

## Gunman Who Killed 2 Firemen Left Note

WEBSTER, N.Y. (AP) — The ex-con who lured two firefighters to their deaths in a blaze of gunfire left a rambling typewritten note saying he wanted to burn down the neighborhood and “do what I like doing best, killing people,” police said Tuesday as they recovered burned human remains believed to be the gunman’s missing sister.

Police Chief Gerald Pickering said 62-year-old William Spengler, who served 17 years in prison for the 1980 hammer slaying of his grandmother, armed himself with a revolver, a shotgun and a military-style rifle before he set his house afire to lure first responders into a death trap before dawn on Christmas Eve.

“He was equipped to go to war, kill innocent people,” Pickering said.

The rifle he had was a military-style .223-caliber semiautomatic Bushmaster rifle with flash suppression, the same make and caliber weapon used in the elementary school massacre in Newtown, Conn., Pickering said.

The chief said police believe the firefighters were hit with shots from the rifle given the distance but the investigation was incomplete.

## Nasty Storms, Tornadoes Blitz The South

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — A Christmas Day twister outbreak left behind damage from Louisiana to Alabama while holiday travelers in the nation’s much colder midsection battled sometimes treacherous driving conditions from freezing rain and blizzard conditions.

In Mobile, Ala., a tornado or high winds damaged homes and knocked down power lines and large tree limbs in an area just west of downtown around nightfall, said Nancy Johnson, a spokeswoman for the Mobile County Commission. WALA-TV’s tower camera captured a large funnel cloud headed toward downtown.

“We haven’t verified what it was, but we have an area that we heard has damage to homes,” she said.

Meanwhile, blizzard conditions were hitting the nation’s midsection.

Earlier in the day, winds toppled a tree onto a pickup truck in the Houston area, killing the driver. Icy roads already were blamed for a 21-vehicle pileup in Oklahoma, and the Highway Patrol says a 28-year-old woman was killed in a crash on a snowy U.S. Highway near Fairview.

## Syrian Rebels Capture Town, Attack Air Base

BEIRUT (AP) — Syrian rebels fully captured a northern town near the Turkish border on Tuesday after weeks of heavy fighting and attacked a regime air base in a neighboring province, activists said.

The air base is in Aleppo province, where opposition fighters have already captured three other large military bases in recent months. Rebels have also laid siege to the international airport in the city of Aleppo, Syria’s commercial capital, and launched an offensive on the police academy near the city.

With steady rebel gains across the north, President Bashar Assad’s regime is having increasing difficulty sending supplies by land to Aleppo province, especially after rebels cut a major thoroughfare from Damascus. It is just another sign that the opposition is consolidating its grip across large swathes of territory in northern Syria near the Turkish border.

In his traditional Christmas address, Pope Benedict XVI decried the slaughter of the “defenseless” in Syria, where anti-regime activists estimate more than 40,000 have died in fighting since the uprising against President Bashar Assad’s rule began in March 2011.

In another blow to the regime, activists said that Mohammed Adnan Arabo, a member of Syria’s parliament has left the country and joined the opposition. Ahmad Ramadan, an executive council member of the opposition Syrian National Council group, and other activists said Arabo arrived in Turkey on Tuesday.

# Holiday Shopping Sales Weak

## Growth Rate Was The Slowest Since 2008

BY DANIEL WAGNER  
AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON — U.S. holiday retail sales this year grew at the weakest pace since 2008, when the nation was in a deep recession. In 2012, the shopping season was disrupted by bad weather and consumers’ rising uncertainty about the economy.

A report that tracks spending on popular holiday goods, the MasterCard Advisors SpendingPulse, said Tuesday that sales in the two months before Christmas increased 0.7 percent, compared with last year. Many analysts had expected holiday sales to grow 3 to 4 percent.

In 2008, sales declined by between 2 percent and 4 percent as the financial crisis that crested that fall dragged the economy into recession. Last year, by contrast, retail sales in November and December rose between 4 percent and 5 percent, according to ShopperTrak, a separate market research firm. A 4 percent increase is considered a healthy season.

Shoppers were buffeted this year by a string of events that made them less likely to spend: Superstorm Sandy and other bad weather, the distraction of the presidential election and grief about the massacre of schoolchildren in Newtown, Conn. The numbers also show how Washington’s current budget impasse is trickling down to Main Street and unsettling consumers. If Americans remain reluctant to spend, analysts say, economic growth could falter next year.

In the end, even steep last-minute discounts weren’t enough to get people into stores, said Marshal Cohen, chief research analyst at the market research firm NPD Inc.

“A lot of the Christmas spirit was left behind way back in Black Friday weekend,” Cohen said, referring to the traditional retail rush the day after Thanksgiving. “We had one reason after another for consumers to say, ‘I’m going to stick to my list and not go beyond it.’”

Holiday sales are a crucial indicator of the economy’s strength. November and December account for up to 40 percent of annual sales for many retailers. If those sales don’t materialize, stores are forced to offer steeper discounts. That’s a boon for shoppers, but it cuts into stores’ profits.

Spending by consumers accounts for 70 percent of overall economic activity, so the eight-week period encompassed by the SpendingPulse data is seen as a critical time not just for retailers but for manufacturers, wholesalers and companies at every other point along the supply chain.

The SpendingPulse data include sales by retailers in key holiday spending categories such as electronics, clothing, jewelry, luxury goods, furniture and other home goods between Oct. 28 and Dec. 24. They include sales across all payment methods, including cards, cash and checks.

It’s the first major snapshot of retail sales during the holiday season through Christmas Eve. A clearer picture will emerge next week as retailers like Macy’s and Target report revenue from stores open for at least a year. That sales measure is widely watched in the retail industry because it excludes revenue from stores that recently opened or closed, which can be volatile.

This season’s weak sales could have repercussions for 2013, he said. Retailers will make fewer orders to restock their shelves, and dis-

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**MARSHAL COHEN**

counts will hurt their profitability. Wholesalers, in turn, will buy fewer goods, and orders to factories for consumer goods will likely drop in the coming months.

In the run-up to Christmas, analysts blamed the weather and worries about the “fiscal cliff” for putting a damper on shopping. Superstorm Sandy battered the Northeast and mid-Atlantic states in late October. Many in the New York region were left without power, and people farther inland were buried under feet of snow. According to McNamara, the Northeast and mid-Atlantic account for 24 percent of U.S. retail sales.

Buying picked up in the second half of November as retailers offered more discounts and shoppers waylaid by the storm finally made it into malls, he said.

But as the weather calmed, the threat of the “fiscal cliff” picked up. In December, lawmakers remained unable to reach a deal that would prevent tax increases and government spending cuts set to take effect at the beginning of 2013. If the cuts and tax hikes kick in and stay in place for months, many economists expect the nation could fall back into recession.

## Christmas

# Pope’s Message Focuses On Mideast, China

BY FRANCES D’EMILIO  
Associated Press

VATICAN CITY — In his Christmas message to the world Tuesday, Pope Benedict XVI called for an end to the slaughter in Syria and for more meaningful negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, while encouraging more religious freedom under China’s new leaders.

Delivering the traditional speech from the central balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica, Benedict also encouraged Arab spring nations, especially Egypt, to build just and respectful societies.

The pope prayed that China’s new leadership may “esteem the contribution of the religions, in respect for each other” to help

build a “fraternal society for the benefit of that noble people.”

It was a clear reference to the Chinese government’s often harsh treatment of Catholics loyal to the pontiff instead of to the state-sanctioned church. Earlier this month, the Vatican refused to accept the decision by Chinese authorities to revoke the title of a Shanghai bishop, who had been appointed in a rare show of consensus between the Holy See and China.

As the 85-year-old pontiff, bundled up in an ermine-trimmed red cape, gingerly stepped foot on the balcony, the pilgrims, tourists and Romans below backing St. Peter’s Square erupted in cheers.

Less than 12 hours earlier, Benedict had led a two-hour long Christmas Eve ceremony in the basilica. He sounded hoarse and

looked weary as he read his Christmas message and then holiday greetings in 65 languages.

In his “Urbi et Orbi” speech, which traditionally reviews world events and global challenges, Benedict prayed that “peace spring up for the people of Syria, deeply wounded and divided by a conflict that does not spare even the defenseless and reaps innocent victims.”

He called for easier access to help refugees and for “dialogue in the pursuit of a political solution to the conflict.”

Benedict prayed that God “grant Israelis and Palestinians courage to end long years of conflict and division, and to embark resolutely on the path to negotiation.”

Israel, backed by the United

States, opposed the Palestinian statehood bid, saying it was a ploy to bypass negotiations, something the Palestinians deny. Talks stalled four years ago.

Senior Palestinian official Saeb Erekat said that in a meeting with the pope last week, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas “emphasized our total readiness to resume negotiations.” The Palestinians have not dropped their demand that Israel first stop settlement activities before returning to the negotiating table.

Hours earlier, in the ancient Bethlehem church built over the site where tradition holds Jesus was born, candles illuminated the sacred site and the joyous sound of prayer filled its overflowing halls.

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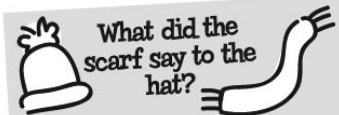


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## Snowman Puzzles

Chill out with this cool collection of brrrr-ain teasers.



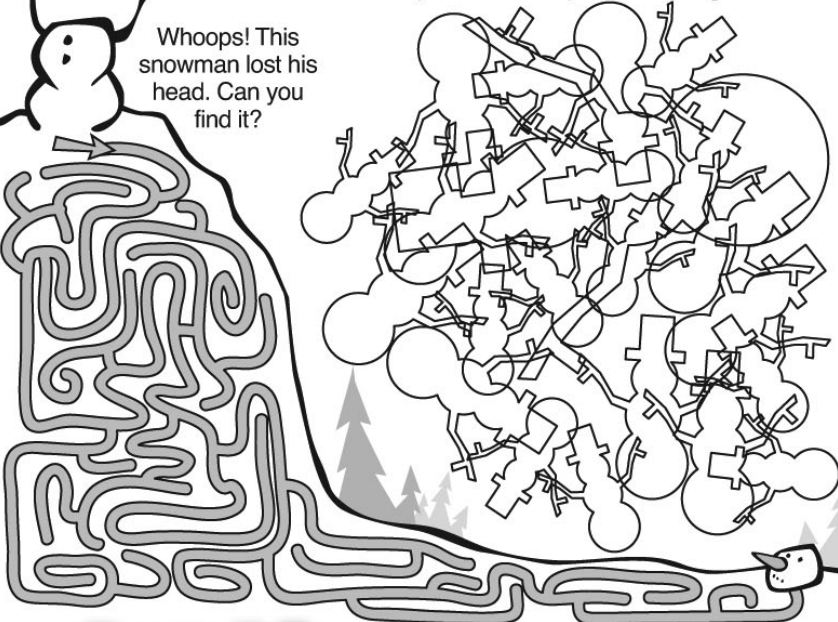
What did the scarf say to the hat?

Cross out the words that rhyme with **FREEZE**.

“TREES YOU SQUEEZE GO ON KNEES AHEAD KEYS PLEASE AND I’LL BEES JUST HANG SKIS AROUND BREEZE.”

### Scrambled Snowmen

How many snowmen can you find in this puzzle?



Whoops! This snowman lost his head. Can you find it?



Circle every other letter to reveal the punchline for each riddle.

What is a snowman’s favorite food?

R I D C J E R B L E  
K R H G M E P R F S

1

What does a snowman put on a taco?

W C S H A I Y L B L  
T Y N P B E Q P J  
P W E D R K S

C

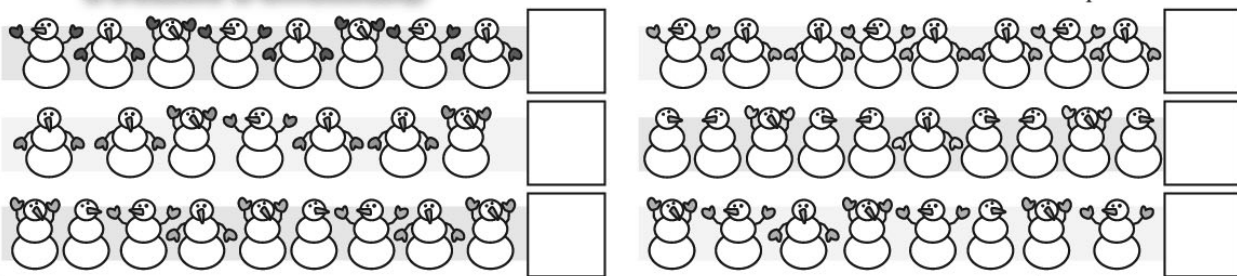
What do you call a family of snowmen around a cozy fireplace?

T P G U Y D T D  
W L H E U S

P

## Frozen Followers

Draw the snowman that should come next in each row to continue the pattern.



Standards Link: Mathematical Reasoning: Complete patterns.

## Snowman Stumper

The kids on Holly Lane built these four snowmen. Can you figure out who made each of these snowmen?

Kayla’s snowman is between Jordan’s snowman and Greg’s snowman. Sophie’s snowman is next to Jordan’s snowman. Greg’s snowman is not the largest.



Standards Link: Problem Solving: Use a variety of strategies, including logic, to solve problems.

Extra! Extra!

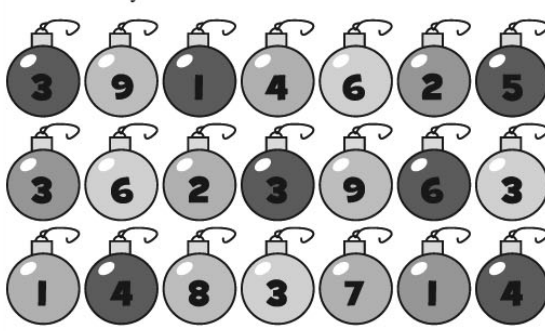
### Winter Words

Look through the newspaper for words that could be used to describe a cold winter. Use them in a sentence to describe the weather today.

Standards Link: Writing: Write sentences using descriptive details.

## Kid Scoop Puzzler

Aunt Artica likes lots of ornaments on her Christmas tree. But she doesn’t have room for all of them. By adding the numbers on the ornaments, can you circle the ones she can use? The total can’t be higher than 50 or less than 35. Then have a friend try. Who was able to use the most ornaments?



Standards Link: Math/Number Sense: Calculate sums.

## Double Word Search

CHRISTMAS  
HOLLY  
SNOWMAN  
FREEZE  
FOOD  
WINTER  
COOL  
RIDDLE  
CHILL  
HOT  
COLD  
LOST  
SKIS  
COZY  
FIND

Find the words in the puzzle. Then look for each word in this week’s Kid Scoop stories and activities.



Standards Link: Letter sequencing. Recognized identical words. Skim and scan reading. Recall spelling patterns.

## FROM THE Kid Scoop LESSON LIBRARY

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### Hot and Cold

A player selects a picture from the newspaper. Another player tries to identify the picture by asking questions that can be answered “yes” or “no.” Give clues like you are “hot” when getting close and “cold” when getting farther away.

Standards Link: Reading: Ask and answer questions; follow directions.

## Write On!

### Invention Lab

Think of a problem people face. Then come up with an invention that would solve that problem. Write a paragraph about your invention and how it solves the problem.

Deadline: January 20 Published: Week of Feb. 17  
Please include your school and grade.

Send your story to:

Press & Dakotan  
C/o Noelle Schlechter  
319 Walnut Street  
Yankton, SD 57078  
605-665-7811, ext 112

## Weekly Writing Corner

### No Money Gifts

What can you give as a Christmas present that doesn’t cost money to buy?

You can make a Christmas present. You can also make it with whatever you have, because with whatever you make, they will like!

Brooklyn, 5th Grade  
Sacred Heart Middle School, Yankton

I think that you don’t need money gifts because all you need is love from that person. Love is the best gift of all. I you aunt and uncle come and they live far away, than that’s the perfect gift.

Cecilia Kouri, 5th Grade  
Sacred Heart Middle School, Yankton

Write a song with no help. Someone who really loves you will love it. It could be a Christmas song. Use interesting words and give it to the person who loves you.

Gabby, 2nd grade

A present that doesn’t cost money is service. Another thing is love and another is caring.

Shannon, 2nd grade

I can give my mom a cookie for Christmas and make the bed.

Breyanna, 1st grade

You can give a gift they will never forget like a picture, or tell them a story, or a huge hug—not a television on an X-Box, but best of all, is a lot of love.

Christian, 2nd grade

I would make a card out of some leftover paper. I would write about how much I love that person, and draw some things on it as well. Then I would take an old can and cut out a diamond. I would take some wire from my wire fence and put it through the top of the diamond to make an ornament. Finally, I would take the ornament and the card and put them under the Christmas tree.

Zane, 5th grade