



AROUND THE CITY/REGION

Spill of dangerous acid prompts Pa. evacuation

WIND GAP, Pa. — A tractor-trailer carrying a dangerous acid overturned on a highway Saturday, prompting authorities to order thousands of residents to leave town for almost nine hours.

The tanker, carrying 33,000 pounds of corrosive hydrofluoric acid, a component for household detergents, flipped over at about 3 a.m. on the edge of Wind Gap, about 60 miles north of Philadelphia.

At 7 a.m., officials ordered an evacuation of 944 households. They said about 5,000 people were in the affected area.

Northampton County spokesman John Conklin said the truck driver was treated at a hospital and was released. One of about 200 people at an evacuation center at a local high school was taken to a hospital for a condition unrelated to the hazardous-materials incident.

Emergency crews reported liquid dripping from the tanker's valves or piping, forcing them to return in full protection suits to stop the drip. The tanker truck was righted at about 3:10 p.m., and the evacuation order was lifted soon after, although the road remained closed in both directions.

Arson-plagued Coatesville, Pa., logs 2 more fires

COATESVILLE, Pa. — Two new fires make 22 for the year in the arson-plagued city of Coatesville, Pa.

The Chester County Arson Task Force says the blazes broke out late Friday on intersecting streets. Investigators determined that both fires were deliberately set. No damage or injuries were reported.

Details of the fires were not immediately released. The number of arsons in Coatesville this year has reached 22. The latest fires come a week after a blaze badly damaged two homes in the distressed former steel town of 11,000 about 35 miles west of Philadelphia.

There have been at least 48 arsons in Coatesville since February 2008, and at least 18 additional arsons in nearby communities. Five people have been arrested.

Pa. man who said victim was still alive gets life

NORRISTOWN, Pa. — A Maryland man who told jurors that the woman he was accused of killing almost nine years ago was still alive has been sentenced to life in prison for her murder.

Jurors in January deliberated for about four hours before convicting 35-year-old Yeshtila Ameshe of first-degree murder and related offenses in the shooting death of his 60-year-old aunt,

Haregewene Bitew. Authorities say she died in June 2000 while the two were visiting relatives in Towamencin Township, 20 miles north of Philadelphia.

Ameshe, of Adelphia, Md., testified through an interpreter in Montgomery County Court that the purported victim was "definitely alive."

Montgomery County Judge S. Gerald Corso on Friday sentenced the defendant to a mandatory life term without parole.

Defense attorney Scott Krjeger unsuccessfully argued that his client was insane at the time of the slaying.

Chemist uses musical formula to teach science

PHILADELPHIA — Grand Hank — self-proclaimed world heavyweight champion of science — is donning his funky green safety goggles, bouncing from foot to foot, nodding as his assistant explains why it's important to keep safe in the lab.

"Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to 'The Science Lab of Grand Hank!'" the champ says over a thumping rap beat, scratching invisible records.

And, via live television, Tyraine Ragsdale, better known by his DJ name, Grand Hank, is off. He's rapping, performing experiments, throwing out terms like "centrifugal chromatography," and generally exhorting his audience of high school students to love science.

"You, too, can be a scientist!" he shouts. "Everybody can be a scientist!"

Ragsdale, 43, a burly, gregarious chemist, knows the lines by heart. For the last two decades, he has been reaching out to students around the region, combining his two loves — music and science — to inspire young people to dream big.

This month, Ragsdale won the George Washington Carver Award, given annually to someone who has displayed outstanding accomplishments in the field.

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