

Western Iowa fire chief resigns after volunteers suspended

SHELBY, Iowa (AP) — The fire chief in western Iowa's Shelby has resigned following the dismissal of the town's volunteer firefighters. Fire Chief Eric Wendt stepped down Wednesday just days after the City Council's suspension of all firefighters at the Shelby Volunteer Fire Department. The city of about 640 is now relying on service in Minden and Avoca for emergency response. Wendt tells the Council Bluffs Daily Nonpareil he resigned for personal reasons, not because of the firings. He says since he was the only one serving the department, he didn't want to be held liable should anything go wrong. The council decided Monday that the department's fundraising proceeds should be under council control, something the volunteers didn't want. Wendt says the council now oversees the department and is accepting volunteer applications.

Fertilizer plant in southeast Iowa slated to open late 2015

WEVER, Iowa (AP) — A \$1.9 billion fertilizer plant in southeastern Iowa is expected to begin production later this year. In a project update released this week, Iowa Fertilizer Company says plant construction should be complete by August, with operation starting in the last three months of the year. The company is building the plant near Wever in Lee County. Iowa Fertilizer says construction is about 70 percent complete. The plant is expected to employ about 240 people and produce between 1.5 million and 2 million tons of nitrogen fertilizer each year. Company officials say they also want the plant to produce diesel exhaust fluid. The Des Moines Register reports the plant is one of the largest projects in state history. Iowa Fertilizer is a subsidiary of Egypt-based Orascom Construction Industries.

Nationwide to move 175 jobs out of Des Moines to Columbus

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company has plans to move 175 jobs out of Des Moines to its Ohio headquarters. Company spokesman Eric Hardgrove tells the Des Moines Register the company's home mortgage operations will be relocated to headquarters in Columbus, Ohio, by mid-2016. He says the move can help streamline mortgage services and improve customer service. Hardgrove says the relocation is not a reflection of poor performance in Des Moines. He says current home mortgage employees can apply to other Nationwide operations or for different positions within the Des Moines branch, where about 230 positions are currently available. Nationwide employs more than 4,000 people in Des Moines.

Iowa Senate panel advances early school start bill

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — A Senate panel has advanced a bill that would let school districts in Iowa decide whether to start classes earlier in August. Members of an education subcommittee voted Thursday in favor of advancing the bill, which would remove authority from the state education department to issue waivers that allow school districts to start early. The

department recently released new guidelines for the waivers, which in the past were issued automatically. The bill will be sent to a full committee for consideration. A similar House bill was recently sent to another full committee for review. Organizations in support of both bills say school districts should have control on deciding their calendars. Tourism officials say early school start dates hurt businesses that rely on summer attendance, including the Iowa State Fair.

House panel rejects bill on crossbow use for Iowa children

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Members of a House panel have rejected a bill that would have expanded the ability of children to use a crossbow to hunt deer in Iowa. The natural resources subcommittee tabled the bill indefinitely Thursday. Bill sponsor Representative Matt Windschitl, a Missouri Valley Republican, says he will work with interested parties to reword the bill for a future session. The bill would have allowed children ages 16 and under with a youth deer hunting license to hunt for deer with a crossbow during other firearm seasons. The minor would have needed an unused tag. A child can currently use a crossbow during the late muzzleloader season if they're accompanied by a licensed adult. The Iowa Bowhunters Association, which supports archery through bow and arrow, expressed concern about expanding crossbow use.

Jury finds man guilty in 2013 Waterloo shooting death

WATERLOO, Iowa (AP) — Jurors have found a 33-year-old man guilty of first-degree murder in a 2013 shooting death in Waterloo. The Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier reports the jury concluded Thursday that Antonio Hutchins is guilty of first-degree murder and willful injury causing serious injury. The two verdicts come after nearly three days of deliberation. Prosecutors say Hutchins allegedly killed 30-year-old Cedrick Matlock and shot another man in the arm in 2013 outside of a Waterloo grocery store. During the trial, Hutchins' defense attorney said he was acting in self-defense. Authorities say the men were unarmed. Conviction for first-degree murder in Iowa carries a life sentence without parole. A sentencing hearing has not yet been scheduled.

Dubuque man gets 50 years for Platteville cab driver murder

LANCASTER, Wis. (AP) — A Dubuque man has been sentenced to 50 years in prison and 18 years of supervised release for robbing, kidnapping and killing a Platteville taxi driver. The Telegraph Herald reports 26-year-old Tommy L. Johnson Junior was sentenced Thursday in Lancaster, Wisconsin, on charges of kidnapping, armed robbery and first-degree reckless homicide. Johnson pleaded no contest in November in connection to the June robbery and murder of 79-year-old Merle Forbes. Police say Johnson stabbed Forbes, put the man in the trunk of his own cab while he was still alive and drove off. Johnson's attorney says his actions were a result of undertreated mental illness, and that he meant to kill himself, not anyone else. But prosecutors say Johnson's 30 prior convictions demonstrate a pattern of dangerous behavior.

Iowa man convicted for dumping wastewater into river

SIOUX CITY, Iowa (AP) — A northwestern Iowa man charged for dumping gallons of wastewater into a river was convicted. The Sioux City Journal reports 57-year-old Michael Wolf of Remsen was charged in federal court in Sioux City on one count of discharging pollutant into a U.S. body of water. A sentencing hearing has not yet been scheduled. The U.S. Attorney's Office says Wolf dumped about 845,000 gallons of untested wastewater and pollutant into a West Branch Floyd River tributary in October 2012 near Sioux Center. The polluted water, which Wolf obtained from the Sioux-Preme Packing wastewater treatment lagoons, included agricultural waste. He was an employee at the pork processing plant and oversaw the facility's lagoons. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources found that the dumping killed thousands of fish over an 11-mile stretch.

D-League suspends Iowa teammates Stokes, Lucas over fight

NEW YORK (AP) — The NBA Development League has suspended Iowa Energy forward Jarnell Stokes for three games and teammate Kalin Lucas for two games for fighting on the bench. The league announced the suspensions Thursday. The 6-foot-9 Stokes and 6-1 Lucas were ejected for fighting with 2:29 left in the third quarter of Iowa's 124-120 win over Rio Grande on Tuesday night. A broadcast of the game showed pushing and shoving near the bench for Iowa, an affiliate of the Memphis Grizzlies, during a timeout. Lucas, a former star at Michigan State, played one game this season for the Grizzlies. Stokes, a rookie out of Tennessee, has split time between Iowa and Memphis. The suspensions were to start Thursday night against Fort Wayne.

Iowa's White questionable for Wisconsin rematch

AMES, Iowa (AP) — Iowa star Aaron White remains questionable for Saturday's game against Number 5 Wisconsin after suffering a stinger in last weekend's loss at Purdue. White sat out Thursday's practice in an attempt to heal the injury, which is affecting his right shoulder and neck. Hawkeyes coach Fran McCaffery says the coaching staff is unsure of White's status, adding that White will likely try to practice Friday in an effort to see if he can play against the Badgers. Key substitute Gabe Olaseni rolled his left ankle on Monday. Olaseni says he'll be ready by Saturday, though his effectiveness won't be known until tip-off.

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