



Daily News-Miner

THE VOICE OF INTERIOR ALASKA SINCE 1903

Inside Today

Supreme Court rules against EPA limits on power plant mercury emissions. » A9

GOOD MORNING



The weather.

Partly sunny in the morning, with more clouds throughout the day.

High today 76
Low tonight 58

Sunrise: 3:08 a.m.
Sunset: 12:38 a.m.

WEATHER » A9

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DROP IT LIKE IT'S HOT

It's OK — you won't break the screens on these rugged smartphones.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

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MORAL VICTORY

Fairbanksan's last-place marathon finish didn't feel like losing.

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BAD DAY

Goldpanners swept by Peninsula Oilers in doubleheader.

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WOLFPACK STANDOUT

West Valley's Cole Michaelis attends US Hockey Select camp.

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SOURDOUGH JACK: "I bet she'd beat me in a marathon ... On second thought, I don't reckon I'd even finish."



Men linked to 8-pound meth stash

Two Fairbanks men charged in federal court

By Sam Friedman
SFRIEDMAN@NEWSMINER.COM

The scales weren't a tip-off, but the 8 pounds of methamphetamine allegedly found in a Fairbanks gold-buying office this month led police to suspect an ex-employee was distributing the drug.

Two Fairbanks men had federal

court dates scheduled for this week on drugs charges that stem from the suspicions of a retail gold assessing store owner who reported finding drugs in a company safe earlier this month.

Federal charges accuse Robert Michael Curry and Matthew Paul Lugin of possessing methamphetamine with intent to distribute. They've both been charged, but

neither has been indicted. Lugin is in custody at Fairbanks Correctional Center. Curry has been released to a third-party custodian.

The federal Drug Enforcement Administration began investigating June 6 when the Anchorage owner of Oxford Assaying and Refining reported drugs he found inside two small safes within a larger company safe, according

to an affidavit filed in court from DEA Special Agent Daniel Lakin.

One safe contained 8.29 pounds of methamphetamine and \$27,150, according to the affidavit. The other had "gold and silver coins, ivory and gemstones, along with a smaller bag containing a substance that tested presumptively positive for the presence of methamphetamine, as well as paperwork bearing the name of Robert Curry."

METH » A3

Rain helped, but fire crews still stretched thin

By Sam Friedman
SFRIEDMAN@NEWSMINER.COM

Fairbanks saw rain and mostly smoke-free skies during the weekend, but it doesn't change the fact that large unconfined fires continue to burn around the Interior.

As of Monday, 612 fires had burned close to 2 million acres this summer, that's 600,000 acres more than Sunday's total. The quickly growing number shows the power of many large fires burning without containment. The acreage burnt and the number of fires puts Alaska on track to be worse than the record 2004 fire season, according to an Alaska Division of Forestry news release.

But while the fire danger remains high, there was plenty of good fire news around the Interior during the weekend.

In both Fairbanks and North Pole, air quality reached "moderate" Monday, that's four levels below the high of "very unhealthy" reached at the worst of last week's smoke. The air remained smoky in other parts of the Interior, including around the village of Tanana, where three of the Interior's largest fires are burning.

The large fires around Tanana illustrate how few firefighters there are to respond to the state's many fires, said Malcolm Evans, a spokesman for the inter-



One of four scoopers that made continuous water drops on the Tetlin Hills Fire all day Sunday. COURTESY ALASKA DIVISION OF FORESTRY

agency joint fire information center at Fort Wainwright. Both the 37,500-acre Tozitna Fire and the 21,400-acre Spicer Creek Fire are being fought by 85-member crews.

"We're still stretched thin," he said. "There is such minimal amounts of containment."

Thanks to recent rain in the Fairbanks area, the two biggest road area fires near Fairbanks had "minimal fire behavior" as of Monday,

WILDFIRE MAPPING

Get a look behind the scenes of using satellites to map wildfires » **Science & Technology, Page B4**

Evans said. The Rex Complex south of Fairbanks near Anderson was measured at 18,242 acres. The Aggie Creek Fire north of Fairbanks off the Elliott Highway was at 14,448 acres.

Fire conditions had improved enough by Mon-

day for the Fairbanks North Star Borough to lift a ban on firewood cutting on borough lands. The ban on campfires, charcoal barbecues and fireworks remains in effect for both public and private lands around much of the state.

Near Northway, a town near the Canada border, the towns plan to go ahead with their annual Fourth of July softball tournament, despite the Long Creek Fire burning in the area. A 79-member fire crew is moving their camp to make room for the softball games, according to news release

Contact outdoors editor Sam Friedman at 459-7545. Follow him on Twitter: @FDNMoutdoors.

Court upholds use of controversial execution drug

By Mark Sherman
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Trading sharp words, a deeply divided Supreme Court upheld the use of a controversial drug in lethal-injection executions Monday, even as two dissenting justices said for the first time they think it's "highly likely" the death penalty itself is unconstitutional.

On their last day together until the fall, the justices voted 5-4 in a case from Oklahoma that the sedative midazolam can be used in executions without violating the Eighth

Amendment prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment.

The court also divided 5-4 in cases upholding congressional districts drawn by independent commissions and calling into question first-ever limits on mercury emissions from power plants. In addition, the justices also agreed to hear an important affirmative action case in the fall and acted to keep Texas abortion clinics open amid a legal fight that threatens to close most of them.

COURT » A9

The Supreme Court building is seen in Washington, D.C., on June 22. AP PHOTO/SUSAN WALSH



Walker to sign IEP bill today

By Matt Buxton
MBUXTON@NEWSMINER.COM

The bill to update the Interior Energy Project will get a signature today in Fairbanks after enduring a tumultuous journey through the Alaska Legislature.

House Bill 105 allows the state to look beyond the North Slope for a source of natural gas as it works to bring affordable energy to the Interior. Gov. Bill Walker will sign it at the Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce luncheon at the Carlson Center today.

"The economic future of the Interior depends on low-cost energy being delivered to its residents," Walker said in a statement released when the Legislature passed the bill in April. "At the end of the day, conditions in Fairbanks have not changed, and relief in the form of clean, affordable energy is needed now."

The Interior Energy Project was created in 2013 and required the state to focus the more

than \$300 million of low-cost loans, tax credits and grants on a North Slope-focused project.

When that attempt to get gas off the North Slope ended up more expensive than expected, Walker introduced House Bill 105 to broaden the project. The most likely source of gas will be from the Cook Inlet, which serves Anchorage and much of the Southcentral area's energy needs.

The potential for Fairbanks' energy needs to be added to Cook Inlet raised concerns from some Anchorage-area legislators, who added parts to the bill that both Walker and Fairbanks-area officials said undermined the project.

The Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce was one of many groups that came out in support of the original version of the bill, which was largely

restored by the time the bill was sent to a vote.

The state already has begun exploring new sources of gas and recently opened bids to any company interested in supplying gas to Fairbanks.

The Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority's board earlier this month announced it would go ahead with plans to purchase Fairbanks Natural Gas and its parent company, Pentex, which owns a gas liquefaction plant in Point MacKenzie.

That deal is expected to close later this year and the public ownership of the plant is anticipated to lower utility rates for the 1,000 or so customers by about 13.3 percent this winter.

Walker also will be talking about the state's financial situation, a discussion that started in earnest at a three-day conference at the University of Alaska Fairbanks earlier this month.

Contact staff writer Matt Buxton at 459-7544. Follow him on Twitter: @FDNMPolitics.

