

West Alabama

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SECTION B

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AND AROUND

Three hurt in wrecks

TUSCALOOSA | Tuscaloosa Police said three people were injured in wrecks Saturday.

Teresa Moore, 43, of Cottondale was transported to DCH Regional Medical Center after her 1996 Jeep Cherokee was struck from behind by a 1995 Oldsmobile Achieva at the intersection of University Boulevard East and Old Cottondale Road at about 2:45 p.m. Saturday.

A TPD spokeswoman said a passenger in the Oldsmobile, Lilly Scott, 63, of Tuscaloosa, was also injured in that wreck and transported to DCH.

Moore and Scott were treated and released, a spokeswoman for DCH said.

In an unrelated wreck, Patrick Porter, 32, of Tuscaloosa was injured when a 1992 Nissan Stanza ran a red light at the intersection of Skyland Boulevard and Alabama Highway 69 South and hit his 1990 Pontiac 6000 at 11:31 p.m. Saturday.

Porter was transported to DCH, where he was treated and released, a DCH spokeswoman said.

News update

NORTHPORT | A DCH Regional Medical Center spokeswoman said a woman injured Saturday in a wreck that killed another woman was listed in good condition Sunday afternoon.

Linda Watson, 32, of Northport was injured in a head-on collision on Alabama Highway 171 about half a mile north of U.S. Highway 43 at about 1:30 p.m.

The cause of the wreck remains under investigation.

More Alabamians insured than average

By Dave Bryan
The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY | Like many Alabamians, Renee Williams receives health insurance through her employer. Also like many Alabamians, the 35-year-old single mother once relied on a public health insurance program.

"With my first kid and then my second one they got Medicaid," said Williams, referring to the federal-state program that helps pay for health care for low-income families with children.

Williams is among the approximately 89 percent of Alabamians who have some type of health insurance coverage — a figure higher than the national average.

About 500,000 Alabamians, or 11.2 percent, however, were without coverage when a telephone study by the state Department of Public Health was conducted between October 2002 and February 2003.

Health officials believe the results of the new study, the "2003 Alabama Health Care Insurance and Access Survey," will provide direction on how to get more Alabamians insured in years to come.

On average, the percent of Alabamians without health insurance

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SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

■ 31.4 percent of Alabamians were covered by some type of public health care program such as Medicaid or the state's All Kids program. That compares to the national average of 25.3 percent.

■ 8.8 percent of Alabamians were uninsured during the entire year, with 5.8 percent without insurance part of the year.

■ Adults between the ages of 25 and 34 comprise the group most likely to be uninsured.



STAFF PHOTO | ROBERT SUTTON
Kasey Rice, the 6-year-old daughter of Sandy and James Rice of Samantha, rides her four-wheeler on the driveway of her home June 23. Kasey got her four-wheeler for her sixth birthday and enjoys riding with her parents and older brother Derek.

Four-wheeler safety becomes problem in Tuscaloosa County

By Stephanie Taylor
Staff Writer

TUSCALOOSA | Children driving four-wheelers and golf carts on neighborhood streets has become a problem for police and residents in Tuscaloosa County.

The issue has pitted neighbor against neighbor in some areas. Many parents feel that their children should be able to drive the vehicles on the street if they have permission, while their neighbors are concerned that the children make the streets dan-

gerous for drivers.

Claire Parks let her daughters drive the family's golf cart in their Alpine Hills subdivision before their neighbors called the Department of Human Resources and filed a complaint that the girls were being abused.

"They said that we weren't watching them, that they were cutting off people in cars and that they were speeding," Parks said. "DHR went to their school. They were scared; it terrified them."

A police officer told Parks that the carts were illegal for the children to

drive on the road, even on the dead-end street where the family lives.

"I did not know that they weren't legal," she said.

The number of complaints called in to law enforcement has increased since kids have been out of school for summer vacation, said Tuscaloosa Sheriff's Office patrol division commander Chief Mark Hearing.

"We have to answer the complaints, even if we have more pressing things to get to," he said. "If we have to come to the neighborhood, we're going to

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Smoking ban not much of a change

By Markeshia Ricks
Staff Writer

The days of smoking anywhere you please in Alabama are coming to an end, but some local officials say residents won't see much of a change now that the state Legislature has passed the law.

Alabama is the last state to pass legislation restricting smoking in public places like hospitals, schools, theaters, museums and day-care centers, but most of these places already ask patrons to take their butts outside.

Brad Fisher, spokesman for DCH Regional Medical Center, said the hospital has had a no-smoking policy inside its facilities for years.

"We're not entirely smoke-free," he said. "Currently, you can smoke outside."

Fisher said that for hospitals to be accredited, the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations requires the inside of the hospital to be smoke-free. Tobacco products also are not available for purchase on DCH campuses, he said.

"Our latest concern is whether it will get to the point where there can't be any smoking on the campus," he said. "That would be asking an employee to go eight hours without smoking, when realistically they can't just leave campus."

The state law, which does not restrict smoking in bars, lounges, tobacco shops or hotel rooms, unless the rooms are designated as no-smoking, goes into effect Sept. 1.

Tuscaloosa City Councilman Joe Powell said the new law wouldn't be a drastic change for residents in Tuscaloosa.

"It's been my experience that most public places like City Hall and the courthouse are already designated as no-smoking areas," he said. "A lot of the restaurants in Tuscaloosa are also becoming nonsmoking; even the football stadium is designated nonsmoking except for the corridors."

Powell said though the law appears to be in keeping with the status quo in Tuscaloosa, law enforcement officers are now duty-bound to enforce it.

"Any law of the state becomes a part of the city code," he said. "Our police department has the duty of enforcing that law."

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Road extension expected to be done this summer

By Stephanie Taylor
Staff Writer

TUSCALOOSA | Tuscaloosa County officials expect that the portion of the Mitt Lary Road extension for which the county is responsible will be completed this summer, while ground remains to be broken on two projects to be completed by the Alabama Department of Transportation.

ALDOT awarded a contract to RaCon Construction Co. in June to build a bridge where the road extension will cross Alabama Highway 171. Keith Hoggie, assistant construction engineer for ALDOT's fifth division, said the company is completing paperwork required before ALDOT officials in Montgomery issue a Notice to Proceed with the project.

He said he expects the state to give RaCon the green light to begin work within the next week.

Once a notice is issued, work on the

Ground remains to be broken on two projects to be completed by the Alabama Department of Transportation.

bridge will begin within 15 days. RaCon will have 150 days, or about five months, to complete the job.

During construction, traffic will be diverted to the existing Mitt Lary Road between Highway 171 and U.S. 43.

Hoggie said that bids for the construction of an interchange where Mitt Lary will meet U.S. Highway 82 would be let to contract sometime in July.

Contractor ST Bunn has almost completed the paving of the 9½-mile extension, said county planning director Farrington Snipes, who has overseen the county's portion of the extension project.

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STAFF PHOTO | ROBERT SUTTON
Mike Beard uses a bulldozer to prepare the road before paving starts on the Mitt Lary Road extension near the toll bridge on Black Warrior Parkway.

TOBACCO AND SOCIETY