

ERRORS

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steps to convert our software program," she said. "At the present time, some of it is updated by computer and some by manual (effort). We are taking steps to complete the whole process with the computer-generated system, where everything will be updated automatically. It's being done this year."

The county will continue using the current software, Simonsen said. "We are not replacing the software—that would be too expensive," she said. "But we have made internal adjustments with the computer system."

The state audit provides a step-by-step explanation of the original error and the subsequent actions that compounded the situation.

For 2008 taxes payable in 2009, the county auditor failed to include the bond redemption levy request of \$0.51 per \$1,000 from the Freeman School District. As a result, there was a shortfall to the Bond Redemption Fund of \$79,238.27.

On Dec. 15, 2009, the county sent a check for \$79,238.27 to the Freeman School District, representing the county's obligation for the levy omission. The county intended to prevent a shortfall in the Freeman school's bond redemption fund.

In March 2009, the county added the omitted bond redemption levy of \$0.51 per \$1,000 to the county's property-tax reapportionment record. This was done in an attempt to correct the property-tax levy omission.

However, the addition of the levy compounded the problem, causing an error in the property-tax apportionment for the remainder of 2009.

Adding the levy in March 2009 did not result in the collection of additional taxes from the taxpayers, as tax levy notices were already sent. The addition of the bond redemption levy only diluted the amounts to be apportioned to other taxing subdivisions.

In effect, other taxing entities were helping pay for the Freeman elementary school building.

"I made the correction in the computer system, and it started to spread out the taxes," Simonsen said. "It pulled it out from places like the City of Freeman and the James River

Water Development District and put it back into the (Freeman) school refiguration."

The audit determined that, once the bond redemption levy was added, the Freeman School District began receiving remittances it was not entitled to for the bond redemption levy. The figure totaled \$71,977.22 for the remainder of 2009.

Of that amount, \$42,081.57 needs to be redistributed to the appropriate funds within the Freeman School District.

The remaining \$29,895.65 needs to be returned to the county for distribution to the correct taxing subdivisions.

Of the returned money, Hutchinson County will receive \$17,897.72; the James River Water Development District \$483.01; the City of Freeman \$6,191.15 and townships \$3,802.09. An unidentified taxing subdivision would receive the remaining \$1,521.68.

The Freeman school district has begun making the necessary changes and remittances, Rinehart said. She was traveling Tuesday but responded to the *Press & Dakotan* by e-mail.

"I have received a copy of the Hutchinson County audit completed by the South Dakota (Department) of Legislative Audit," she said. "The \$42,081.57 that was incorrectly allocated will be corrected with an adjusting entry to the correct fund in the Freeman School District budget. The \$29,895.65 will be remitted to Hutchinson County."

Once it receives the remittance, Hutchinson County will redistribute the money to the appropriate entities, Simonsen said.

"This will be for 2010 taxes payable in 2011," she said. Simonsen said the computer changes should take care of the errors. However, she isn't overlooking the importance of the human factor.

The Hutchinson County auditor's office will step up its vigilance in recording and updating future property-tax information, Simonsen said.

"We have learned to double check, double check and double check again," she said.

OIL RIG EXPLOSION

Gulf Businesses Wait As Oil Creeps Toward Coast

BILOXI, Miss. (AP)— This time, it's not a hurricane that threatens to wreck their livelihoods—it's a blob of black ooze slowly making its way toward the Gulf Coast.

Hotel owners, fishermen and restaurateurs are keeping anxious watch as an oil slick spreads from a wrecked drilling rig site like a giant filthy ink blot. Forecasters say it could wash ashore within days near delicate wetlands, oyster beds and pristine white beaches.

Crews have not been able to stop thousands of barrels of oil from seeping out of the sea floor since an April 20 explosion destroyed the Deepwater Horizon, which was drilling 50 miles off the Louisiana coast. Eleven workers are missing and presumed dead, and the cause of the explosion has not been determined.

Louis Skrmetta, 54, runs a company called Ship Island Excursions that takes tourists to the Gulf Islands National Seashore, where white-sand beaches and green water create an idyllic landscape.

"This is the worst possible thing that could happen to the Mississippi Gulf Coast," he said. "It will wipe out the oyster industry. Shrimping wouldn't recover for years. It would kill family tourism. That's our livelihood."

As crews struggled to contain the oil slick, Coast Guard officials said Tuesday they were considering setting fire to the contaminated water to burn off the crude. Pools of oil far off-

shore would be trapped in special containment booms and set aflame as soon as Wednesday.

A similar burn off the coast of Newfoundland in 1993 eliminated 50 to 99 percent of captured oil. However, burning the oil also creates air pollution, and the effect on marine life is unclear.

Ed Overton, a professor emeritus of environmental sciences at Louisiana State University who's studying the oil spill, questioned whether burning would work.

"It can be effective in calm water, not much wind, in a protected area," he said. "When you're out in the middle of the ocean, with wave actions, and currents, pushing you around, it's not easy."

He has another concern: The oil samples from the spill he's looked at shows it to be a sticky substance similar to roofing tar.

"I'm not super optimistic. This is tarry crude that lies down in the water," he said. "But it's something that has got to be tried."

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, birds and mammals are more likely to escape a burning area of the ocean than escape from an oil slick. The agency said birds might be disoriented by the plumes of smoke, but they would be at much greater risk from exposure to oil in the water.

In Washington, meanwhile, the Obama administration launched a full investigation of

the explosion, and Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and Interior Secretary Ken Salazar said they will devote every available resource to the probe.

Meanwhile, the glistening sheen of sweet crude continued to grow and began forming long reddish-orange ribbons of oil that, if they washed up on shore, could cover birds, white sand beaches and marsh grasses.

The last major spill in the Gulf was in June 1979, when an offshore drilling rig in Mexican waters—the Ixtoc 1—blew up, releasing 140 million gallons of oil. It took until March 1980 to cap the well, and a great deal of the oil contaminated U.S. waters and Texas shores.

"In the worst-case scenario, this could also last months," said Richard Haut, a senior research scientist at the Houston Advanced Research Center who worked for Exxon for 20 years, 10 of them on an offshore platform in the North Sea.

Oil from the Deepwater Horizon is not expected to reach the coast until late in the week, if at all. As of Tuesday, it was about 20 miles offshore, south of Venice, La. The spill covered an expanding area about 48 miles long and 80 miles wide, but with uneven borders, making it difficult to calculate its area in square miles.

The spill also threatens billions of fish eggs and larvae coating the Gulf's surface this time of year.

Man Cites Explosives, Trans-Atlantic Flight Diverts To Maine

BANGOR, Maine (AP)— The former Air Force member who was detained Tuesday on a trans-Atlantic flight after allegedly claiming he had explosives in his luggage and a fake passport lives a "squeaky clean" life and has never been in trouble before, his father told The Associated Press.

Richard Stansberry said government officials told him the man who was detained after the Paris-to-Atlanta flight was diverted to Maine is his son, 26-year-old Derek Stansberry of Riverview, Fla.

The father said government officials questioned him, but he was as perplexed as they were.

"My son's profession in the military required he live a squeaky clean life," Richard

Stansberry said. The father said his son served four years in the Air Force before leaving last year for a job in the private sector. He wouldn't identify his son's employer, but said the firm does work for the Air Force.

There were 235 passengers and 13 crew aboard Delta Air Lines Flight 273. The flight landed safely just after 3:30 p.m. at Bangor International Airport.

According to U.S. officials who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because the investigation was ongoing, the man claimed to have explosives in his luggage and a fake passport. They said his passport was authentic, and there were no explosives found on board the plane.

Federal officials met the air-

craft at the airport. The Transportation Security Administration said the passenger was being interviewed by law enforcement.

In Washington, Air Force spokeswoman Lt. Col. Linda Pepin

said the man detained on the plane was a senior airman and worked as an intelligence specialist. She said he was on active duty from June 2005 to 2009 and was last stationed at Hurlbert Field, Fla.

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BRIDGE

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Gulden said PCIRoads is looking forward to working on the Meridian Bridge.

"It's such a beautiful and unique structure," he said. "You just don't see those double-decker bridges very often."

While its design may be unique, Gulden said the actual work on the Meridian Bridge and the methods by which it is carried out won't differ much from Missouri River bridge projects the company has at Gettysburg and Moberidge.

The size of the crew working on the bridge will vary throughout the summer depending upon what work is being done.

"For example, when it comes time to do the expansion joints on the deck, there will be a six-to-eight-man crew that comes in just to do that," Gulden said.

"Another 10 carpenters will come in to form up and pour the concrete. The guys that set up the scaffold are a different crew than (the crew that) will do a majority of the paint."

The scope of the work will include structural repairs, spot painting, lighting and railings that the states say will expand the bridge's life span by at least another 25 years.

One highlight of this project is that it is not a bridge or road still being used for traffic.

"The thing that is nice about this job is we aren't under the daily pressure of traffic wanting to get through the work," Gulden said.

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