

# Push For Policy Unlikely On Impaired Firefighting

BY JAMES NORD  
Associated Press

PIERRE — Key state lawmakers and Gov. Dennis Daugaard's administration don't plan to push for a statewide measure to regulate intoxication among firefighters when they're responding to emergency calls, officials said Monday.

An autopsy last week found a volunteer firefighter for Valley Springs Fire and Rescue who died fighting a house fire in Brandon had a high blood-alcohol level when he responded. State Fire Marshal Paul Merriman said there's no uniform policy governing alcohol use in departments across the state and said his office doesn't have authority over daily operations at individual departments.

It's unclear if there's a policy on intoxication at

Valley Springs, which is one of South Dakota's 337 fire departments that all have their own policies governing conduct. Don Johnson, chief of the volunteer fire department, didn't respond to messages seeking comment Friday and Monday.

Kelsey Pritchard, a spokeswoman for Daugaard, said in an email that a statewide alcohol policy for departments would be difficult to enforce. Merriman said that voluntary state certification training teaches trainees about impairment while responding to emergencies, and he has said that many departments do have policies governing intoxication in place.

"It really comes down to being personally responsible when you respond ... for your own well-being as well as your fellow firefighters and those around you," Mer-

riman said.

House Majority Leader Brian Gosch said he wouldn't push for a change, though he said he doesn't think firefighters should respond while intoxicated. Incoming Senate Majority Leader Corey Brown said the Republican caucus leading the Senate wouldn't start discussing legislative priorities for the 2016 session until the fall.

The autopsy released last week determined that Steven Ackerman, 38, had a blood alcohol level of nearly 0.19, more than twice the legal limit for driving. The 14-year volunteer with Valley Springs Fire and Rescue died April 12, and investigators determined he likely fell through the floor in the burning home in Brandon.

The fire, which also killed 47-year-old David Smith, started in a first-floor vent

pipe enclosure that served a basement furnace and water heater. The blaze has been ruled accidental, authorities have said. It was never considered suspicious, and both Ackerman and Smith died of smoke inhalation.

Monte Albertson, a member and past chief of the Split Rock Volunteer Fire Department, said the department has an unwritten policy that firefighters don't respond to an emergency if they've been drinking. Albertson said he wouldn't support a statewide policy since some departments are understaffed and noted that there are laws against driving while intoxicated that apply to firefighters.

He said his department relies on common-sense expectations.

"You don't go to a call with alcohol in your bloodstream," he said.

## Man Sentenced In Sex Trafficking Case

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — A Minnesota man accused of forcing a woman into prostitution in Sioux Falls has been sentenced to more than three years in federal prison.

Authorities say 31-year-old David Nance and a co-defendant drove a 33-year-old woman from Minnesota to Sioux Falls in August 2014. The operation allegedly involved an ad on Backpage.com that was answered by several men.

The Sioux Falls *Argus Leader* reports that Nance was sentenced Monday to 37 months in prison.

Nance and his co-defendant, Ashley Crayton, both signed plea deals in the case.

## Dead Assault Victim Identified

RAPID CITY (AP) — Rapid City police have identified the victim who succumbed to injuries in what has been described as a suspicious death.

Police say 38-year-old Joseph Roaneagle, of Rapid City, died Friday morning at an area hospital.

Roaneagle was discovered unconscious on May 27 after officers responded to report of an assault. Police say Roaneagle was suffering from head trauma and was found lying against a retaining wall.

Police have identified several people who may have been present when the man was injured.

Rapid City Police and the Pennington County Sheriff's Office are continuing to investigate the incident.

## Patrol Seizes Drugs After Traffic Stops

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — State troopers seized 131 pounds of marijuana and nearly 24 pounds of heroin after separate traffic stops along Interstate 80 in Nebraska.

The Nebraska State Patrol says the pot was found Saturday after a trooper stopped a sport utility vehicle just east of Grand Island. The patrol says a drug dog alerted troopers to the odor of drugs, and the pot later was found in five packages inside a bag in the cargo area.

The patrol says the heroin was found in Sunday afternoon after a trooper pulled over a vehicle about a mile east of the Waverly exit. The patrol says the trooper was given permission to search the vehicle. The patrol says the heroin was found in nine packages secreted in two false compartments.

Both drivers were arrested.

## Death Penalty Petitioners Open 2 Offices

LINCOLN, Neb. — Nebraskans for the Death Penalty has opened offices in Omaha and Lincoln where people can volunteer and sign the group's petition to put the death penalty on the 2016 ballot.

The Omaha and Lincoln locations will be open roughly 60 hours a week. Organizers said Monday they plan to open offices in other parts of the state over the summer.

The ballot drive follows last month's vote in the Legislature to abolish capital punishment despite Gov. Pete Ricketts' veto.

The offices are located at 11605 Miracle Hills Drive in Omaha and the Nebraska Republican Party office at 1610 N Street in Lincoln. Hours for both are 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Sunday.

## Iowa Jail Inmate Who Escaped Arrested

URBANDALE, Iowa (AP) — The second of two escapees from Warren County Jail in south-central Iowa has been arrested.

The Des Moines Register (<http://dmreg.co/1Gk6IU>) reports 29-year-old Darian Crayton was arrested Sunday morning.

According to a news release, Crayton was arrested while a gas station in Urbandale. He faces several charges including possession of a stolen vehicle and driving while barred. Crayton will be taken back to Warrant County Jail following his charges in Dallas County. He is currently being held on \$5,000 bail.

Authorities say he and 26-year-old Frank Manders escaped from jail last week by manipulating a cell door lock and descending from the third floor. Manders was found earlier.

Crayton had been jailed on charges of driving while barred and failing to appear in court.

# Village Scrutinized For 'Questionable' Payments

BY GRANT SCHULTE  
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — An audit that found widespread financial problems in the Nebraska village of Riverton has been turned over to prosecutors for a criminal investigation, State Auditor Charlie Janssen said Monday.

Janssen said his office referred the case to the Nebraska attorney general's office and local authorities after his staff uncovered more than \$30,000 in "questionable and possibly fraudulent" payments.

Most of the money went to former village clerk Kelly Jackson and her husband, Jeremy Jackson, a former water operator, according to the audit.

The potentially fraudulent payments included \$15,830 to Kelly Jackson beyond her approved \$400-a-month salary and \$10,250 to her husband. Auditors also documented more than \$2,600 in overpayments to Kelly Jackson from years prior to the audit and \$1,600 in cash utility payments that were never deposited.

Auditors said Kelly Jackson responded to one inquiry with what appeared to be an altered bank statement and claimed to have repaid money that she had not.

The Jacksons could not be reached

to comment on the audit; a listed phone number was disconnected and no other numbers could be found. Village board chairman Mike Lammers declined to comment, saying the audit was "a sore subject."

Auditors blamed the village board for insufficient monitoring and oversight. According to the report, the village had no receipt books, employee timesheets, personnel files, invoices or customer utility listings to track payments. It also failed to distribute W-2 forms to employees and didn't withhold payroll taxes during the audit period from Oct. 1, 2013, through Jan. 31, 2015.

As of Jan. 31, the village owed nearly \$33,700 to various creditors. About \$9,400 of that was at least 90 days overdue, according to the audit.

Auditors said the village provided water, sewer and garbage services to residents for a flat rate of \$77.80 per month, but never provided invoices for the services and didn't record money when it was received. At least one resident received a discount based on a verbal agreement with Kelly Jackson, auditors said.

Current village clerk Audrey Beaty, who was hired in January, said she's working to correct the problems.

"We've been working closely with

our village attorney to ensure it's done right," she said.

The village also purchased 250 gallons of bleach, purportedly to purify its water supply. But state water tests suggested the chemical hadn't been used for that purpose, and village officials couldn't account for it, according to the audit report.

"This gives rise to serious safety concerns, as such large amounts of bleach can not only pose health and environmental risks but can also be used for illegal activities, including the manufacture of methamphetamine," the report said.

Auditors said all of the bleach purchases were made by Jackson except for two made by former village board member Carolyn Jackson. At the time of the purchases, auditors said Carolyn Jackson had resigned from office and had no authority to buy the bleach on the village's behalf. Auditors were not able to determine whether Carolyn Jackson is related to Kelly and Jeremy Jackson.

Janssen said he plans to increase the number of random audits on villages.

"We're seeing more and more problems," he said.

## Wet Weather Boosts SD Moisture Supplies

SIOUX FALLS — More rain across South Dakota in the past week boosted field and livestock moisture supplies.

The Agriculture Department says in its weekly crop progress report that topsoil moisture totals were rated 6 percent very short, 14 percent short, 74 percent adequate and 6 percent surplus. Subsoil moisture rated 7 percent very short, 23 percent short, 67 percent adequate and 3 percent surplus.

Pasture and range conditions were rated 2 percent very poor, 9 percent poor, 34 percent fair, 39 percent good and 16 percent excellent. Stock water supplies rated 5 percent very short, 17 percent short, 71 percent adequate and 7 percent surplus.

The report says there were five days suitable for fieldwork.

## District Eases Students' Cellphone Use

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — High school students within the Omaha school district can now check their smartphones in between classes or during lunch thanks to a recent change in rules.

The school board last week approved a change to student code conduct that eases rules on cellphone use for the high school students, the Omaha World-Herald (<http://bit.ly/1lpm8tf>) reported. The district previously required them to keep their phones off during the school day unless it was an emergency or they had received

special permission.

Elementary and middle school students still have to keep their phones inside lockers or backpacks and they must be off during the school day.

Compared with other metro area high schools in Nebraska, the Omaha district is a little late to the game on cellphone tolerance. The Millard, Bellevue and Papillion-La Vista school districts gave their students the green light several years ago to call their parents or watch videos on their phone during lunch or between classes.

The Omaha district hopes

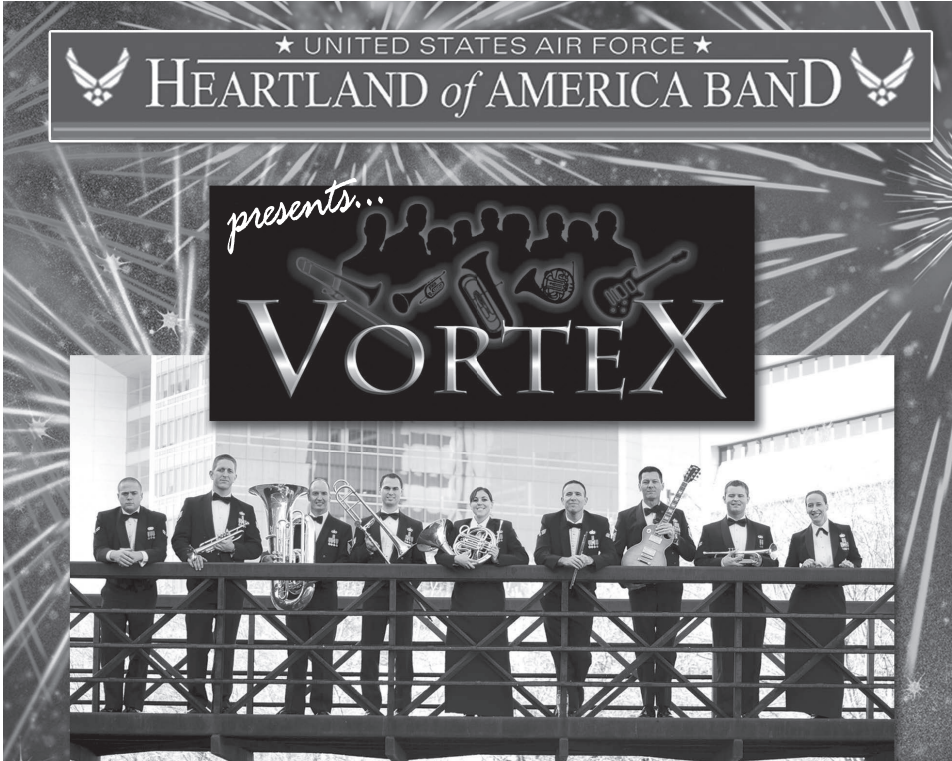
the change in its rules encourages more teachers to incorporate technology such as the smartphones into lesson plans, said Rob Dickson, the district's executive director for information services. If the change goes well, elementary and middle school rules might be changed, too.

The Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan will be publishing a special edition on Saturday, July 4, 2015.

This 4th of July edition will feature special stories about the history of Independence Day as well as memories from readers about some of their favorite July 4 experiences.

**Advertising deadline for this issue will be Monday, June 29, 2015**

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