

March 2009 News Releases

March 04 - TFD

Firefighters Respond to Mobile Home Fire in the 3000 Block of Roberts Avenue

Around 8 pm last night, firefighters responded to a reported mobile home fire in the 3000 block of Roberts Avenue. The fire started inside the kitchen wall, and is believed to be electrical in nature. The fire was contained to the inside of the wall causing minor damage to the home. Residents noticed smoke coming from the wall outlet and called 911 when they saw fire coming from underneath the home.

Damage is estimated at \$2000. No injuries were reported during the incident.

March 04

Temporary Road Closure on Franklin Blvd.

Block Between East Park Ave. and East Call St. - The City of Tallahassee has temporarily closed the northbound lanes of Franklin Boulevard between East Park Avenue and East Call Street due to a water leak. Crews from the City's Underground Utilities are on-site and have begun repairs, and the road should be reopened by early afternoon. A detour is available via East Park Avenue to North Meridian Street to East Call Street, where it connects back to Franklin Boulevard.

March 06 - TFD

Firefighters Battle Townhouse Fire in the 1500 Block of Jacks Drive

Around 6 pm last night, firefighters responded to a fully involved townhouse fire in the 1500 block of Jacks Drive. The fire which started from unattended grease on the stove, spread throughout the home. The resident was able to rescue one of the two family dogs, but one perished in the fire. The resident reported the fire and stated that he had started heating the grease and was distracted when a neighbor came over to talk. The resident suffered minor cuts to his hand, while trying to rescue his pet.

No other injuries were reported during the incident. Damages estimated at \$120,000.

March 06

City's Leadership Team Helps Keep Tallahassee Clean!

Cleanup effort at Lake Elberta Park and along Lake Bradford Road - City Manager Anita Favors Thompson and members of the City's Leadership Team will lend a hand, literally, to the ongoing beautification of Tallahassee by taking part in a community cleanup effort Saturday morning. The work will be concentrated at and adjacent to the Lake Elberta Park on Lake Bradford Road, and is a follow-up to last weekend's Super-Clean Sweep event organized by Keep Tallahassee-Leon County Beautiful.

City officials will meet at 9 a.m. at the Lake Elberta Park, located on the east side of Lake Bradford Road, just south of Jackson Bluff Road. They will then be assigned to several separate cleanup teams in specific areas of the park, with others collecting debris and sprucing up the roadside along Lake Bradford Road. Cleanup work will continue to approximately 11 a.m.

Activities include litter and debris collection, painting over graffiti, planting trees, flowers and shrubs, and more.

March 09

Lonnbladh Road Closed for Two Months

The City of Tallahassee will close Lonnbladh Road between Eddie Road and Greer Road for approximately two months for a stormwater drainage project. This closure will take place in two phases, with phase 1 between Eddie Road and Laurelwood Lane beginning today and lasting approximately one week. The phase 2 closure between Laurelwood Lane and Greer Road will be in effect for approximately seven weeks. The detour route will be clearly posted. Lonnbladh Road residents and their contractors/visitors will be allowed access to and from their homes, but through traffic will be detoured around the project. Residents were notified in advance of the project and its short-term impacts on the immediate neighborhood.

The project will provide flood control improvements to the stormwater drainage system in the area of Lonnbladh Road and the downstream drainage ditch. These improvements include the installation of drainage pipes under the roadway and ditch construction downstream from the culverts. A future City project includes additional improvements to Lonnbladh Road itself between Eddie Drive and Capital Circle Northeast.

Weather permitting, the project should be completed and Lonnbladh Road completely reopened to traffic by mid-May.

March 09

Charter Review Committee Hosts Public Forum

Public Input on City Charter Review Sought - The City of Tallahassee's Charter Review Committee (CRC) will hold a forum designed to receive public input on potential revisions to the City's Charter. The public forum will take place on Monday, March 16 at 5:30 p.m., in the City Commission Chambers on the second floor of City Hall, 300 S. Adams St.

The Charter Review Committee is comprised of ten local citizens, with two each appointed by the Mayor and four other members of the Tallahassee City Commission. The Committee's primary task is to review the role, duties and function of the Mayor and Commissioners and to make recommendations to the City Commission for any amendments to the City Charter deemed appropriate and necessary by the committee. Meeting weekly since Jan. 26, the CRC discussions have included topics looking at how government operates, and any changes the Committee might recommend to the existing Charter.

Though the City Commission will hold a public hearing on Charter Review Committee recommendations after they have received the report, members of the CRC are conducting the March 16 forum to receive input from citizens prior to the Committee formalizing its final list of recommendations.

For more information on the Charter Review Committee, including details on the March 16 forum, please contact the Office of the City Treasurer-Clerk at 891-8130, or visit Talgov.com.

March 09 - TPD Burglary Arrest

On Friday morning, 3/6/09, at approximately 11:45AM the Tallahassee Police Department conducted a traffic stop on a 2007 gray Dodge Charger on Pedrick Rd, just north of Buck Lake Elementary School. The occupants in the vehicle had been involved in suspicious activity at a residence in the 5400 block of Easton Point Way. During the traffic stop, two televisions were seen in the back seat of the car. The investigation, in cooperation with the Leon County Sheriff's Office, led to the arrest of the two occupants. Investigators were then able to connect the two men to a residential burglary that occurred earlier in the day at the 1800 block of Wagon Wheel Circle East.

Arrested



William Ronald White Jr., B/M, 18YOA



Lorenzo Dennis Baker, B/M, 19YOA

Charges

- Burglary of Unoccupied Dwelling
- Grand Theft more than \$300 but less than 5000
- Criminal Mischief over \$200
- Loitering or Prowling

March 10 - TFD

Vehicle Fire at Glen Oaks Apartment Complex Determined to be Arson

This morning around 4:30, Tallahassee Firefighters responded to a vehicle fire in front of building 7 of the Glen Oaks Apartment Complex. The fire was contained to the engine compartment of the 2006 Ford Focus. Glen Oaks Apartments are located at 2074 Midyette Road. Later this morning, investigators from the Tallahassee Fire Department determined that the fire was intentionally set.

Anyone having information leading to the arrest and conviction of the subject(s) involved with this fire or any other fire may be eligible for a \$2,500 reward by contacting FACAP at (1-877-662-7766) or the Tallahassee Fire Department Hotline at 891-FIRE (891-3473).

March 11 - TPD

TPD Announces 45th Citizens Police Academy

The Tallahassee Police Department announces the 45th Citizens Police Academy (CPA) that is scheduled to begin April 7, 2009. The CPA is an information process where students learn more about the inner-workings of TPD while participating in several police-related activities. The deadline for applications is March 20, 2009, and there is no cost to our citizens.

CPA class members receive information, instruction and demonstrations in areas such as police use of force, narcotics enforcement, the Tactical Apprehension and Control (TAC) Team, the Special Response Team, K-9, special operations, criminal investigations, crime laboratory and evidence processing, and much more. Class members will also visit Pat Thomas Law Enforcement Academy for TAC Team and weapons demonstrations, and will participate in a ride-along with a TPD officer on a regular patrol shift.

Applicants must meet the following criteria:

- 21 years of age or older
- Pass a criminal history check.
- Work or live in Tallahassee/Leon County.
- Be able to commit to attending all classes during the 10-week class period.

Citizens can apply in one of three ways:

- [Online at the TPD Web site](#)
- Call 850-891-4934 and leave your name, mailing address and zip code.
- Fax name, mailing address and zip code to (850) 891-1872.

For more information contact Officer Michele Yown at 850-891-4934.

March 12

City Boosts Economy Through Fast Tracking

Program Speeds Public Project Permitting/Construction - With a goal of creating jobs locally during the current economic downturn, as well as providing needed infrastructure improvements for the community, the Tallahassee City Commission recently approved a 'fast tracking' initiative to expedite the construction of public projects. The first projects initiated under the new initiative include the construction of roadway improvements, an upgrade to the City's Municipal Services Complex and access roads at the Tallahassee Regional Airport. Within the first month after approval, review and permitting have been completed and construction scheduled for the first four projects, with a combined value of approximately \$5 million.

"Internally we have made a major commitment to expediting all reviews, and with the City Commission's approval we've worked to streamline the process while still staying vigilant to making sure everything is done right," said City Manager Anita Favors Thompson. "The Commission's commitment was to expedite City projects so that the work would stimulate jobs in Tallahassee and we've already seen projects approved that will soon be under construction."

At its February 11 meeting, the City Commission approved the Local Economic Emergency Fast Tracking Program for Public Sector Projects, creating a mechanism to expedite the construction of public sector projects. A multi-departmental team composed of staff normally involved in public project approval identified existing City processes, policies and ordinances that could be amended to allow for faster turnaround times on projects. Key areas revised to expedite public projects were permitting and procurement.

The City's Growth Management Department is charged with reviewing and permitting projects inside the city limits, including government construction projects. As such, Growth Management staff recommendations approved by the Commission for streamlining the review process for fast track public projects included the following:

- Public sector projects will still require compliance with the Land Development Code, but will not require formal application and/or permits;
- Revise the review process to allow City Manager approval of project variances regarding certain conservation and preservation

features - this allows the process to move faster since formal City Commission approval will not be required, while still adhering to the City's high community environmental standards (a "net environmental benefit" is still required for project approval);

- Allow City Manager approval authority for environmental variances, in such areas as stormwater, tree debits/credits, urban forest and landscaping;
- Clarifies the net environmental benefit through allocating a defined percentage of the total project cost to a fund to be used for purchasing environmentally sensitive lands;
- Staff will conduct a preliminary environmental review of each fast track project site and prepare variance requests, as needed, allowing for design around environmental features prior to the permitting phase.

The other policy area streamlined to allow fast track projects to begin quickly involves the City's Procurement Services office that oversees processes related to project bidding, contracting and firm selection. Staff recommendations approved by the City Commission related to expediting various internal processes and procedures designed to awarding construction bids, with a focus on bid awards to area companies to help boost the local economy and provide jobs for local residents.

Projects scheduled as part of the fast tracking program include:

- Lipona Road - reconstruction between Pensacola Street and Pepper Drive; includes sidewalks, bike lanes, curb and gutter
- Gaines Street - reconstruction of Gaines between Monroe Street and Lake Bradford Road (part of Gaines Street Revitalization Plan)
- McKeithen/Hayward paving - reconstruction and paving of McKeithen Street (Block Drive to Hayward Drive) and Hayward Drive (McKeithen Street to Cactus Drive); includes sidewalk and curb and gutter
- Sidewalk construction - along Richmond Street, Meadow Ridge Drive, Sixth Avenue and Lorene Street
- Municipal Services Complex - upgrade storage facilities per hurricane wind load standards, and construct hazardous waste building for temporary storage of hazardous materials prior to proper disposal
- Traffic signals - upgrade of existing signal at Blair Stone Road and Governor's Square Blvd.; installation of new signals at High Road/Hartsfield Road, and Hartsfield Road/Atlas Road
- Reconstructing streets in the Providence neighborhood
- Tallahassee Regional Airport entrance/access road improvements - includes improvements to Capital Circle Southwest at three airport entrance/exit points; also includes improvements to access roads in the General Aviation Complex area
- Airport directional guidance - provide new directional guide signs around both the Ivan Munroe Airline Terminal Complex and General Aviation Complex

Review and permitting has already been completed and construction scheduled for the Lipona Road (April), McKeithen/Hayward (May), Airport roadway (April-May) and Richmond Street sidewalk (June) projects.

For more information on City initiatives, visit Talgov.com.

March 13 - TFD

Vehicle Fire on April Road Determined to be Arson

Around 11:20 am Thursday, Tallahassee Firefighters responded to a vehicle fire on April Road. April Road is located between Apalachee Parkway and Old Saint Augustine Road. The fire involved a 2003 Ford SUV and according to Investigator Lieutenant Frank Mohr, was intentional set. This is the second arson case involving a vehicle fire this week. Earlier this week a vehicle fire involving a 2006 Ford Focus located in front of Glen Oaks Apartments was determined to be arson.

"We do not believe the two fires are linked," said Investigator Mohr. "The SUV was parked in the middle of April Road and set on fire," he said. Damage is estimated at \$5,000. No injuries were reported during the incident.

Anyone having information leading to the arrest and conviction of the subject(s) involved with this fire or any other fire may be eligible for a \$2,500 reward by contacting FACAP at (1-877-662-7766) or the Tallahassee Fire Department Hotline at 891-FIRE (891-3473).

March 13 - TFD

Firefighters Respond to Fire in the 5000 Block of Ruthenia Road

Around 5 pm Thursday, Tallahassee Firefighters were called to the 5000 Block of Ruthenia Road to a reported house fire. Firefighters battled the blaze for 15 minutes before bringing it under control. The resident called the fire in when he noticed smoke coming from the home while outside working in his yard. The cause of the fire is under investigation. No injuries were reported. Damage estimated at \$50,000.

March 16

Youngsters Begin to Swing for the Fence!

PRNA Youth Baseball/Softball Opening Day Festivities on Saturday - This Saturday, March 21, the City of Tallahassee Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Affairs Department (PRNA) celebrates Opening Day 2009 for their youth recreational softball and baseball programs. From 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., PRNA will host a variety of free activities at the Tom Brown Softball Complex.

Visitors can take part in the Major League Baseball Pitch, Hit & Run competition any time during the event. Each player averages about 5 minutes to complete all three events. For more information about the rules, visit mlb.com/phr. Other features at the event include a bounce house, rock climbing wall, batting practice on Field 5 and door prizes as well. The Dunk Tank offers a unique opportunity this year as PRNA Director Dee Crumpler sits in the hot seat while visitors try to knock him into the water.

Players can also take part in a free clinic. Baseball clinics will be offered on Field 1 from 10 to 11:20 a.m. and 11:40 a.m. to 1 p.m. and will be led by staff from Next Level Professional Baseball and current and former Florida State University players. The softball clinic, hosted by local collegiate players, will take place from 11 a.m. to noon on Field 2.

Lunch will be available for purchase on-site from the Red Elephant. You can pre-order "team" pizzas by calling Brian Smatt at 891-3837 by Wed., March 18. Large cheese pizzas are \$10, and large one-topping pizzas are \$11.

Magic 107.1 will be on-site hosting a live broadcast.

For more information, call 891-FUNN (3866) or visit Talgov.com

March 17 - TFD

Fire in the 2600 Block of Mission Road Determined to be Arson

According to Investigator Frank Mohr, the fire which occurred around 11 pm last Friday was intentionally set. The mobile home fire, which started in the bedroom, caused an estimated \$5000 in damages. "The occupants were out of town at the time of the fire," said Investigator Mohr. No injuries were reported during the incident.

Anyone having information leading to the arrest and conviction of the subject(s) involved with this fire or any other fire may be eligible for a \$2,500 reward by contacting FACAP at (1-877-662-7766) or the Tallahassee Fire Department Hotline at 891-FIRE (891-3473).

March 19

City and County Water Atlas Now Online

Comprehensive website includes information on local water resources - To provide citizens with a one-stop source for information on our community's vast array of natural water resources, City and County staff have joined forces to create the Tallahassee-Leon County (TLC) Water Atlas website, located at <http://www.tlc.wateratlas.usf.edu/>. The online TLC Water Atlas provides a digital gateway to help interested citizens, educators, students and professionals access local data and information about local natural water resources.

The [Water Atlas website](#) is loaded with an extensive collection of material, and features user-friendly technology to view data, such as local lake and stream water quality reports and rainfall levels. The atlas includes information on virtually every known water body within Tallahassee and Leon County. It also features information about recreational opportunities and a library of scientific and educational materials on water resource issues.

A team from the City of Tallahassee and Leon County, in conjunction with the University of South Florida (USF), designed the site. A web team from USF, which works with local governments to create comprehensive water resource information websites, has developed online water atlas sites throughout Florida.

Photo Contest

To help promote the online Water Atlas, the City and County are holding a Grand Opening Photo Contest. Citizens are invited to submit their favorite photos of local natural resources, waterbodies, and wildlife for posting on the Water Atlas website. Citizens can enter the contest by posting their photos directly on the Water Atlas website. The first-place winner will receive a Wakulla River guided kayak trip for two from Wilderness Way. The second-place winner will receive free admission and a riverboat tour for four to Wakulla Springs State Park. Photos may be submitted through May 15.

For more information, or to schedule a presentation of the TLC Water Atlas, please visit the [Atlas online at http://www.tlc.wateratlas.usf.edu/](http://www.tlc.wateratlas.usf.edu/), or call the City of Tallahassee's Water Resources Engineering Division/Stormwater Management at (850) 891-6860 or Leon County's Engineering Services Division at (850) 606-1500.

March 19

Delays on Betton Road

Resurfacing Project Begins March 24 - Motorists will experience temporary delays along Betton Road beginning Tuesday, March 24, while crews resurface the roadway between Centerville Road and Thomasville Road. Crews will maintain two-way traffic while work is occurring, but motorists should prepare for brief delays.

Milling and resurfacing work will take place on Betton Road, in segments as follows:

- Weekdays between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. - between Centerville Road and Marion Ave.
- Weekends between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. - between Marion Ave. and Thomasville Road.

Motorists are urged to use caution in the area and obey flag signals from construction personnel. Weather permitting, the work should be completed by April 10.

March 23 - TFD

BPW/Florida Announces Tallahassee Fire Chief Cindy Dick as the 2009 Glass Ceiling Award Winner

The Florida Federation of Business and Professional Women's Club, Inc. is pleased to announce Tallahassee Fire Chief Cindy Dick as the winner of the 2009 Glass Ceiling Award. The award established in 1991, presented by the BPW Florida Executive Committee, recognizes women who have successfully broken through the barrier of advancement in professions in fields generally dominated by men.

Chief Dick joins past winners such as Police Chief Kim Tierney, Lighthouse Point Police Department, Highlands County Sheriff Susan Benton, first woman in the state of Florida to be elected sheriff in a general election, Carolyn Vesper Bivens, Commissioner LPGA, and Alex Sink, Florida Chief Financial Officer.

Chief Cindy Dick will be recognized at the upcoming BPW Florida Annual State Conference being held at the Doubletree Grand Key Resort in Key West, Florida from June 11-14, 2009. BPW Florida's goal is to be the leading advocate for working women. The mission is to achieve equity for all women in the workplace through advocacy, education and information.

March 23 - TPD

Home Invasion Robbery Suspect Arrested

This morning, just after midnight, the Tallahassee Police Department responded to a reported home invasion robbery located at 2030 Belle Vue Road (Villa Christina Apartments). Upon arrival, Officer Derek Braxton began chasing one of the suspects, later identified as 26 year old Omar Benghuzzi. Benghuzzi lead officers on a short foot chase and a nearby citizen told officers that he observed Benghuzzi running near the apartments. Canine Officer Robbie Clayton and his canine partner "Shadow" tracked the suspect to a nearby dumpster, where Benghuzzi was located hiding under loose trash. Benghuzzi was arrested without incident.

The investigation revealed that two victims were inside the apartment when they heard a knock on the front door. One of the victims looked through the door's peephole and observed two masked suspects standing outside. The victims were terrified and called 911. Officers arrived within minutes and Benghuzzi was subsequently arrested. After Benghuzzi's arrest, officers located a concealed handcuff key in his pocket and a black ski mask inside the dumpster. Benghuzzi was on probation for armed burglary at the time of this arrest. The investigation continues and investigators are asking anyone with information about this crime to call the Tallahassee Police Department at (850) 891-4200 or Crime Stoppers at (850) 574-TIPS (8477). Remember, Crime Stoppers does not want your name, just your information. You could be eligible for a reward up to \$1000.

Arrested:



Omar Benghuzzi, W/M, 26 yoa. Charges: Home Invasion Robbery, Wearing Mask or Hood, Violation of Probation, Possession of a Concealed Handcuff Key, and Resisting Arrest Without Violence.

March 24

Airport Adds New Service To Dallas-Fort Worth

Service on American Eagle Airlines Begins June 11 - Tallahassee Regional Airport (TLH) announced today that American Eagle, an affiliate of American Airlines, would initiate one daily flight between its Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport's (DFW) hub and Tallahassee beginning on June 11, 2009. American Eagle will operate the new flight using its ERJ-140 aircraft (44 seats).

"The addition of this new service offers Tallahassee area citizens the ability to connect to western US destinations and provides even more options for connecting internationally. This new service represents another successful partnership resulting from our efforts to bring new

and enhanced air service to Tallahassee," said Mayor John Marks.

The schedule for the new DFW service is as follows (all times local):

- DFW to TLH: Flight # 3237, Departs 9:50am, Arrives 1:10pm
- TLH to DFW: Flight # 3238, Departs 1:35pm, Arrives 2:50pm

In March 2008, American Eagle began service at TLH with two flights to Miami International Airport (MIA). Due to the tremendous success of the new service, the airline added a third flight to Miami earlier this month. The expanded service came as a result of good performance of the existing two flights between TLH and MIA and provided a welcomed addition for the spring legislative season. American Eagle's new service to DFW demonstrates a growing confidence in the Tallahassee market.

"We have been very pleased with the community's support and our success to date in Tallahassee, and we look forward to adding new service from Florida's capital to our DFW hub," said Peter Bowler, American Eagle President and CEO. "Connecting to the north and west via American Airline's vast network will now be even easier for all of our Tallahassee customers."

American Eagle is one of five major commercial air carriers servicing the Tallahassee market, including Continental, Delta Air Lines, Northwest Airlink, and US Airways Express. To view flight schedules or book a flight go to www.aa.com.

In other news, Delta officials recently informed the City, County and State Consortium, a joint partnership to address air service challenges, that the TLH-DCA (Reagan National Airport in Washington, DC) service will not come to fruition. The Consortium was informed that there is currently no gate available to accommodate the service between TLH and DCA.

"We continue to work aggressively with the airlines in a very volatile market to expand options for our air travelers," said Mayor Marks. "While we are disappointed that Delta is unable to move ahead with the DC service, we believe the new intrastate flights as well as this exciting new opportunity to Dallas and beyond will help address business and travel needs for Tallahassee. The challenge now is to ensure we all utilize these new flights and our existing service so that the airlines see that an investment in Tallahassee is a wise decision."

The Airport encourages the regional community to take advantage of air travel opportunities to promote the stability of established air service and generate demand for new service in the future.

The Tallahassee Regional Airport is operated and maintained by the City of Tallahassee. For more information on the Tallahassee Regional Airport, please visit www.flytallahassee.com.

March 24

Changes are Coming to Gaines Street

Public Open House This Thursday - The City of Tallahassee will host an informational open house for the public on Thursday, March 26, from 3 to 8 p.m. to allow businesses and residents to learn more about the upcoming road and project work to revitalize Gaines Street. The open house will be held at the Residence Inn by Marriott, located at the corner of Gaines Street and Railroad Avenue. City staff will be on site to answer questions and provide information.

As part of the Gaines Street Revitalization Plan, Gaines Street is being rebuilt from a 2-way, 4-lane road to a 2-way, 2-lane street with limited on-street parking from Woodward Avenue to Monroe Street. The work along Gaines Street is part of the City Commission's goal to create an 18-hour, pedestrian friendly downtown. During the coming years, as the economy improves and development demand increases, this vital link between both area universities and downtown will become an urban corridor with public art displays, businesses and live/work spaces.

Crews from the City's Electric Utility have already begun work to prepare for the change, and construction is anticipated to begin in mid-May or early June on underground sewer and water lines, as well as resurfacing portions of the roadway. Following the road resurfacing, new sidewalks and landscaping will also be added.

During construction, portions of Gaines Street will be completely closed during overnight hours; however, access to local businesses will be maintained. During the day from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m., two travel lanes will be open, one lane in each direction. Construction will take place seven days a week.

"We want people to attend the open house to get a sense of all that we have planned for Gaines Street and catch the excitement," said Roxanne Manning, project manager for the City. "In addition, if you use Gaines Street, you'll soon see changes that will affect your drive and we want you to know about them well in advance."

"We appreciate the community's patience and understanding as we move forward," Manning added. "While it may be hard to imagine now, this change is the beginning of a new era for Gaines Street and the community."

Once construction on the underground utilities begins, and the Gaines Street traffic flow is permanently reduced from 4 lanes to 2 lanes, some traffic will begin using alternate routes. Motorists are encouraged to try alternate routes prior to the start of construction to see what corridor will work best for them and to get a feel for the available options. Motorists are asked to allow more time for their travels in the affected areas and exercise caution on all roadways.

For more information on the project's progress, please visit Talgov.com/Gaines. Visitors to the site will be able to sign-up to receive project updates via email.

In an effort to ensure everyone who may be affected by this project is informed, the City will use social media options to help keep motorists informed. Citizens can receive updates by following GainesStreet on Twitter or by becoming a fan of Gaines Street on Facebook.

March 25 - TFD

Vehicle Fire in the 1100 Block of Magnolia Drive Determined to be Arson

Yesterday, around 5:30 pm, Tallahassee Firefighters responded to a reported vehicle fire. Upon arrival, firefighters found a 1999 green, 4 door Toyota Camry fully involved with fire. The vehicle was unoccupied and located in front of the Palms of Magnolia Apartment complex. TFD investigated the incident and determined the fire to be intentionally set.

Damages are estimated at \$5,000. No injuries were reported during the incident.

Anyone having information leading to the arrest and conviction of the subject(s) involved with this fire or any other fire may be eligible for a \$2,500 reward by contacting FACAP at (1-877-662-7766) or the Tallahassee Fire Department Hotline at 891-FIRE (891-3473).

March 25 - TFD

Firefighters Respond to a House Fire in the 700 Block of Dent Street

This morning at 12:18 am, Tallahassee Firefighters responded to a house fire in the 700 block of Dent Street. The home was boarded up with a No Vacancy Notice on the home. However, there was evidence that vagrants had been living in the home without electricity. The origin of the fire was in a room that was being used as a bedroom. The cause of the fire is under investigation.

Damage estimated at \$25,000. No injuries were reported during the incident.

March 29

Electric Utility Receives National Recognition

Utility Noted for Reliable and Safe Electric Operations - The City of Tallahassee Electric Utility is one of 60 of the nation's more than 2,000 public power utilities to earn Reliable Public Power Provider (RP3) recognition from the American Public Power Association (APPA) for providing customers with the highest degree of reliable and safe electric service. Paul Allen, vice president, engineering at Nashville, Tenn., Electric Service and chair of APPA's RP3 Review Panel, presented the designees on March 23, during the association's annual Engineering & Operations Technical Conference, held in Austin, Texas.

"RP3 designees are shining examples of excellence in utility operations," Allen said. "These utilities are currently providing their communities with a high level of reliable and safe service while focusing on future improvements."

The RP3 recognizes public power utilities that demonstrate proficiency in four key disciplines: reliability, safety, workforce development and system improvement. Criteria within each category are based on sound business practices and represent a utility-wide commitment to safe and reliable delivery of electricity.

"We're thrilled to have our certification as an RP3 utility renewed and maintain our position with the other RP3 designees around the country," said Kevin Wailes, General Manager of the City of Tallahassee Electric Utility. "This recognition is a testament to the quality work our employees do every day."

This is the second time that APPA has recognized Tallahassee Electric Utility as a RP3 Provider.

Additionally, the City of Tallahassee Electric Utility was also given an APPA Safety Award for its continued commitment to safety and low incident rate during the past year (2008), being recognized as the second place winner among Public Power Electric Utilities working between 500,000 and 750,000 hours.

Electric Also Named Tree Line USA Utility by Arbor Day Foundation

The City of Tallahassee Electric Utility has also been named a Tree Line USA Utility for the seventh year in a row. The Tree Line USA program is sponsored by the National Arbor Day Foundation (NADF) in cooperation with the National Association of State Foresters and recognizes utilities that meet three requirements: a program of quality tree care, annual worker training in quality tree care practices and a tree planting and public education program. The electric Utility will be recognized during the NADF's 16th annual Trees and Utilities Conference in Dallas, Texas, April 6-8.

Reaffirming its proactive programs preserving and enhancing the community's famous canopy of trees, the City of Tallahassee has also once again been named as a Tree City USA by the NADF. The honor recognizes the City meeting four standards established by the foundation, including having a comprehensive forestry program and a tree care ordinance. This is the seventeenth time Tallahassee has received the prestigious award.

[Your Own Utilities](#) (YOU) provides electric, water, sewer, gas and solid waste services. YOU enjoys a proud record of more than 100 years

of reliable electric service to the Tallahassee community. For more information on YOU and the Electric Utility, visit Talgov.com/YOU.

This is the fourth year that the RP3 award has been offered. APPA is the national organization representing more than 2,000 not-for-profit, community- and state- owned electric utilities. It is located in Washington, D.C. The National Arbor Day Foundation, a nonprofit education organization, is dedicated to tree planting and environmental stewardship. Tree Line USA Utilities include both investor owned and municipal utility systems.

March 31 - TPD Police Solve Bank Robberies

Last Wednesday, the Tallahassee Police Department investigated a bank robbery at 2262 North Monroe Street (Bank of America). The investigation revealed that the suspect entered the bank and displayed a handwritten note demanding cash. The teller complied with the demand fearing violence would occur if she refused. The Tallahassee Police Department's Violent Crimes Unit responded to the scene and within an hour of the robbery released bank surveillance photos to local media outlets. Due to the publicity, Crime Stoppers received information identifying Ben Rucker as the robbery suspect.

While investigators continued gathering evidence in the Bank of America robbery, a second robbery occurred yesterday at 3400 South Monroe Street (Wachovia Bank). During the Wachovia robbery, the suspect entered the bank and committed the robbery utilizing the same method as in the Bank of America robbery. Investigators compiled a photo lineup and Ben Rucker was positively identified as the suspect. Investigators worked closely with the State Attorney's Office and obtained a warrant for Rucker's arrest late yesterday afternoon.

Rucker is still at large and investigators consider him armed and dangerous, as he has a criminal history, including murder. Anyone with information about these crimes or the location of Rucker is asked to contact the Tallahassee Police Department at (850) 891-4200 or Crime Stoppers at (850) 574-TIPS (8477). Remember, Crime Stoppers does not want your name, just your information. You could be eligible for a reward up to \$1000.

Wanted Suspect



Ben Rucker, B/M, 64 yoa, 5'8", 168lbs. Charges: Robbery

March 31 City Preparing for Storm

Response Efforts in Place for Heavy Rain/Severe Weather

The City of Tallahassee's Emergency Management Team is closely monitoring the current weather situation, and City departments are preparing to respond as needed. The forecast calls for the potential for very heavy rainfall over the next several days, including the possibility of severe weather.

City crews from the Electric Utility, Public Works, Police and Fire have already initiated response efforts for any problems that may develop. These include:

- Electric Utility staff at the C.H. Corn Hydroelectric Facility at the Lake Talquin dam are lowering the lake level in anticipation of heavy rain both in the immediate area and upstream. Staff at the dam are working with the Leon County Sheriff's Office on notification efforts for residents living on Crooked Road along the Ochlockonee River downstream from the dam. Given the current forecast, flooding is anticipated in this area.
- The Electric Utility will also have extra staff at the Electric Control Center on duty, with additional on-call repair crews ready for response efforts, as needed. City of Tallahassee Electric Utility customers may report power outages to **891-4YOU (4968)**.
- Sandbags and sand are now available at the corner of Mabry Street and Bellevue Way. Citizens must bring their own shovels and be prepared to fill bags on their own. Public Works staff will closely monitor this location in the morning to determine if additional sand and bags will be needed.

- Extra on-call Public Works crews are in place to respond to reports of downed trees or localized flooding.
- The Tallahassee Police Department will overlap shift changes allowing for extra response capabilities, as needed.

Barricades may be placed at city streets prone to flooding so emergency crews can block off roads quickly if necessary. A word of caution to motorists who must be on the road during heavy rain - do not drive on streets where water covers the surface. There could be deep water or potholes caused by the flooding. Police officers **will issue citations** to drivers ignoring road barricades.

March 31 - TPD Road Rage Ends in Arrest

Today, at approximately 2:20PM, the Tallahassee Police Department responded to a report of gunshots in the area of Brewster Road and Mahan Drive. Upon arrival officers were unable to locate a possible victim or suspect. Additional information revealed that the victim was pursuing the suspect east on Mahan Drive, eventually traveling east on I-10. The Tallahassee Police Department contacted the Florida Highway Patrol for assistance and Troopers eventually stopped the suspect vehicle just before entering Jefferson County (near mile marker 215).

With assistance from the Leon County Sheriff's Office, mutual aid was enacted and the Tallahassee Police Department continued the investigation. The investigation revealed that the suspect and victim were involved in a road rage incident near Capital Circle Northeast and Mahan Drive. According to the victim, the suspect pointed what appeared to be a handgun at the victim during the incident and fled. The victim called 911 and followed the suspect until Troopers conducted the traffic stop. A search of the suspect's vehicle revealed a BB gun. No one was injured during the incident and 23 year old Kalel Dias has been arrested and charged with aggravated assault.

Arrested: Kalel A. Dias, H/M, 23 yoa. Charge: Aggravated Assault