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## Fire erupts at Willow Creek coal mine

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A fire erupted last Wednesday afternoon approximately 2,400 feet underground at Willow Creek coal mine. Fortunately, all 54 workers manning the Cyprus Amax afternoon production crew managed to exit the underground facility without injury.

"The miners were evacuated and on the surface within 25 minutes - they were outside the mine well before the smoke," reported Mike Dmitrich during an interview last Friday.

The miners were utilizing the company's state-of-the-art longwall equipment to extract coal when the Nov. 25 blaze ignited.

"The fire started behind the longwall in what coal miners call the gob," confirmed Dmitrich, Willow Creek government affairs officer and media spokesperson.

The company notified the United States Mine Safety and Health Administration regarding the situation and MSHA representatives promptly arrived at the scene, added the company spokesperson.

Willow Creek employees and several local mine rescue teams, assisted by MSHA personnel and heavy equipment operators in the area, immediately focused on sealing the portals to extinguish the blaze at the underground facility.

The concentrated effort concluded successfully at 3 a.m. on Thanksgiving Day, according to Dmitrich. Rescuers assisting at the scene included teams from Willow Creek, Energy West and Skyline mines.

"The portals were sealed to cut the oxygen going into the mine and smother the fire," explained Dmitrich. "The company plans to rehabilitate the mine and reopen Willow Creek as soon as possible."

Before the mine fire was contained, smoke billowed from the underground facility, blanketing the surround area with a thick haze.

Public safety agencies throughout the county launched an emergency response process, transporting Price and Helper residents with respiratory problems to Wellington Elementary School.

Fire department personnel metered carbon monoxide content in the two cities and recommended evacuating the residents, pointed out Carbon County emergency management director Dennis Dooley on Monday.

Thirty individuals apparently stayed overnight at the Wellington school. Carbon monoxide levels did not register high enough to necessitate forced evacuations, explained Dooley.

Carbon Commissioners Mike Milovich and Neil Breinholt along with Dooley set up the emergency operation center at the dispatch office in Price.

Evacuated Helper and Price residents returned home early Thanksgiving morning.

"The police and fire departments in Helper, Price and Wellington conducted an outstanding emergency response operation and deserve recognition," declared Carbon County Sheriff Jim Robertson last Friday.

"Special accolades should go to the public safety dispatchers for keeping it all together. The dispatchers did a heck of a good job. Of course, the most important thing is no one died and no one was injured," added the sheriff.

On Monday, Cyprus Amax spokesperson Mike Rounds updated the situation at Willow Creek from the company's office in Denver, Colo.

"Cyprus Amax is working on determining exactly what happened at Willow Creek," indicated Rounds.



Ben Bradey and Steve Manzanaras, longwall sheer operators at Willow Creek mine, hook up remotes at the beginning of a recent shift. The two men are members of the crew working at the time of the fire last Wednesday.

"The company is drilling bore holes to evaluate the gases and atmosphere inside the mine."

Rounds pointed out that atmospheric conditions at the underground facility will determine the next step the company will take at Willow Creek.

Extensive monitoring at the mine will continue to determine when re-entry into the coal mine can be safely accomplished.

The Cyprus Amax spokesperson

attributed the injury-free evacuation of all workers inside the underground facility on Nov. 25 to the "excellent execution of mine emergency procedures."

The miners on shift in the underground facility last Wednesday included 53 Cyprus employees and one contracted worker.

Rounds revealed that testing has indicated positive trends occurring inside the mine, but emphasized the extremely preliminary nature of the data to date.

"The goal is to keep the permanent employees at Willow Creek employed," pointed out Rounds.

The local Cyprus Amax underground coal mining operation employs approximately 300 permanent workers. Cyprus Amax is extremely pleased with the effective response by Willow Creek employees, local and state law enforcement, the fire department, hospital personnel, rescue squads from mines in the area and the telephone company, concluded Rounds.

## PRWID board members finalize tentative 1999 budget numbers

Price River Water Improvement board members have been putting in extra time lately as they finalize budget numbers for next year and continue to receive information concerning the ongoing rate study.

A special work meeting was set for last week where the board approved the tentative budget for 1999 as well as the purchase of a maintenance vehicle, pickup truck from Community Motors. The final budget hearing is set for December 29 allowing a month for citizens and municipalities to comment.

The board approved a 2 percent raise for all employees starting in 1999.

The board reviewed various departmental needs lists in their attempt to balance the budget. The

total 1999 budget is down over \$300,000 from 1998. Just under \$200,000 will not be on the 1999 budget as various projects were completed in 1998.

Also, PRWID has budgeted \$135,000 less this year because of the action that cities opted in 1998 to retain \$1.50 per connection for sewer line maintenance and replacement projects of their own. PRWID manager Phil Palmer explained that the reduced revenues caused the board to make cuts in the capital projects for 1999.

Total income for PRWID in 1999 is expected to be \$3.13 million. Another \$3.1 million is being considered for a mandatory ammonia removal facility at the water treatment plant that could be started in 1999.

What may still impact the 1999 bud-

get will be the outcome of the rate study. It will be finished in the next few weeks. Depending on the findings and recommendations, board members will then have to determine whether rates need to be adjusted in the future.

Tentative budget levels call for making some cuts in capital projects. They include cutting several line replacement and line repair projects including the proposed 12 inch water line going up to the district's Helper water tank. All vehicle purchases totaling \$30,000 were cut, a highway 6 waterline upgrade, line and seal of the carbon box pipeline, a 10-inch PRV for backwash filter, cleaning the north digester along with other items considered less pressing by the board.

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## Price city fields concerns, approves liquor permit for event at CEU center

Price City Council members received heated suggestions concerning a special event liquor permit for a catered Christmas party at College of Eastern Utah's student center.

Sam Farliano of Farliano's Cafe requested the permit and several citizens were on hand to oppose its issuance at the last city council meeting.

The council heard from local business owners and managers concerning the issue of public facilities being used for private enterprise.

After hearing the debate, the Price council members explained that because of Utah law, state buildings are approved for such use. City officials advised citizens to direct questions about facility use to the board of reagents.

As far as issuing the liquor per-

mit, the council was only approving local consent. The document will then be presented to the state liquor commission for approval.

Farliano explained that he operated a business in Carbon County. The cafe was only renting the building and the food would be brought on location.

Farliano pointed out that the reason the cafe rented the college facilities was because there is not a place in town large enough to accommodate the expected crowd.

Addressing an unrelated agenda item, the city waived the building permit fee for Carbon County to construct a new fence around the public safety facility in Price.

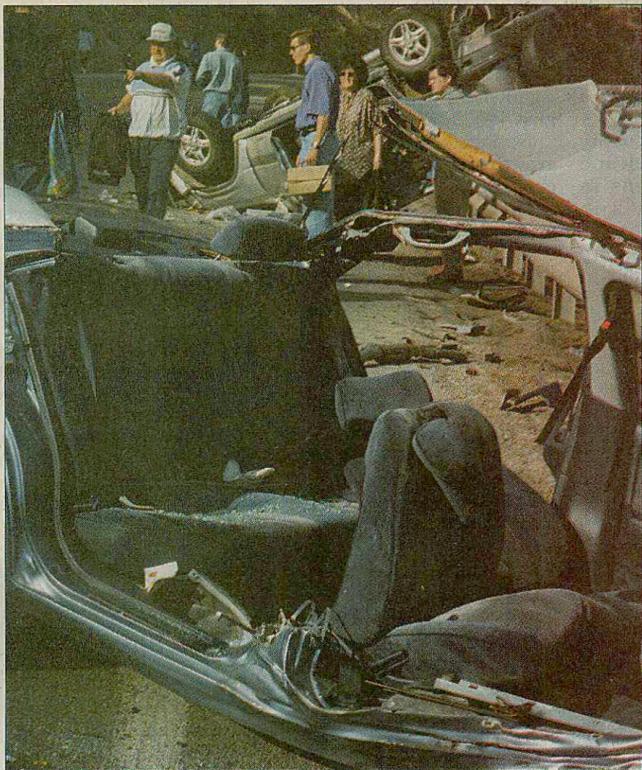
Kennedy Byrd, a student at Notre Dame Regional School, was honored at the recent Utah League of Cities and Towns convention. She received a

\$1,000 award for her school as well as \$100 for herself.

K&P Plumbing has completed the water distribution line replacement on 800 North between 600 East and 900 East. The invoice for final payment is in the amount of \$87,518.80.

On Nov. 19, five individuals were screened by the police department to establish an eligibility list for officer positions. Four of the five individuals were determined to meet the requirements if a police officer position becomes available within the next year.

The successful candidates were Shane Leonard Brown, who must pass the Utah Police Officer Standards and Training waiver test for state certification; Manuel Escoto; Dale Maxfield; and Corey Houskeeper, who must pass the POST waiver test for Utah law enforcement officer certification.



### Vehicle drivers, passengers escape serious injury

Helper Recue 3, county ambulance and military emergency personnel assist at the scene of a two-vehicle collision Thanksgiving Day in Price Canyon. The accident occurred Nov. 26 at approximately 12:27 p.m. several miles below the Bamberger cutoff on U.S. 6. Discussing the incident, Utah Highway Patrol Trooper Tracy Cartwright explained that an eastbound 1990 Honda Civic driven by 16-year-old Matthew Jewkes of West Valley City allegedly crossed the center line and collided with a westbound 1998 Honda driven by 56-year-old Thomas Whipple of Monticello. Jewkes was traveling alone in the blue passenger car, while Whipple was accompanied in the gray recreation vehicle by his 47-year-old wife, Julia, and the couple's 16-year-old son, Jeremy. Rescue crews had to extricate Jewkes from the demolished Honda Civic. All four victims were transported to Castlevue Hospital, where they were treated and released later Thanksgiving Day. Cartwright attributed the accident to excessive speed, coupled with an inexperienced driver. According to the investigating UHP trooper, Jewkes reportedly failed to negotiate a curve while traveling toward Price, lost control of the Honda Civic and entered the oncoming traffic lane. Cartwright indicated that Jewkes will be cited for reckless driving in connection with the mishap.