

## Walk it out

Walk to school day is Wednesday

A6



## Election 2014

Local races profiled in this edition

A3, 4 and B6, 8 and 9



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## Senator calls for higher rail safety standards

BY SPENSER BICKETT  
Staff Writer

A recent letter from U.S. Sen. Al Franken to the Department of Transportation focuses on the senator's call for the highest safety standards for rail cars carrying crude oil through Minnesota.

In a letter to U.S. DOT Secretary Anthony Foxx, Franken throws his support behind Foxx's proposal to increase the safety of trains carrying crude oil, focusing on crude oil from the Bakken formation in Montana, North Dakota, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan.

"Every day, these trains pass through Moorhead, Saint Cloud, Rochester, and large portions of the Twin Cities metro area," Franken said in the letter. "My



Sheriff Brian Jespersen



Al Franken

state sees all the risk, while getting none of the economic reward. These trains need to be held to the highest safety standards possible to prevent a disastrous derailment."

In the letter, Franken recommends more puncture-resistant tank cars, as well as the proposed routing requirements for high-hazard flammable trains, which should not be allowed to

run through population centers. Where cases where that is the only option, Franken said he supports restricting train speeds when traveling through those population centers.

"However, I'm concerned that, if too many HHFTs are allowed to travel through these population centers, even at slow speeds, it will result in increased congestion for other commodities and passenger rail," Franken said in the letter. "We're already seeing these delays in Minnesota."

### Local issue

According to media reports, Canadian National Railway, the largest railroad in Canada, reported an 82 percent increase in crude oil shipments in three months ending in June. Canada's overall exports of crude oil by rail have grown tenfold in just

more than two years, according to Canada's National Energy Board.

Locally, Koochiching County Sheriff Brian Jespersen said there is some concern about increased rail traffic, but it also includes the chemicals crossing the U.S.-Canada border bridge in Ranier.

"We're fortunate that when trains come through Ranier and head south, they're fairly slow until they get to about Ericksburg," Jespersen said.

The lower train speeds means a high-speed collision is unlikely, Jespersen said, though if a derailment led to a spill, that could create big problems if the spill entered the Rainy River. To prepare for this situation, he said there's regular meetings with various emergency response personnel to plan for the scenario.

"We're trained regularly to deal with each situation, and we change scenarios each time we do one," Jespersen said. "We go over what actions we would implement if it did happen."

The first course of action regarding any scenario is to notify the public and evacuate the affected area, Jespersen said. Then, based on variables like the wind and the weather, emergency staff would contact the people who need to be involved and contain the spill.

Koochiching County Environmental Services Director Dale Olson said the county has a hazard mitigation plan that has to be renewed every five years.

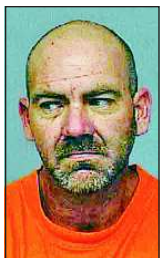
"We're actually working on renewing it right now, and derailments are a part of it," Olson said.

Safety to A7 ➤

## Man sentenced to more than 14 years for sexual assault

BY LAUREL BEAGER  
Editor

A short-time resident of International Falls was sentenced to more than 14 years prison in Koochiching County District Court for extremely violent crimes.



Billy Ray Garrison

Billy Ray Garrison, 38, was convicted by a jury of four felony charges: first-degree criminal sexual conduct with the use of force, kidnapping, theft of motor vehicle, and domestic assault by strangulation. In addition, he was convicted of misdemeanor domestic assault.

He was sentenced to 172 months prison and is now being processed at the Minnesota Correctional Facility in St. Cloud.

County Attorney Jeff Naglosky served as prosecutor and Grand Rapids public defender Evelyn Schneider represented Garrison. Schneider did not return phone calls in time for this report.

Naglosky said the Nov. 28, 2013, incident was very violent.

"We kind of lull ourselves into thinking this doesn't happen here and fortunately, it rarely happens here, but it's not that it doesn't happen here," he said.

First-degree criminal sexual conduct is often charged when there is a large age discrepancy between the offender and the victim. In this case, an adult female was involved, but a substantial amount of violence in the assault raised the severity level to first degree, Naglosky said.

The victim, not originally from the area, was involved in a long-term relationship with Garrison and they were living in Border-

Assault to A7 ➤



STAFF PHOTOS BY LAUREL BEAGER

Isaac Dahl, Mary Dahl, Ben Keeney, Nathan McRoberts and Cole Mann stand at the five stations as one of the team members take their shot Monday.

## FHS trap team offering skill building and fun



Mary Dahl takes aim.

### Team members say it's not just for hunters

BY LAUREL BEAGER  
Editor

The concentration was obvious on the faces of the shooters as their turn neared Monday to fire at clay targets tossed into the air at the Falls Trap Club.

After taking their shot, they carefully lowered their guns, and watched as the other four

members at the five stations took their shot.

These members of the International Falls Trap Team are involved in what many consider the fastest-growing high school sport as a part of the Minnesota State High School Clay Target League.

Coached by Eric Norstad, the main season of the sport, a nine-week spring season, brought 34 kids last year, the first for the Falls team. He said the current, six-week fall season is like a bonus, and drew 21 kids.

Trapshooting is the only

sport in which boys and girls compete together and alongside physically challenged students. It involves students in grades 6-12.

Norstad said part of the coaching staff includes past trap shooters and veteran members of the Falls Trap Club, which has allowed the team to use its facilities east of International Falls.

"It's a blast," Norstad said. "What a better place with all our kids who like to shoot and hunt to get into a sport like

Trap to A7 ➤