



# The Columbus Dispatch

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## ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY

### DuPont chemical under scrutiny

Federal EPA orders more tests of material used to make Teflon

By Michael Hawthorne  
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Federal regulators are stepping up their investigation of a chemical DuPont uses to make Teflon after determining it might cause developmental problems in young girls and women of child-bearing age.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced yesterday that it is concerned enough about potential health hazards posed by ammonium perfluorooctanoate, also known as C8 or PFOA, that it will conduct the most extensive scientific review of a chemical in the agency's 33-year history.

Questions about the chemical's safety come as DuPont and other companies have embarked on advertising campaigns to promote products made with Teflon, including nonstick cookware, stain-resistant carpet and clothing.

DuPont says the products are safe, and the EPA says that, for the time being, there is no reason for consumers to think otherwise.

"The data that is before us is raising concerns, but we have very limited data," said Stephen L. Johnson, assistant administrator of the EPA's Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances.

"We need to get the science sorted out first," Johnson said, "then undertake regulatory action if necessary."

Studies provided by DuPont and 3M, once the leading manufacturer of C8, revealed that the chemical has been detected in human blood nationwide, in people ages 2 to 96.

Industry studies also have linked C8 to a variety of health problems, including cancer and liver damage, in rats. But regulators don't know whether those findings are relevant to humans. Nor do they know how C8 is making its way into human blood.

DuPont has used the unregulated chemical for more than 50 years to make Teflon, which is applied to dozens of popular house-

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### Another school tragedy

One student died and three were injured in a school shooting in New Orleans | **Nation A12**

### Low on cash

The city auditor says Columbus will have nearly \$6 million less to spend this year than first projected | **Metro & State B1**

### Hello, it's me

Todd Rundgren brings his new, low-tech live show to the Southern Theatre tonight | **The Arts D8**

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A U.S. soldier points a gun at the head of a man arrested yesterday in Baghdad. Citizens and troops said the man was with a group of non-Iraqi Arab fighters.

# Easy victory in Tikrit ends major fighting



DAVID GUTTENFELDER | ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTOS

U.S. soldiers arrest a group of men accused of trying to attack American forces yesterday in Baghdad, Iraq. Troops said the group was driving a vehicle loaded with weapons.

## THREAT OF SANCTIONS

### Bush turns up heat on Syria

By Ron Hutcheson  
KNIGHT RIDDER NEWSPAPERS

WASHINGTON — President Bush didn't list Syria as part of his axis of evil, but it is fast becoming his top target in his campaign to rid the world of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.

Although U.S. officials downplay prospects of military action, and Syrian officials deny the charges, the steady stream of accusations from the White House, the Pentagon and the State Department is strikingly similar to the invective aimed at Iraq in the buildup to war.

Yesterday — a day after Bush accused Syria of producing chemical weapons — administration officials branded Syria "a rogue nation" and threatened diplomatic, economic and unspecified other sanctions.

U.S. officials also have accused Syria of offering sanctuary to top Iraqi leaders and harboring a host of terrorist organizations. Syria has been on the government's official list of nations that sponsor terrorism since the list's inception in 1979.

A newly released CIA report says that Syria has a

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## Remembering those who fell

Some grew up longing to be soldiers or pilots. Others joined the military as a way to turn their lives around, or earn money for college, or serve their country. In phone calls, letters and e-mails home, they urged their loved ones not to worry — and sometimes they also talked about their fears. They are the U.S. troops killed or missing in Iraq. The Dispatch begins a series profiling the war dead below and on Page A4.

### Marine Sgt. Michael E. Bitz

Michael E. Bitz was a daredevil drifter before he joined the Marines — that's how his mother sees it. The military, she says, turned his life around.

Bitz remarried and started a new family. In February, he became the father of twins he would never hold.

Bitz, 31, from Ventura, Calif., and based at Camp Lejeune, was killed in combat March 23.

His mother, Donna Bellman, said she encouraged her son to join the Marines because he had been directionless for several years after he graduated from high school.

"The Marines did a wonderful thing for him," she said.

Her son was an athlete, she said. And more than a bit of a daredevil.

"If it looked dangerous, he wanted to try it," Bellman said. "He always wanted to go to the highest slide and swing the highest of anybody and jump the highest."

Bitz and his wife, Janina, son Joshua, 2, and the twins he never saw lived in Jacksonville, N.C. He also has a 7-year-old son, Christian.



## Deadly fire's cause still unclear

5th victim identified as Dublin woman; probe continues

By Jeb Phillips and Alice Thomas  
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

The first call came at 4:05 a.m., from a woman walking down the street.

"Half of the house is lit up in flames. There's no one there," said the woman, who didn't give her name.

She was wrong. As many as 20 people were inside, in the aftermath of a five-keg birthday party. But firefighters didn't know that at first, according to a tape of the 911 call and the conversations of

the firefighters at the rooming house at 64 E. 17th Ave.

Beginning with that call early Sunday, the firefighters seemed to hear worse news every few seconds — not enough paramedics, more and more injured. And, finally, five dead — all college students. Christine Wilson, 19, an Ohio University sophomore and Dublin native, was the final victim identified yesterday.

Authorities were still working to determine the fire's cause, saying that several agencies needed to meet and discuss the investigation. NorthSteppe Realty, the property manager, continued to hear from investigators that the fire seemed suspicious because it began at the front door of the house, an attorney

Family, friends share memories of the five fire victims | A13

Two Ohio campuses mourn lost classmates | A13

for the company said.

But Columbus police Sgt. Brent Mull said investigators are still looking at a charcoal grill and tiki torches on the porch, where Ohio State University students pointed out burned couches yesterday. All the elements of an accidental fire were there, Mull said.

Dental records have shown that, along with Wilson, the two other women killed in the fire were Andrea Dennis, 20, of Madeira and Erin DeMarco, 19, of Canton, Franklin Coun-

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ALYSIA PEYTON | DISPATCH

## U.S. forces find Iraqi weapons, seize palace

By David Espo  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit fell yesterday with unexpectedly light resistance, the last Iraqi city to succumb to overpowering U.S.-led ground and air forces.

"I would anticipate that the major combat engagements are over," Maj. Gen. Stanley McChrystal told reporters at the Pentagon. Tikrit fell with no sign of the ferocious last stand by Saddam loyalists that some military planners had feared.

As fighting wound down, Pentagon officials disclosed plans to pull two aircraft carriers from the Persian Gulf. Iraqi power brokers looked ahead to discussions on a postwar government at a U.S.-arranged meeting set for today.

Looting eased in Baghdad after days of plundering at government buildings, hospitals and an antiquities museum, and a group of religious and civil opposition leaders met in the capital to plan efforts to restore power, water, security and other vital services.

U.S. forces found prodigious amounts of Iraqi weaponry, French-made missiles and Russian anti-tank rocket launchers among them. Army troops discovered thousands of microfilm cartridges and hundreds of pa-

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► Leading archaeologists from around the world will meet Thursday in Paris to discuss how to rescue Iraq's cultural heritage, imperiled by the plundering of its museums. The heads of archaeological missions in Iraq have been invited to the emergency meeting sponsored by UNESCO, a cultural arm of the United Nations.

► Support groups and service agencies have help for troops and families | A4

► Experts say U.S. forces should be able to find evidence of chemical weapons, if there are any, in the next several weeks | A4

► Map of the latest developments | A5

OSU sophomore Jennifer McNamara leaves flowers and a poster at her next-door neighbors' house, which caught fire Sunday morning. Five students — three women from Ohio University and two men from Ohio State University — were killed in the blaze.