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THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

INLAND SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S NEWSPAPER **PE.com**

Minor repair job leads to major blackout

LIGHTS GO OUT: The cascading power outage on Thursday is a reminder of the power grid's vulnerabilities.

BY MICHAEL R. BLOOD AND ELLIOT SPAGAT
ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN DIEGO — A blackout that swept across parts of the Southwest and Mexico began with a single utility worker and a minor repair job.

How it then rippled from that worker in the Arizona desert, to Southern California and across the border, plunging millions of people into darkness, has authorities and experts puzzled, especially since the power grid is built to withstand such blips.

However it spread, Thursday's outage was a reminder that the nation's transmission lines

IN MAIN NEWS

■ Things you can do to prepare. **A13**

remain all too vulnerable to cascading power failures.

"There are a lot of critical pieces of equipment on the system and we have less defense than we think," said Rich Sedano at the Regulatory Assistance Project, a utility industry think tank based in Montpelier, Vt.

There have been several similar failures in recent years. In 2003, a blackout knocked out power to 50 million people in the Midwest and the Northeast. And in 2005, a major outage struck the Los Angeles metropolitan area.

That same year, Congress required utilities to comply with federal reliability standards for the electricity grid, instead of self-regulation.

SEE **GRID/A11**



The power outage Thursday cut electricity to wastewater pumps and released more than 2 million gallons of sewage into the ocean.

Tepid cheers for job plan

ECONOMY: Experts say the president's \$447 billion proposal, at best, would provide modest short-term benefits.

BY KEVIN G. HALL
MCLATCHY NEWSPAPERS

WASHINGTON — Could it work? That's the question being asked about President Barack Obama's big new jobs plan.

Independent experts answered Friday with a qualified yes.

The American Jobs Act would create jobs and help keep a struggling economy moving forward, said a number of economists. But they cautioned that it wouldn't shift the nation's business gears into overdrive, and it offers only modest benefits, given the headwinds the economy faces from a moribund housing sector and growing financial turmoil in Europe.

IN BUSINESS

■ Jobs plan gets mixed reviews from small business. **D1**

As only a short-term stimulus plan, the American Jobs Act wouldn't address structural and external problems holding back the U.S. economy. And since the proposals' very design is transitory, it makes them difficult to compare against the broad economic plans being proposed by GOP presidential candidates Mitt Romney and Jon Huntsman, who hope to replace Obama.

Macroeconomic Advisers, a leading economic forecast group, projected that Obama's plan "would give a significant boost to (the gross domestic product) and employment over the near term."

There's the rub. Obama's plan aims to deliver only a short-term fix to keep the economy moving forward and avoid falling back into recession.

Then there's the price tag, \$447 billion. That would add to the sum that must be covered by a special congressional deficit-reduction committee aiming to cut \$1.5 trillion from federal spending over a decade. Obama's plan counts on this committee to find almost \$2 trillion in cuts.

"It is a political question. Is there a worthwhile political tradeoff? The economics of it are not worrisome," said Chris Varvares, president of St. Louis-based Macroeconomic Advisers. He favors raising the deficit short-term as long as there is a clear path to bringing it down over time. "The current hysteria over the deficit is misplaced ... our current deficit is not

SEE **JOBS/A6**

HISTORY LESSONS: TERROR ATTACKS HIT HOME FOR NEW GENERATION



PAUL ALVAREZ/FREELANCE PHOTOGRAPHER

Members of the Hemet West Valley Navy Junior ROTC practice maneuvers. From left are Nicollette Estes, Vanessa Cardoza, Arlene Villarruel, Jayshun Garrison, Kristina Miller and Zayna Korin. Some say they picked up the notion of fighting for their country from 9/11 lessons over the years.

Youths of 9/11 just now getting it

SCHOOLS: Those whose memories of that day are fuzzy, or nonexistent, piece together the impact.

BY DAYNA STRAEHLEY
STAFF WRITER
dstraehley@pe.com

Children who were too young to grasp the details 10 years ago say they vividly remember the mood of Sept. 11, when terrorists flew planes into the twin towers of the World Trade Center.

"I don't remember much about the actual event, but I remember people being sad," said Kristina Miller, 16, a cadet in the Navy Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps at West Valley High School in Hemet.

"The PTA did all sorts of fundraisers afterward. We had a ceremony in the quad with the Pledge of Allegiance by a red umbrella."

She said teachers have brought it up every year, usually on the anniversary, and one teacher cried last year while talking about it.

"I've learned about it every year," Miller said.

Miller is part of the Millennial Generation, and dubbed by some the 9/11 Generation, the West Valley High School student and other young Americans under

SEE **STUDENTS/A9**

COMING SUNDAY

■ A special section looks back at the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

IN MAIN NEWS

■ Poly High School students plant 3,000 American flags. **A9**

■ Federal officials search for three men thought to be part of a terror plan. **A15**

UCR professor's healing touch comes through again years later

BY LAURIE LUCAS
STAFF WRITER
llucas@pe.com

For the second time since Sept. 11, 2001, the tragedy has moved a UC Riverside theater professor to write a play to help people heal and come together.

"Ten" premieres tonight in Princeton, N.J., where Charles Evered, an associate professor of playwriting, lives with his family when he's not teaching in Riverside. His short play tells the story of Flora, a woman waiting at a train station in New Jersey, and Doug, the police officer who gently convinces her that her husband, who boarded 10 years ago Sept. 11, will not be getting off.

Evered, a Navy reserve officer, was at ground zero a few days after the attacks. "It changed me forever,



Charles Evered

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Rules of the off-road frustrating

DESERT RACING PERMITS: The Bureau of Land Management's fees are drawing fire from both critics and fans.

BY DUG BEGLEY
STAFF WRITER
dbegley@pe.com

Phil Klasky and Dave Cole are on opposing sides of the debate of whether off-road racing is appropriate on public lands in Southern California. But both agree they don't like the way the Bureau of Land Management is charging for

off-road racing permits.

Klasky, a longtime desert racing critic from Wonder Valley, east of Twentynine Palms, and member of Community ORV Watch, is upset that federal officials did not charge promoters of a February off-road race in Johnson Valley the full cost of overseeing the event.

Critics have long contended the BLM favors off-road fans, and this is just the latest example of cutting racers a break. The fees are intended to protect pristine areas of the desert, racing critics complain, and without them the BLM doesn't

have the money to mitigate environmental damage caused by off-roaders.

Cole, meanwhile, said he is worried higher fees will kill off-road racing in Southern California, which a dedicated group of people enjoy. The BLM, he explained, is pricing off-roaders right off public lands.

Federal officials began charging more and requiring increased manpower at off-road races following an August 2010 crash in Johnson Valley — east of Victorville —

SEE **OFF-ROAD/A6**