

5 Dead, 4 Injured In Head-On Crash In S.D.

RELIANCE (AP) — Two cars collided head-on and burst into flames on a gravel road in central South Dakota, killing five people, including a 10-year-old child, and injuring four others, authorities said.

An Oldsmobile Cutlass with three Lower Brule residents on board struck a Toyota Corolla carrying six people on 327th Avenue in Reliance on Tuesday, the Highway Patrol said. Both cars caught fire.

The Corolla's driver, 18-year-old Gabriella D. Laroche, of Lower Brule, died, as did three of her passengers: 32-year-old Alvina Johnson and 10-year-old Deja Sazue, both of Lower Brule; and Truman Armell, 33 of Winnebago, Neb. Two boys, ages 3 and 10, were thrown from the vehicle and suffered serious but non-life threatening injuries, the patrol said.

The driver of the Cutlass, 18-year-old Tessa Crane, was seriously injured, one of her passengers, 35-year-old Jessie Hawk Wing, was killed, and the other passenger, 22-year-old Caleb Mills, suffered minor injuries.

Steve Manger, the Lyman County sheriff, told KGFY radio on Wednesday that he turned the investigation over to the Highway Patrol.

"All I can really say that this is a tragedy and that my heart goes out to all the families involved," he said.

Johnson: Congress Should Focus On Economy

SIoux FALLS (AP) — Sen. Tim Johnson says Congress should get back to working on improving the economy now that the debt ceiling crisis has been averted.

The South Dakota Democrat says lawmakers should now turn their focus to bringing down the nation's unemployment rate and creating jobs.

President Barack Obama on Tuesday signed emergency debt-limit legislation that begins the process of curbing the country's spiraling debt and avoids a default by increasing America's \$14.3 trillion cap on borrowing.

Obama signed the legislation into law shortly after the Senate passed it on Tuesday. The House of Representatives approved the legislation Monday night.

Johnson supported the bipartisan compromise, saying the alternative is pain and chaos. He says the deal keeps the full faith and credit of the United States intact.

S.D. Man Sentenced For Kidnapping, Assault

SIoux FALLS (AP) — A South Dakota man has been sentenced to six months in prison on a kidnapping and assault charges.

The U.S. attorney's office says Marcus Marks was indicted by a grand jury for kidnapping, assault with intent to commit kidnapping, and domestic violence. He pleaded guilty in May to two of the three charges.

Authorities say the 20-year-old Marks threw his victim into a car, choked her and hit her in the face. He allegedly forced the victim to leave the area against her will and continued to assault her.

Lawmakers Consider Closing Dropout Loophole

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman and several key lawmakers say they're considering a proposal to close a loophole in state law that lets 16- and 17-year-olds drop out of school with a parent's permission.

Heineman says he has talked with Omaha Sen. Brad Ashford about a possible bill when lawmakers reconvene in January.

The U.S. Department of Education says that, as of last year, Nebraska was one of 21 states to require student attendance until age 18. But Sen. Greg Adams of York, chairman of the Legislature's Education Committee, says the law also allows students to stop attending at age 16 with a parent's notarized consent.

Ashford says that provision seems counterproductive, given Nebraska's recent efforts to reduce truancy.

Iowa Man Dies In One-Vehicle Rollover In S.D.

LEAD (AP) — Authorities say an Iowa man died Wednesday in a one-vehicle crash near Lead.

The Highway Patrol says 71-year-old David McKeag of Lamoni, Iowa, was killed when his vehicle left the roadway on a curve and rolled.

The patrol says McKeag wasn't wearing a seatbelt and was thrown from the vehicle.

Changing Demographics Challenge Neb. Schools

BY TIMBERLY ROSS
Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — The state education commissioner said Wednesday that Nebraska's changing demographics present challenges for both rural and urban school districts.

Roger Breed said student-enrollment patterns have changed over the past 20 years, in part because "families and students are moving from farms and ranches to cities."

He said that strains resources, facilities and the tax base in urban districts that must accommodate more students.

"In rural areas, you have the reverse problem ... fewer and fewer students in more isolated areas," he said, adding that education costs rise as districts struggle to reach students across vast distances.

The 2010 Census showed that more than half of Nebraska's 93 counties lost 10 percent or more of their population in the past decade. Only eight counties, all around population-heavy Omaha and Lincoln or along Interstate 80, saw their populations rise.

Breed said rural districts could see relief from online learning programs. An announcement about Nebraska's proposed virtual school is expected in the next few weeks, he said, declining

Wednesday to release further details.

The school was proposed several years ago to assist rural and low-performing schools teach language arts, math and science.

Breed also said an increase in the number of minority students challenges Nebraska schools. In 1990, one in 10 students was a minority. Today that figure has grown to three in 10, and 6.6 percent of students need English-language instruction because the primary language spoken at home is not English.

And, he said, more students are qualifying for free or reduced lunch.

Breed said together those changes create language barriers and poverty-related issues such as poor health and attendance that affect students' education.

Breed's comments came Wednesday after his address to educators gathering in Grand Island. Some 1,000 school administrators, principals and teachers are in attendance at the one-day conference focused on student success.

He said he's asked educators to be aware of how changing student enrollment affects their school districts. He suggested that schools look at whether before- or after-school programs, better use of class time or online classes would help address their challenges.

Western ND Pipeline Proposal Scaled Back

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — A proposed oil pipeline in western North Dakota has been scaled back because of the uncertain construction schedule of a second pipeline that it was intended to feed, state regulators said Wednesday.

BakkenLink Pipeline LLC was intended to carry up to 100,000 barrels of oil from oil truck unloading stations and a pipeline gathering system in three North Dakota counties to Baker, in southeastern Montana.

In Montana, the line was to link up to TransCanada Corp.'s proposed Keystone XL pipeline, a 1,700-mile project that is intended to deliver oil from Canada's Manitoba province to locations in Oklahoma and Texas.

The Keystone XL project has drawn opposition from environmental activists, and the U.S. State Department has ordered more time for public comment. State Department permission is needed for the project to go ahead, because the pipeline crosses the U.S. border.

North Dakota's Public Service Commission said Wednesday that BakkenLink now intends to build its pipeline to a rail loading station that is being developed near Fryburg, about 30 miles west of Dickinson in southwestern North Dakota.

The length of the proposed line is being reduced from 250 miles to about 144 miles, and the project's cost is now estimated at \$126.5 million, roughly half the cost of the original plan, Cramer said.

"It still allows them some access to markets," Cramer said.

The commission on Wednesday scheduled a public hearing on the proposed changes for 10 a.m. Sept. 1 at the McKenzie County courthouse in Watford City.

The BakkenLink project will be designed to ship oil in either direction along its length, depending on whether better prices could be had by using another pipeline to transport the oil east, or by sending it to the Fryburg terminal to be loaded onto a train, state regulators said.

Pipeline development is important to the state because shipping oil by pipeline is the most economical and safest way to transport crude, Cramer said.

Science Project Closes Omaha Airport Terminal

BY MARGERY A. BECK
Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — An Oregon college student's science project forced the evacuation and shutdown of a terminal at Eppley Airfield in Omaha on Wednesday.

The student had been participating in a science fair at Creighton University in Omaha, FBI spokeswoman Sandra Breault said.

"The device had a legitimate purpose and was harmless but had a suspicious appearance, which triggered an appropriate response by TSA and law enforcement," Breault said.

Breault said the student is working on a doctorate, but did not release the student's name or other details — such as the type of science project that prompted the scare.

The airport's north terminal was evacuated and shut down for about two hours Wednesday after X-ray screening workers spotted the science project in a carry-on bag, the federal Transportation Security Agency said.

The terminal was reopened around 2 p.m. Wednesday.

"Out of an abundance of caution, screening operations were suspended and the terminal was evacuated," a TSA written release said.

"The Omaha Police Department's Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit cleared the item with negative findings."

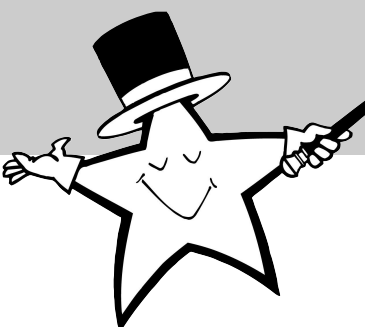
Screening operations continued at the airport's south terminal, but crowds of travelers could be seen gathering outside the airport's north terminal more than an hour after officials called for the evacuation.

Officers and police dogs could be seen inside the terminal checking trash cans, under chairs and even cabinets in the terminal's shops and concessions area while the area was shut down.

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