

MORNING ADVOCATE

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Inside



Purchase offer made for Saints

Gov. Edwards disclosed Wednesday that a purchase offer that will keep the New Orleans Saints in the Crescent City has been made to John Mecom Jr., owner of the NFL club. The man in charge of selling the Saints says, however, he hasn't seen the offer.

1H

Postal rates go up in February

The cost of mailing a first-class letter will jump from 20 cents to 22 cents on Feb. 17, the U.S. Postal Service announced Wednesday. Other rate changes also are in store.

3A

Charges of politics

The Department of Education has sanctioned a second depository to handle textbooks for Louisiana schools, prompting charges of politics from a firm that has served as the exclusive depository for the past eight years.

16A

Weather

Warmer, may rain Thursday. High, mid-70s. Low Thursday night, near 60.

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The March of Dimes poster child gave the president a sheep dog puppy. He says he may name the dog 'Lady.' I hope he picks that name. Since he's been playing at being FDR, I was afraid he was going to name it 'Fala.'

Military pay freeze offer studied

By DAVID HOFFMAN
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WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger offered at a White House budget meeting Wednesday to agree to a one-year "freeze" on military pay in 1986 as the Pentagon's contribution toward reducing the deficit but balked at other deep cuts in the defense buildup, administration sources said.

Weinberger, at a luncheon with President Reagan and his group of

budget advisers, outlined a plan for defense savings that would allow the military to receive a scheduled 4 percent pay increase in January, then hold pay at existing levels for 1986, the sources said.

Weinberger's suggestion would affect 2.1 million Americans in uniform. Congress has rejected proposals for a military pay freeze in the past. "We tried it once and it was dead the moment it got up there," a White House official said.

Administration sources also said

Weinberger continued to resist a proposal by Office of Management and Budget Director David A. Stockman to scale back the defense buildup over several years by restraining weapons procurement as well as personnel costs.

Reagan has already tentatively approved a proposed 5 percent pay cut in 1986 for civilian government workers, who will get a 3.5 percent pay raise in January.

The 5 percent cut would cover civilians working at the Pentagon. The administration has turned up the

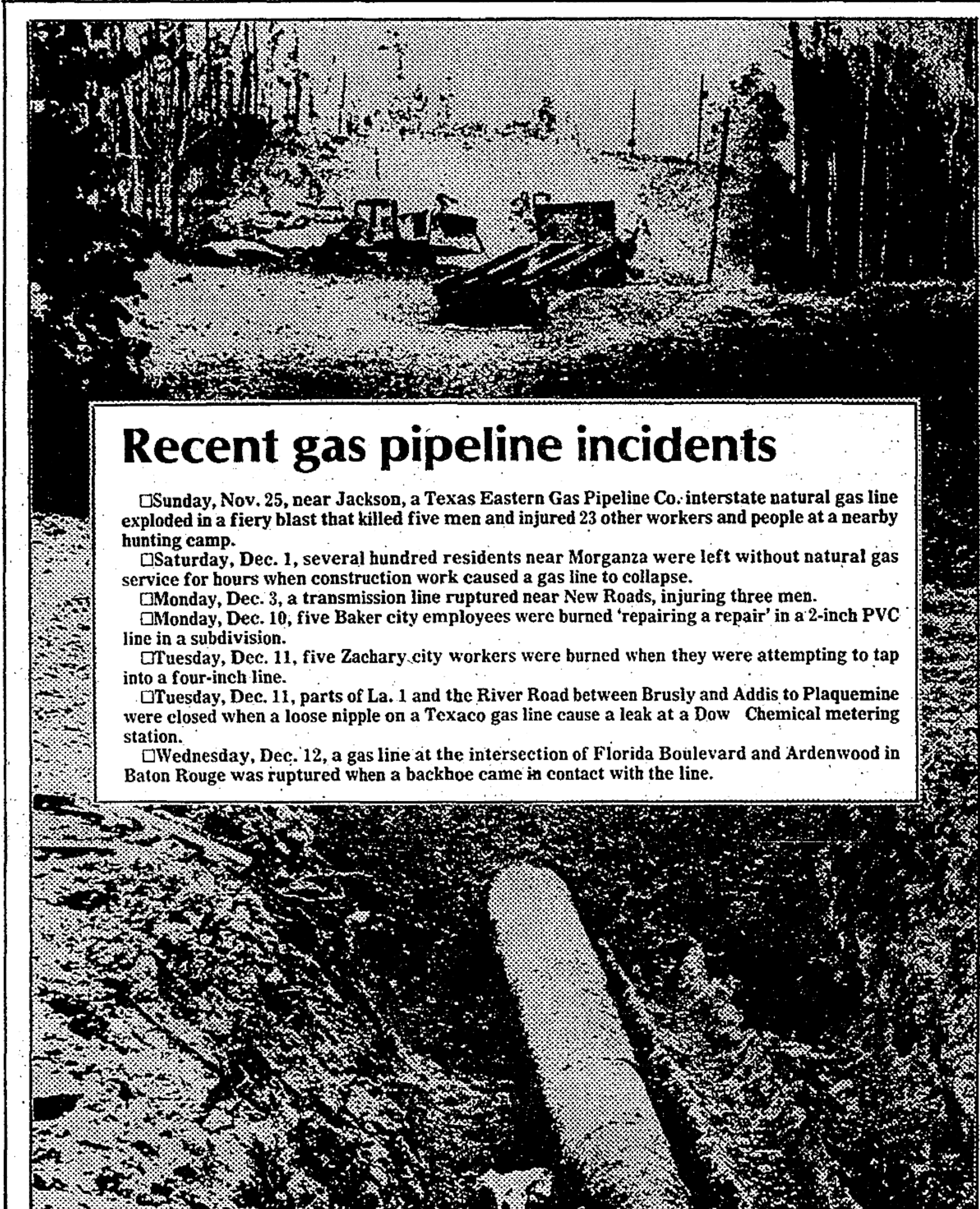
pressure on federal employees to accept lower pay by confirming that it is studying a plan to slash the federal workforce by 125,000 if Congress balks at the 5 percent pay cut.

A spokesman for the Office of Personnel Management said the agency has prepared a draft report recommending a 6 percent reduction in the ranks of the 2.1 million civilian employees as a possible alternative to the pay cut. Either approach — a 5 percent pay cut for all federal civilian workers or the 125,000 cutback in the

workforce through elimination of jobs and attrition — would save about \$13 billion over the next three years, the personnel official said.

Administration sources said Weinberger's offer to freeze military pay for one year would save more than \$4 billion in fiscal 1986, which begins next Oct. 1.

The White House goal for Pentagon savings is \$8 billion. Officials said Weinberger's overall proposal fell short (See FREEZE, 6A)



Recent gas pipeline incidents

CSunday, Nov. 25, near Jackson, a Texas Eastern Gas Pipeline Co. interstate natural gas line exploded in a fiery blast that killed five men and injured 23 other workers and people at a nearby hunting camp.

CSaturday, Dec. 1, several hundred residents near Morganza were left without natural gas service for hours when construction work caused a gas line to collapse.

CMonday, Dec. 3, a transmission line ruptured near New Roads, injuring three men.

CMonday, Dec. 10, five Baker city employees were burned "repairing a repair" in a 2-inch PVC line in a subdivision.

CFuesday, Dec. 11, five Zachary city workers were burned when they were attempting to tap into a four-inch line.

CFuesday, Dec. 11, parts of La. 1 and the River Road between Brusly and Addis to Plaquemine were closed when a loose nipple on a Texaco gas line cause a leak at a Dow Chemical metering station.

CFuesday, Dec. 12, a gas line at the intersection of Florida Boulevard and Ardenwood in Baton Rouge was ruptured when a backhoe came in contact with the line.

Official says gas line mishaps could become more numerous

By MELINDA SHELTON
Advocate state writer

Within the past 2½ weeks, at least seven mishaps involving natural-gas pipes have occurred in the Baton Rouge area — including one that killed five people and injured 23 others — and more potentially deadly incidents could occur at any time and any place in Louisiana, said one state official.

Under state jurisdiction alone, there are more than 50,000 miles of "distribution, transmission and gathering lines . . ." Of those lines,

the state estimates that more than 40 percent have been subjected to the corrosive quality of Louisiana soil for more than 25 years and another 20 percent are more than 40 years old, said Mariano G. Jimenez, director of pipelines for the state Department of Natural Resources.

Such lines are located in schools and universities, state-owned buildings, hospitals, businesses and residences. And at any time, the antiquated and often badly decomposed lines could rupture or cause a buildup of gas under or within the walls of a building or home.

In a state that is one of the country's leading natural-gas producers and transporters, natural gas ironically could prove to be a thorn in the state's side.

Since Nov. 25, seven incidents, several of which involved multiple injuries, have been reported. They include:

• Sunday, Nov. 25, near Jackson, a Texas Eastern Gas Pipeline Co. interstate natural-gas line exploded in a fiery blast that killed five men working on the pipeline and injured (See MISHAPS, 13A)

Edwards' hopes dimming for health plan changes

By MARSHA SHULER
Capitol news bureau

Gov. Edwards said Wednesday that the moratorium he issued on state approval of new hospitals and nursing homes has brought him only grief and not the changes he wanted in the State Health Plan to allow the construction of more health care facilities.

"It's gotten me investigated, but nothing else," Edwards said about the moratorium he ordered effective Aug. 1.

The governor ordered the moratorium so that revisions could be made in the plan through which decisions are made about the need for new health care facilities in the state.

As he issued the moratorium, however, Edwards granted exemptions for eight applications, five of which were proposed by a firm with close personal and financial ties to him.

Edwards has admitted receiving some \$2 million in fees from the company — Health Service Development Corp. — for his role in winning state approval of four health care facility applications during the administration of former Gov. David Treen.

Edwards has acknowledged being the subject of a federal grand jury probe into the handling of applications for new hospitals, nursing homes and other health care projects by his friends and business associates.

Edwards testified two weeks ago for some four hours before the federal grand jury in New Orleans. His brother, Marion, and three former Department of Health and Human Resources officials appeared last week.

Edwards revealed Wednesday that state Sen. Joseph Sevario, D- (See HEALTH, 8A)

DEQ says Rollins PCB burn off until review completed

By BOB ANDERSON
Environmental editor

Rollins Environmental Services will not be able to test burn PCBs Monday, as the company had planned, unless the firm gets a court order.

The state's review of the technical data and the public comments submitted cannot be finished by Monday, said Pat Norton, head of the Department of Environmental Quality.

He said that review will probably be finished later next week and a decision given on whether the state will grant Rollins a variance of its air discharge permit to allow the burn.

Rollins maintains that it does not need such a variance, but company

officials said on Wednesday they prefer not to go to court on the issue.

Gov. Edwards said on Wednesday that Rollins Environmental Services can forget its attempts to get a tax exemption for expansions at its plant, where Rollins wants to burn 2,500 pounds of pure PCBs an hour.

Several other officials, including Mayor Screen and State Sen. Tommy Hudson, D-Baton Rouge, said they would fight the proposed tax exemption for the hazardous waste disposal firm, saying Rollins is not the type of industry they want to

benefit from such exemptions.

One of the factors in deciding whether to go to court on a delay by the state in deciding whether to allow the test burn is the amount of extra time the state needs to complete its review, said Tom Blank of Rollins headquarters in Delaware.

Blank stopped short of saying that Rollins would not go to court if the delay were only a week, but indicated that the company would probably do so if the delay were for a "long period" — such as "90 days."

Rollins will not make a decision on what option to take until it receives a formal notification from DEQ that the Monday burn must be postponed.

(See BURN, 10A)

Council OKs budget of \$123 million

By MIKE DUNNE
Advocate staff writer

The Metro Council approved a \$123 million city-parish operating budget for 1985 Wednesday night and also sent a message to the administration — live within your budget during the coming year.

The council made \$719,530 in changes in Mayor Screen's \$123 million budget proposal. It was the first time in four years that the council has made any significant changes in the document the mayor has sent them.

Although the message came as part of another item, the council made it clear that they want departments to live within the money allocated.

The council previously had hammered out a list of changes to the budget, generally taking money from mayoral departments to bolster council divisions.

Included in the changes were internal auditors for the council and restoring funds to avert a proposed increase in bus fares.

Internal auditors have been recommended for years as part of the

Related stories, 1B, 5B

annual independent auditor's report, but officials have never taken the advice.

The two auditors will work for the council and will be independent of the mayor or the administration's finance section.

The only discussion of the budget came from District Judge Daniel LeBlanc, chief judge for the 19th Judicial District Court.

LeBlanc asked the council to provide funds for law clerks' pay and to eliminate from the budget the "salary savings" provision which predicts the amount of unused salaries expected from personnel turnover and deducts it from the funds set aside for salaries.

LeBlanc said the courts faced a \$5,000 deficit primarily due to salary savings, although he did not mention the

(See BUDGET, 14A)

Edwards won't support flat 7% state pay raise

By MARSHA SHULER
Capitol news bureau

Gov. Edwards said on Wednesday he won't approve a 7 percent pay raise being considered by the state Civil Service Commission because it would only "aggravate" the inequities in current pay scales for state employees.

In addition, he said, a more comprehensive plan under study does not correct the situation and should be shelved.

"I will not support an across-the-board pay raise unless it includes a pay plan in which this inequity is addressed," Edwards said at an impromptu news conference at the Governor's Mansion.

Edwards also said that the possibility is slim that any of nearly \$1 billion in taxes passed by the Legislature in the past year can be repealed in the near future.

"I'm not as optimistic now as I once was," the governor said of the tax repeal.

Edwards said the economy "has not spooled up like I thought" and the settlement of an offshore oil revenue dispute with the federal government that could mean hundreds of millions to the state is no closer to completion.

He said the state will have to struggle to "live within the limitations of income we have now."

The proposed new state employee pay plan which Edwards criticized would give raises to most Civil Service employees and give especially big raises to some employees, such as clerks, that a two-year study determined were seriously underpaid.

Rather than equalize pay scales, Edwards said the plan causes further damage.

He said state department heads have come to him expressing displeasure with the proposal, which has also "horrified" hundreds — even thousands — of state employees. The governor did not detail complaints he has received about the plan.

The state's 67,500 classified employees haven't had a raise in three years, despite Edwards' campaign promise to give a 10 percent raise to all public employees this year.

Civil Service director Herb Sumrall has said state workers deserve a cost-of-living adjustment while officials wait on final action on a long-range plan to upgrade and equalize state salary schedules.

A 7 percent pay hike is up for a Jan. 9 hearing before the State Civil Service Commission.

The 7 percent pay hike, retroactive to Sept. 1, would cost the state about \$64 million. Commissioner of (See RAISE, 6A)