailHt 25,786 91.30 +1.90

DIARY

Advanced 609

Declined 273

Unchanged 85

Total issues 967

New Highs 13

New Lows 28

NASDAQ

1,964.65 +41.67

MOST ACTIVE (\$1 OR MORE)

Name Vol (00) Last Chg

Microsoft 659,176 26.10 +.34

Intel 64,8436 28.10 +.36

SunMicro 55,7005 22.24 +.58

Altria 52,6741 3.14 +.14

GenElec 22,1384 9.27 -.28

WheatR g 20,6464 46.65 +1.70

Wyeth 19,2411 34.65 -2.66

NotrelWn 18,0685 3.53 +.05

Textron 15,9620 25.33 +.48

Pfizer 15,3253 34.74 +.29

DIARY

Advanced 2,274

Declined 884

Unchanged 321

Total issues 3,489

New Highs 54

New Lows 48

THE MARKET IN REVIEW

STOCKS OF LOCAL INTEREST

NAME EX DIV YLD PE LAST DAILY CHG %CHG

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BULLETIN BOARD

TODAY

TOPS

Taking Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS) will meet today from 9 to 11 a.m. in Covington at 1169 Clark St. on the lower level. Call 770-787-1411 or 770-787-5057.

Pavilion Concert

Bring a sack lunch and enjoy a free concert at the Olde Town Conyers Pavilion from noon to 1 p.m. today. Christa Orion Rooks will perform contemporary Christian music as part of the city of Conyers' downtown summer series. Call 770-602-2606.

Spring Revival

Crawfordville Baptist Church, 2360 Lake Rockaway Road, will hold a spring revival at 7:30 p.m., today-Friday, May 28, with guest speakers each evening. Call 770-922-8711.

More Than Conquerors

The Church at Covington will present "More Than Conquerors," a Bible study series for women, beginning at 7 p.m. today. Call 770-786-7293 for directions. A nursery will be provided.

THURSDAY

On the Square

Featured at noon on Thursday, May 27, at the free Concerts on the Covington Square

event will be Drive Time with Mack McKibben with traditional-contemporary jazz.

Newton Concert

Tahino, a concert of Latin American music, will be held at the Newton County Library meeting room at 7 p.m. Thursday, May 20. Call 770-385-6496.

United Singles

United Singles and Associates will meet on Thursday, May 27, at the American Legion Post, 674 American Legion Drive in Conyers, at 7:30 p.m. The event will feature a dance with a live band at 8 p.m. A \$5 donation is requested to cover expenses. Attendees are encouraged to bring a dish to share. For more information, call 770-922-6090 or 770-972-8794.

Covington Kiwanis

The Kiwanis Club of Covington will meet at 12:30 p.m. Thursday, May 27, at the First United Methodist Church, 1113 E. Conyers St. in Covington. Call 770-788-3347.

Conyers Rotary

The Rotary Club of Conyers will meet at noon on Thursday, May 27, at Palmetto's on Green Street. GRSP student Cecilia De Soto will speak. Call 770-761-7102.

Newton Republicans

The Newton County Republican Party will meet at 7 p.m. on Thursday, May 27, at the

Woman's Club on College Avenue. Mac Collins, candidate for U.S. Senate, and Lynn Westmoreland, candidate for U.S. House District 8, will speak. The public is invited. Call 770-786-5460.

Conyers Christian

Conyers Christian Church, 4550 Ga. 20, S.E., will offer low-cost CT scans for early warning signs of heart disease, aneurysms and cancer from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Thursday, May 27. Call 1-877-828-7475, toll-free, to schedule an appointment or receive further information.

Insect Day

Rockdale County 4-H Club will present "Cloverbud Insect Day" for girls and boys ages 4-8, from 1 to 4 p.m. Thursday, May 27 at the Extension Office, 1329 Portman Drive.

Cost is \$5 and includes crafts, viewing live insects and games. Call 770-785-5952 to register.

Cowboy Action

Mule Camp Cowboys will host the nation's best cowboy action shooters at the Southeast Regional Championship. The event will begin at 9 a.m. Thursday, May 27, and conclude at 2 p.m. on Sunday, May 30. Marksmanship

demonstrations, medicine show, stories, re-enactments, seminars, music and vendors will all be at the South River Gun Club, 5205 Ga. 212 in Covington. Tickets are \$5 per person or \$10 per vehicle. A

portion of the proceeds will benefit charities such as a hospice, Vietnam veterans scholarship fund and more. Call 706-367-9736 or visit www.mulecamp.com.

FRIDAY

Square Market

The Square Market will be open from 4 p.m. until dusk, on Friday, May 28, at 1169 Washington Street in Covington. Square Market is a shopping and entertainment center in downtown Covington. Local residents who produce and create goods offer a unique shopping experience. Call 770-784-1718 or visit www.squaremarket.org.

Six Flags Tickets

Rockdale County Extension Service, 1329 Portman Drive, Suite C, has discount Six Flags tickets and passes. Sale of the tickets benefits the Rockdale County 4-H Club. Tickets are \$26 and passes are \$48. Cash only, please. Call 770-785-5952.

Bug Camp

Register for Rockdale County 4-H Club Bug Day Camp for girls and boys in grades 3-6 by May 28. The camp, which will be held at the Extension office on Portman Drive, will run Tuesday-Friday, June 1-4, from 9 a.m. to noon. Participants will make an insect collection, play games, create art and view live insects. The cost

Community Yard Sale

Sardis Baptist Church, 2308 Keys Ferry Road, will host a community yard sale beginning

is \$40. Call 770-785-5952 for details.

SATURDAY

Junior Golf

The Optimist Junior Golf Tournament will be sponsored by the Evening Optimist Club of Conyers Tuesday, June 1, at Highland Golf Club. Pairings will begin at 7 a.m. and the first tee time at 7:30 a.m. Call 770-483-2883 or e-mail jam1906@bellsouth.net. Cutoff date for registration is Saturday, May 29.

Car Show

Salem Baptist Church in McDonough will host a car show Saturday, May 29, beginning at 10 a.m. Registration will be at 9 a.m. To enter a car, advance registration is \$20.

The fee on the day of the show will be \$25. Proceeds will benefit the church youth program. Call 770-957-4543.

Ignite Barbecue

The Church at Covington Youth Department will host a community barbecue from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, May 29. Barbecue pork, Brunswick stew, coleslaw, chips, bread and a drink will be \$6.50. Call 770-786-7293, ext. 18, visit www.thechurchatcovington.org or call 770-786-7293.

Community Yard Sale

Sardis Baptist Church, 2308 Keys Ferry Road, will host a community yard sale beginning

at 8 a.m. Saturday, May 29. Spaces to sell are \$15 with table provided or \$10 without table. Call 770-775-2308.

Porter Memorial

A Southern gospel concert featuring The Carolina Boys, formerly The Kingsmen, Vessels of Praise and The Stanfifers will be held Memorial Day weekend at Porter Memorial Auditorium, 140 Ram Drive, Covington. Advance tickets are \$10. Tickets at the door are \$12. Children 11 and under are free. Visit www.vesselsopraisequartet.com for details.

ETC.

Church at Covington

The Church at Covington Youth Department will host a community barbecue Saturday, May 29, from 11 a.m.-6 p.m. at the church. Call 770-786-7293 or visit www.thechurchatcovington.org.

The Rockdale Citizen Bulletin Board is a forum for announcing meetings and events of nonprofit organizations. To submit information, call 770-483-7108, ext. 401, fax the information c/o Linda Reynolds at 770-483-5797 or e-mail linda.reynolds@rockdalecitizen.com. Please include an event description, sponsoring organization, date, time, place, phone number and contact person.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Children's Healthcare

Children's Healthcare of Atlanta needs volunteers to assist in the intensive care units at both Egleston and Scottish Rite campuses. Volunteers working in these highly sensitive areas provide parents and families with patient information. Shifts are available from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. on weekdays and weekends. Volunteers must be 21 years of age or older. Call 770-404-325-6180, 404-250-2546 or visit www.choa.org.

Earth Care

Earth Care, a ministry for seniors, disabled, mentally and physically challenged people, needs directors, paid workers, volunteers and donations. Earth Care offers computer training, job coaching and Food Box work training programs. Seniors needing part time paid positions are encouraged to apply. Additional board mem-

bers are needed. Call Grady or Annette Mayeaux at 770-922-8511.

Basset Hound Rescue

Basset Hound Rescue of Georgia needs families who love dogs to help foster homeless hounds while they wait for adoption. The organization will provide veterinary care and identification. Volunteers provide love and a family atmosphere. Average foster time is two-three weeks. A fenced-in yard is preferred. A preliminary home visit is required. Call 770-499-1164 to apply or visit the Web at www.ccml.com/bhrg.

Volunteer HIV Support

A volunteer HIV support group facilitator is needed to lead AIDS survival support group "Positively Living," which meets each Monday from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. The group is open to men and women who

are living with HIV. Organizers prefer facilitators be experienced in social work, psychology or sociology. This is a volunteer position. Call Terri Wilder at 404-874-7926, ext. 13.

Keep The Ark Afloat

Help support Noah's Ark with a clothing roundup. Donated clothing will benefit Noah's Ark, an organization in Henry County dedicated to providing a home for abused, unwanted and orphaned children and animals. Used (but good-condition) toys, clothing, small appliances, household goods, furniture, etc., are examples of items requested. All donated items will be picked up free and a receipt for tax purposes provided. Call 770-504-8853 for more information.

Home Care

Gwinnett-Rockdale-Newton Community (GRN) Service

Board Therapeutic Home Care Program is recruiting families and individuals to provide foster homes for children and adolescents with special needs. The GRN service will provide individualized training, extensive support and financial reimbursement. Call Colleen Mousinho at 770-339-5388 for details.

Refuge Pregnancy

The Refuge Pregnancy Center in Conyers needs new and used newborn/infant clothing. Donations may be delivered to the center at 954 S. Main St. Call 770-922-5939. Donations are tax deductible.

Project ReNewal

Project ReNewal, the shelter for battered women serving Rockdale, Newton and Walton counties, needs storage space in Rockdale County. If you have space to donate, or if you would like to commit to a monthly

contribution fund to maintain a storage space, call Project ReNewal at 770-860-1666.

Surfers Wanted

Nancy Guinn Memorial Library in Olde Town Conyers needs volunteers to help local people learn Internet navigation. The library will provide the training for volunteers. Call 770-388-5040 and ask for the reference desk.

United Hospice

United Hospice of Atlanta is conducting an ongoing search for special people to volunteer to provide compassion and support for people with terminal illnesses. If interested, call Sandy Hatfield at 770-925-4788.

Independent Enterprises

Independent Enterprises is seeking assistant volunteers to aid instructors in training. Independent Enterprises serves indi-

viduals with developmental disabilities in Rockdale and Newton counties. Donations are always appreciated. To visit and discuss volunteer opportunities, call 770-784-3188.

Abuse Prevention

Prevent Child Abuse Rockdale is seeking volunteers to lead parent and children groups in learning family skills. The council provides training throughout the year. Call Sheena Berry at 770-483-7333.

The agencies requesting community service in this column can use time, talent and donations. Agencies wishing to be included in future requests should contact Linda Reynolds at The Citizen, 770-483-7108, ext. 252; fax to 770-483-5797; mail to P.O. Box 136, Conyers, Ga. 30012; or e-mail to linda.reynolds@rockdalecitizen.com.

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Fire leaves residents scrambling

Toxic clouds force many out of homes, into makeshift shelters

BY JAY JONES
STAFF REPORTER
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CONYERS — The chemical fire at BioLab caused frustration and concern for many residents Tuesday morning. At Sigman and Irwin Bridge roads, traffic flowed as best could be expected with the road going into Conyers closed, giving people only one option — get out.

The scene at the two gas stations at the intersection was of onlookers watching the chlorine gas cloud floating east, commuters frustrated at being unable to get to Interstate 20 and concerned residents on cell phones trying to get their family members out.

Natelle Elliott, a Northfolk Southern employee, was coming off her job on the third shift to find that she could not get home to her 16-year-old son, Ervin. Standing in the Citgo station parking lot, she spoke on her cell phone, telling her son to get dressed and leave their Pinedale subdivision home.

"I'm calling the house and trying to get them out," Elliott said. "They won't let me drive up there, so they'll have to walk down here."

Anxious, she called home again. "Are you still there? Get your clothes on, and get out the door, now. What's so hard about that?" she asked her son.

Before authorities began an evacuation of the area around 9 a.m., many people walked from the intersection up to their homes along Irwin Bridge Road. Blocked from driving into town, one couple walked their mother from her home on Cooper Circle. Elliott began walking in that direction when her son and a group of boys appeared. A quick hug from his mother greeted Ervin as they headed for their car.

Elliott's neighbor, Derrick Smith, was also waiting to get his teenage son to safety.

"They got them both, thank goodness," he said.

Some commuters showed frustration while others took the situation in stride. Rockdale County resident Dale Thomas pulled up to the Chevron station on the north side of the intersection, realizing his commute had just gotten much more complicated.

"You got any Mamie's biscuits?" asked Thomas. His regular morning commute to his job at In Touch Ministries in Atlanta normally takes him through Conyers, and occasionally by Mamie's Kitchen at Main Street and Rockbridge Road, blocks away from the fire. All joking aside, Thomas paused as he looked at the billowing cloud cutting across the sky.

"I've got a lot of friends who work at BioLab," he said. "I hope everybody's all right."

At J.H. House Elementary School on Ga. 20, Red Cross workers were setting up one of the emergency shelters in the school's cafeteria. A few people came in on their own just as school buses to be used for the evacuation pulled out of the parking lot.

Olde Town Conyers resident Tom Watson said he rode out with his neighbor and her daughter when police drove down his street with loudspeakers telling residents to leave.

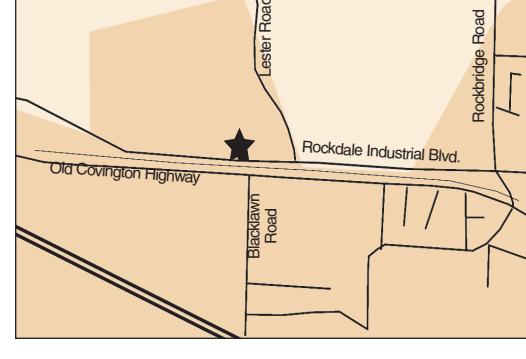


Staff Photo: Lee Depkin

Capt. Eric Jackson of the DeKalb County Fire Department said firefighters were fighting the chemical blaze at BioLab Tuesday with lots of water, calling it "our best friend." Four ladder trucks and several other engines, manned by firefighters, who were rotated every hour, pumped thousands of gallons of water on the smoldering chemicals as viewed here from the north side of the complex.

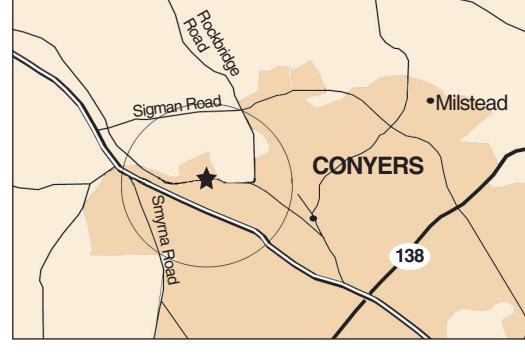
Plant fire

BioLab Inc. warehouse at 1601 Rockdale Industrial Blvd. in Conyers.



Area evacuated

A one-mile radius of the fire was evacuated, including downtown Conyers, forcing hundreds of people to seek temporary shelter.



Metro effects

The plume of smoke reached a half-mile wide and more than 10-miles long, closing some roadways, including parts of Interstate 20 and affecting many others.



Ninety-year-old Vera Marshall watches the news at the evacuation center set up at Heritage High School Tuesday morning in the wake of the BioLab fire. She was one of the residents evacuated from the Legacy Assisted Living Center around 8 a.m.

Staff Photo: Lee Depkin

Area medical staffs join forces to treat chemical exposure

BY SARAH BARNES
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CONYERS — Medical staff throughout the east-metro Atlanta area joined forces Tuesday to respond to one of the largest environmental disasters there in more than a decade.

With the mandate of meeting the health needs of the community, area hospitals worked with public health officials, the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA), the Red Cross and law enforcement, among other groups to treat the thousands of residents exposed to toxic chemicals that were released in a fire at Conyers' BioLab warehouse.

Starting in the early hours Tuesday morning, Rockdale Medical Center (RMC) was shrouded in a chemical cloud, which required the hospital to lock down from 9 to 11 a.m., shut down its air ventilation system and divert patients to hospitals in Newton, DeKalb, Walton and Henry counties.

After reopening its doors at noon, RMC had treated 14 patients by approximately 5 p.m., six of whom required admission. The hospital also opened its emergency room to the public late Tuesday, but advised patients with minor symptoms to stay home and avoid further exposure, as opposed to visiting the ER.

However, according to spokeswoman Sharon Barbour, Newton Gen-



A Rockdale Medical Center employee walks through the ER bay with a surgical mask to protect her from the chlorine gas. The EMS drivers at the hospital said they ran calls "non-stop" from 5 a.m.

eral saw a rush of patients Tuesday. The hospital saw 24 patients and admitted 20; the majority of the patients were elderly.

"We think we've done a very good job," RMC spokeswoman Joy Davis said. "We kept our lines of communications open and we were able to stay open and available to the community except for a brief period this morning."

For updates on the status of RMC, residents can access press releases from the hospital at www.rockdalehos-

pital.org. Residents can also contact Newton General at 770-786-7053.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, symptoms of chemical exposure include mild to severe irritation in the eyes, skin or respiratory passages, as evidenced by coughing, wheezing, itching, burning or similar sensations. Symptoms can emerge 24-48 hours following exposure.

There is no antidote for chemical exposure, so symptoms are treated with

supportive measures. These include cleaning affected areas or clothing, avoiding further exposure and treating irritation.

According to Rockdale Medical Center officials, there will be no elective surgery Wednesday, and outpatient surgery has been delayed until after 10 a.m.

Hospitals in Newton, DeKalb, Walton and Gwinnett counties all reported seeing up to 30 patients complaining of respiratory distress throughout the day Tuesday.

In addition to RMC's efforts, public health and Red Cross personnel served the community at medical outposts Tuesday. The groups set up at the designated shelters of J.H. House Elementary School and Heritage High School to offer displaced residents medical care and support.

Moreover, public health spent considerable time Tuesday treating and supporting the Spanish-speaking population in Conyers, which is largely centered in Lakeview Estates, near the chemical fire.

Local doctors also received a barrage of calls from worried residents Tuesday. Nora Patonay, a physician with Conyers Pediatrics, said her office phone rang off the hook with patients calling concerned about exposure or symptoms.

However, unless patients are facing severe reactions or breathing difficulties that require hospitalization, Paton-

ay said there was little a doctor could do.

"I have really just been recommending people try to get out of the area and get some fresh air," Patonay said. "Or if they are home, to close their windows and doors and not go outside."

In addition, Patonay recommends saline drops to soothe irritation in the eyes, as well as other general soothing treatments like cold compresses for the face and skin.

Also, Patonay recommended that adults carefully monitor asthmatics, the elderly or young children, as these groups are at greater risk for serious complications from chemical exposure.

GEMA spokesman Buzz Weiss commended RMC and other local organizations for working together efficiently during the fire. He said that the swift and efficient response of the community was indicative of the amount of time local groups had invested in emergency preparedness.

"RMC and all of the responders have been excellent," Weiss said. "This is the kind of incident that we plan for throughout the state. This is the real thing, and everything seems to be going the way we hoped in that we have had no deaths or serious injuries."

For more information about chemical exposure symptoms or treatments go to www.cdc.gov. Residents can also contact the local health department at 770-785-5936 or RMC at 770-918-3000.

CHOKING CLOUD

Plant fire sends toxic smoke fumes over Conyers, surrounding areas causing road closures, evacuations



Aerial photo of BioLab building at 9:00 a.m. The smoke is blowing east.

Staff Photo/Colin Owens



A view of the burning BioLab facility from the north side, with Old Covington Highway across bottom of picture.

Staff Photo/ Lee Depkin



Some of the many Rockdale County residents who had been relocated to the evacuation center at J.H. House Elementary School.



After fighting the BioLab destruction for more than 10 hours, a firefighter takes a break against a utility truck.

Staff Photo/Chris Cecil



Staff Photo/Colin Owens
The BioLab staff might need to change this sign after the dust settles.

For more fire photos, check the Web site at www.citizenonline.net

Fire shuts down Interstate 20

BY JOEY PETERS
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COVINGTON — According to the Georgia Department of Transportation (DOT), the massive toxic fire at a BioLab plant in Conyers created a "traffic nightmare" that prompted local officials to ask for people to simply stay at home.

Starting at 11 a.m., DOT officials closed off a 27-mile stretch of I-20 reaching from Panola Road down to Social Circle.

Resembling a scene from a science fiction movie, the normally booming stretch of interstate was a ghost track marked with an occasional emergency vehicle.

"We will be opening I-20 for the time being, but this is a cautionary opening that could change," DOT spokesman Carlene Barrett said. "Should the wind shift back and push the cloud back down, we will close I-20 without notice."

A few hours later, the DOT made good on its words.

Fearing that visibility might be an issue once darkness sets in, the DOT ordered that I-20 be closed overnight beginning at 8 p.m.

For those who found themselves stuck in traffic, the DOT established two alternative routes to bypass the scene.

For those traveling eastbound on I-20, the detour went from Panola Road to Ga. 212, then south into Monticello and north on Ga. 83 to I-20.

The westbound detour, starting at Social Circle, led north on Ga. 11 to U.S. 78, then west on U.S. 78 to I-285.

For Rockdale County residents, travel was further impeded by a perimeter bordering the fire scene.

According to DOT officials, the perimeter stretched from West Avenue to Flat Shoals Road to Ga. 138 most of Tuesday afternoon.

"We are asking that people, unless they must be in the area, stay home this evening. ... Traffic will be gridlocked in this area," Rockdale County Sheriff's Office Deputy Jodi Shupe said.

For one local resident stuck on Ga. 212 Tuesday, the term gridlock was an understatement.

"Right now, I'm sitting in my car on Ga. 212 and it's bumper to bumper. ... It's been at least an hour since I was diverted off I-20," Conyers resident Josh Callum said. "I've heard that some people might not be getting home tonight. ... It's crazy."

DOT officials declined to estimate the number of motorists stuck in traffic as a result of the fire.



This view of I-20 eastbound facing Covington was shot from the Fayette County Sheriff's Office helicopter, courtesy of pilot Bill Riley, around 2 p.m. Tuesday. The West Avenue interchange is near the top center.

Conyers tackles blaze with help from FEMA, GDOT, EPA

BY RIC LATARSKI
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CONYERS — Olde Town Conyers

was turned into a ghost town Tuesday when a toxic gas cloud caused by an industrial fire floated over the city.

The smoke plume from the fire at BioLab on Rockdale Industrial Boulevard, which contained a variety of chlorine-based chemicals, drifted east, primarily on the north side of Interstate-20, and ultimately led to authorities ordering an evacuation of a 1-mile radius around the fire.

The cloud went directly over Olde Town and the Georgia International Horse Park (GIHP) and, at the high point of the fire, the cloud created a thick haze that made 8 a.m. appear more like early dusk and left a pungent smell in the air. BioLab is the world's largest manufacturer of pool and spa supplies. The fire erupted during the early morning hours at the company's distribution warehouse.

Businesses in the downtown area

were closed, as were county offices,

and activities at the Rockdale County

Courthouse were suspended as

authorities limited access to the area.

Conyers city officials coordinated response to the fire with agencies such as the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Federal Emergency Management

Administration (FEMA) from its emergency communication center located at City Hall on Scott Street.

The city made contingency plans to move its emergency communications center to a location south of I-20 when the situation required City Hall to be evacuated. Police officers were placed on 12-hour shifts and non-essential city personnel were sent home.

The Department of Motor Vehicle Safety facility, located in Conyers, also closed and personnel from that facility assisted in traffic control and the evacuation. Sections of I-20 were closed on more than one occasion as the fire fluctuated and FEMA authorized issuing gas masks to police officers who were working in the most affected areas.

Jennifer Bexley, spokeswoman for the city, said approximately 15 school buses provided by Rockdale County

public schools were utilized to assist in the evacuation, with the initial effort focusing on the elderly and other individuals who would be considered at high risk to the effects of the noxious cloud.

City officials said the north side of the city was evacuated in four hours and approximately 400 people were relocated to emergency shelters. No serious injuries were reported, but a number of people were treated for respiratory irritation caused by the fumes.

Emergency shelters were set up at the J.H. House Elementary School and Heritage High School and as of press time it is unknown how long people will have to stay away from the area.

"How long people will have to remain out of the area will depend upon the weather and how long the fire burns," said Bexley. "We will try and keep people advised of the situation as soon as we have new information."

EPA officials were checking air quality in a number of locations throughout the area and last reports were that the fumes were dissipating.

As the fire continued to burn, there were concerns that as the air cooled during the evening hours the remaining toxic fumes could sink to ground level. Residents were being asked to stay away from the area overnight and concerns about visibility during the nighttime hours had officials announcing tentative plans to close I-20 at 8 p.m.

Conyers Police Chief Tony Lucas and City Manager Rebecca Polizzotto monitored the situation through the communications center and kept Conyers Mayor Randy Mills informed via telephone every 30 minutes.

Mills, who was out of the city visiting relatives at Lake Oconee when he was alerted to the situation, said he went outside and was able to smell the effects of the fire.

"Next to the Heritage High School shooting, this is the most serious situation in Conyers I can remember," said Mills. "You hate to see something like this, but the positive to this situation is the manner in which everyone responded and came together, and I think that is something we can all be proud of."

EPD tests area air, water for chlorine

BY JAY JONES
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CONYERS — Water. It was the key component in controlling the BioLab fire that firefighters never doubted. DeKalb County Fire Department Public Information Officer Eric Jackson said it best.

"We're in a totally defensive position, and we're putting mass quantities of water on the fire," said Jackson at a morning press conference. "It's basically BTU (British thermal units) versus GPM (gallons per minute)."

Rockdale Water Resources officials said the system did what it was supposed to do in supplying plenty of water for the fire department while maintaining service to customers.

Water Resources Director Laurie Ashmore said recent upgrades to the system worked flawlessly in keeping pressure up in the pipes. On average, county usage rates are about 11-12 million gallons per day. Ashmore said the added amount of water being poured on the fire should not have any significant impact on service countywide.

"We have adequate water and pressure to provide the fire department with what they need to fight the fire," Ashmore said. "We have contacted adjacent jurisdictions and, if needed, they are ready to provide us with additional resources."

Ashmore said the county water department has connections ready with DeKalb, Walton and Newton counties. Rockdale County is permitted to draw 22 million gallons a day from Big Haynes Creek, which is drawn from the county reservoir, Randy Poynter Lake, in north Rockdale County.

The monitoring of possible water contamination was done by Georgia's Environmental Protection Division (EPD) of the Department of Natural Resources, with air quality checked by the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Ashmore said her department worked closely with both agencies throughout the day.

"The EPA people are on site monitoring the situation, and we are providing them with any assistance we can," she said.

EPD spokesman Kevin Chambers said there was little danger of chemicals reaching the general water supply, and that monitors focused on the site of the fire itself.

"We were more concerned near the site than anywhere else, because water being poured on the fire could end in a stream, a pond or whatever," Chambers said. "The firefighters did a good job of containment."

Chambers added that water in a ditch near BioLab tested high in pH levels that could have caused considerable damage to fish and other aquatic wildlife if it had drained into a stream. He said officials diked the ditch and pumped the water out. Tests of a nearby pond were negative for contamination.

The EPA had ground level monitors checking air quality in the area, as well as an airplane equipped with monitoring devices that kept tabs on the column of smoke coming from the fire. By mid-afternoon, the chlorine in outlining areas showed signs of dissipating.

"The good news is that as of about 90 minutes ago (about 3 p.m.), at the U.S. 278 exit at Social Circle, there were no hits for chlorine," Chambers said.

Businesses forced to close in wake of emergency, expect to reopen today

BY KEVIN CULPEPPER
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CONYERS — Many local businesses throughout Conyers and Rockdale County were shut down and all outdoor activities in the Newton County School System (NCS) were canceled in the wake of the fire which occurred at the BioLab Inc. facility off Rockdale Industrial Blvd. in the wee hours of Tuesday morning.

"I actually went to my store in Olde Town this morning, but I was quickly told by police to please leave the area," said Vince Evans, the owner of Evans Pharmacy on Center Street. "We will most likely be closed all of today, but if conditions continue to improve throughout the day, I expect us to be able to reopen tomorrow (Wednesday) at our regular time."

Ed Cowan noted that the Cowan Ace Hardware store on Green



Andy Brown of Brown Wealth Management stands outside his office in Olde Town Tuesday afternoon. "I had to sneak in. I had a friend drop me off. I feel like Charlton Heston in 'The Omega Man.' I think I'm the only one in Olde Town," said Brown.

Street closed pretty quickly, but

that it was business as usual for the store on Honey Creek Road.

"My son Joe, who runs the store now, called me about 6:30 this morning to tell me they were

not going to open," said Cowan. "A few people had shown up for work, but they were sent home for the day. But our other store on Honey Creek Road opened at the regular time, and as far as I know, there has been no drop-off in their number of customers."

When Cherokee Run Golf Club General Manager Wayne Ackerson was reached, he said that he was the only person remaining at the golf course, which is located on Centennial Olympic Parkway.

"Our employees came in this morning, but the smoke got so bad that I sent everyone home," said Ackerson. "It is better now, but I will make the final decision on whether to be open on Wednesday as soon as I know for sure that the area is completely safe."

Wal-Mart spokeswoman Sharon Weber said that the Supercenter located on Dogwood Drive would most likely be closed for

several hours.

"We closed early Tuesday and there is no way of knowing when we will reopen," said Weber in the afternoon. "My best guess is that we will be closed between 12 and 16 hours, but we will not reopen until it is safe. We are trying to help those displaced by the evacuation, however, by donating food and water."

NCSS Director of Public Relations Sherri Viniard said that she and Superintendent Wendell Clamp drove around part of Newton County checking out the areas surrounding some of the schools before a final decision was made to keep the schools open.

"We decided to cancel all outdoor activities for the schools after conferring with Fire Marshal Johnny Evans and Emergency Management Director Trey Polk," said Viniard. "After visiting three schools and driving by others, the decision was made by Dr. Clamp

that the best and safest place for all the kids to be right now is in school. And while we did not cancel classes at any of the schools, we had some of them turn their air conditioning units off as a precaution."

Viniard said that unless something changed late on Tuesday, schools would be open normal hours on Wednesday.

Classes ended in the Rockdale County School System last Friday.

While Covington businesses were able to stay open during the fire, some were responding to the concerns of local residents.

Employees with the Super Kmart located in the Covington Galleria Shopping Center on Turner Lake Road moved their dust masks to the front of the store where they would be seen as shoppers entered the store. As of late Tuesday afternoon, the store only had a few masks remaining in stock.

OPINION

Rockdale Citizen

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On an unusual Tuesday, we are the news

What was it the philosopher said? "Fools plan. God laughs." Many times in my life I have been dramatically reminded of the folly of assuming to be in charge of my own destiny. I was reminded, yet again, Tuesday.

I had a pretty full schedule for a Tuesday. It was to have been, in the words of Tony Gray, the Sage of Salem Road, a "good ol' Tuesday" — the last day of post-planning for the long-suffering teachers of Rockdale County. Having already completed my end-of-year checklist, I planned on spending most of the day visiting with friends whom I wouldn't see for the next few weeks. You know, you always promise to keep in touch with fellow teachers over the summer, but you never do.

Truth be known, I figured that I might actually slip out just a few minutes early if I caught my boss looking the other way. I planned to swim a few laps over at the Johnson Park Pool and then go home and submit a column for today's paper on the Greatest Generation. In case you haven't noticed, we are spot-lighting that esteemed group in the Citizen this week.

To celebrate the end of another school year, I had planned on splurging at the grocery store for some nice T-bone steaks and having a cookout for my family — sort of a kick-off for all the summer fun we hope to have.

After supper, I imagined that we would rent a movie that the whole family could watch and spend an idyllic summer evening, 2004 style, camped out in front of the television set.

Those were the plans. The plans changed early on Tuesday morning.

I awakened at my usual time, turned on the coffee, slid on my flip-flops (they are shoes; not attacking John Kerry here) and walked, with our dog, Rachel, up the driveway to get the morning papers. Other than the five or six rolls of toilet paper strewn in the yard of the Wasdins across the street, everything was normal. And then I turned to walk back down the driveway, and normalcy ended. As I looked across our pasture, to the north, I saw a huge cloud rising toward the heavens and then spreading out like a mushroom. In this post 9/11 world, I immediately thought of the unthinkable. Thankfully, so far at least, those fleeting thoughts have been unfounded.

By the time I got back to the house, the news helicopters were hovering and the phone was ringing and Rockdale County was, once again, in the news. As my deadline for this column approaches, I have no idea what the ramifications of the tragic fire at Bio-Lab will be. As of this writing, we don't know how it started or how long it will burn or what damage will be done.

There are a few things that I do know, however. I know that "the day of the BioLab fire" will long be remembered in these parts. I know that my lovely wife, Lisa, couldn't even get to work, and early on in the day Heritage High School was being transformed into a refugee center for, primarily, elderly people who had to be removed from the path of the noxious fumes that continued to spill out into the hot Georgia air.

I know that I-20 was shut down and that eastbound motorists were routed as far south as Monticello. I know I would have been bitter if that had happened to me. It looked eerie seeing an empty West Avenue on the noon news and a Wal-Mart parking lot covered by smoke, didn't it?

I know that on the news the talking heads dispensing information were my friends and neighbors. I saw Michael Lee speaking on behalf of the fire department, for instance. Michael Lee used to coach my son Jackson's soccer team.

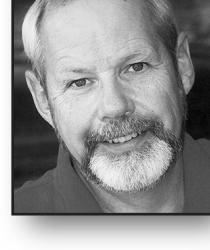
I saw Mike Sellars on the news, screaming at over-anxious news reporters to get back out of the way. Jodi Shupe did an admirable job speaking on behalf of the Rockdale County Sheriff's Office, and she is a lot more pleasant to look at than Sheriff Jeff Wigington.

And I walked out the door of Heritage High School and saw WSB-TV news reporter Lori Geary, standing in front of my car, filming a news shot. Lori Geary is a lot more pleasant to look at than fellow teacher John Robinson, whom I usually see standing in front of my car when I walk out the door at Heritage High School.

As I said, we don't yet know what the ramifications of Tuesday's fire will be — but we know that the day will long be remembered. And maybe the events of Tuesday will help remind me that I'm not nearly as in control of my own circumstances as I would like to believe.

Darrell Huckabee is a local author and educator. He can be reached at dHuck08@aol.com.

VIEWPOINTS
DARRELL HUCKABY



Under fire

Evacuation makes task of publishing a daily paper even more difficult

VIEWPOINTS
RICK RAE



At 5:29 Wednesday morning, the phone woke me up, and Associate Editor Barbara Knowles was on the other end. "BioLab's on fire and there is a chlorine gas cloud over the town," she said. "Authorities have evacuated a 1-mile radius and it could go to 5 miles. I've got a photographer en route and I will be basing myself at the sheriff's office."

I quickly called our new Rockdale editor, Chris Cecil, to update him on the situation. Chris has not relocated to the area yet, so he had a bit of a commute to get to the scene.

As I rolled the car out of the garage, I abused our company policy a bit by using my cell phone while the car was in motion. I contacted our circulation director, Bill Herbert, and found that he was already up to speed. Our distribution center, which is quite close to the Bio-Lab facility, had already been evacuated. Bill informed me that our circulation zone manager had picked up a disposable camera on the way out and may have obtained some photos.

I then contacted our other department heads to have them re-route our staffers to the offices of our Newton County paper in Covington. I had already written off the idea of going to our Conyers office in Olde Town, and that fact was confirmed when the deputy stationed at Sigman Road and Millstead turned me away.

As I drove east on Sigman Road, the cloud above me became more dense, and by the time I reached Ga. 138, it was getting hard to breathe. Of course, I had the top down on my car which was probably pretty dumb, but rather than stop to put it up I just pressed on toward Covington.

Once in the office there, I began to address the mental list of items I had prepared:

■ Since we would not be able to access our Conyers

began making plans to utilize the facilities of our sister paper in Gwinnett County in order to get our Rockdale and Newton newspapers produced.

■ In short order, we arranged to add pages to the Wednesday editions, assigned related story lines for follow up and put some more photography firepower into place.

■ Our news staffers needed to answer questions for our readers such as, what caused the fire? Was it related to an earlier fire at the same location in April? How dangerous are the chlorine gas fumes? What impact is the Rockdale Medical Center experiencing since it is so close? How long will the emergency last? And a hundred other questions related to this disaster.

■ As our plans began to formulate for upcoming editions, our news staffers calmly and professionally began to go about their duties.

■ My thoughts then turned to advertising as I thought about the preprinted advertising sections that were sitting in our warehouse situated just off Sigman Road right in the middle of the danger zone. I quickly discarded thoughts of our carriers picking up their newspapers from that warehouse early Wednesday morning and made the decision to have their papers routed to another location. The ad inserts would just have to stay in the warehouse until we could safely access them. Hopefully, our advertisers would understand if we didn't get them delivered until Thursday.

At this writing, it is early Tuesday afternoon, and all the plans are in place to produce today's Citizen newspaper. We just hope that the wind doesn't shift and the chlorine cloud is not as dangerous as we suspect it is.

Rick Rae is the vice president of Gray Publishing LLC.

other views

Michael Moore to get taste of own medicine

The Daily Telegraph, London:

It must have been a gruesome sight: the elite of the Cannes film festival applauding someone even more self-regarding than themselves. Michael Moore, portly archpriest of the anti-Bush cult, premiered his film "Fahrenheit 9/11" at the festival this week.

Many of the claims made in "Bowling for Columbine," his Oscar-winning film about America's gun culture, have unraveled spectacularly under scrutiny. ... Many American commentators — including Left-wing ones — are embarrassed by the crudity of his rhetoric, the unreliability of his "facts" and the gulf between his claim to represent blue-collar America and his personal lifestyle.

Mr. Moore lives on New York's Upper West Side and travels in corporate jets with a rock-star entourage. Asked about this by the Los Angeles Times, he implied that only middle-class journalists were bothered by the contradiction — "the working class just thinks it's cool."

The truth about Moore is that this self-righteous critic of corporate America is one of its most bloated beneficiaries. It is time someone made a film about him — and ... someone is. ... Later this year, a young filmmaker, Mike Wilson, will unveil a documentary entitled "Michael Moore Hates America," in which the self-proclaimed "slob in a baseball cap" will find his techniques turned on himself.

More should follow Manitoba's example

Red Deer Advocate, Alberta, Canada:

The Manitoba government is enacting a no-nonsense law that calls for strict policing aimed at keeping trashy, high-tech games out of the hands of youngsters. It's a first for Canada to subject all video games to a rating system. It's a move other provinces should take note of and follow.

The Amusement Amendment Act is an attempt to help parents who complain that video games have increasingly become sexually explicit and violent. While British Columbia and Ontario have slapped R ratings on specific video games, those lame-duck policies do not go far enough. Currently on the market ... are games that make violent conflicts now rocking the real world look like child's play.

If legislation requires a heavy hand to get that message across, then so be it for the sake of the children. There is no room for debate, given the world's current turmoil: Iraqi prisoners being abused; an American having his head hacked off; the limbs of children flying in all directions at the hands of a suicide bomber.

That's the real world that violent video games do not project. Yet such actions are condoned in the name of entertainment. ... To expose a child to a play game of violence can nurture a feeling of numbness and indifference toward the real world. ... To allow violent video games to go unchecked smacks of hypocrisy.

Letter Guidelines

The Citizen encourages letters to the editor. All letters must be signed.

Letters should be brief and related to a topic of local interest. No attacks on individuals, libelous allegations or known falsehoods will be printed. Letters will be edited for style, clarity and space. It is important that letter writers include their name, address and a daytime phone number for verification. Letters that do not include a phone number will not be published. Letter writers will be limited to two letters per month. Letters can be mailed to 969 S. Main St., Conyers, Ga. 30012; faxed at 770-483-5797; or e-mailed to letters@rockdalecitizen.com.

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BY GARRY TRUDEAU

