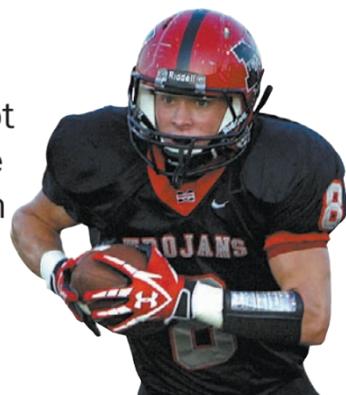


TIMES DAILY

Florence • Muscle Shoals • Sheffield • Tusculumbia • Northwest Alabama

THE BIG GAME

This year, it's Muscle Shoals – not Russellville – favored in rivalry.



Sports 1D

SURVIVOR



Rare mussels reintroduced.

Region 1B

DASHED DREAMS



Fewer people own homes, census finds.

Business 5C

HAVE A NICE ARREST?

Survey inquires about experience

SCHENECTADY, N.Y. — You have the right to remain silent, but would you mind taking part in our survey?

Schenectady police are conducting surveys of the people it tickets, arrests or assists in an effort to improve service to the public.

Schenectady Police Chief Mark Chaires urged people to participate in the survey, which he called “a report card” on how the agency is performing its duties and how it can improve services.

Questions include whether police clearly explained the reason for a stop and how satisfied the person was with how they were treated.



Aztec symbol of war

ANCIENT FIND

Temple platform may house tombs

MEXICO CITY — Archaeologists say they've found an Aztec ceremonial platform studded with carvings of serpents' heads at Mexico City's Templo Mayor ruin site.

Archaeologist Carlos Javier Gonzalez said the stone platform measuring 45 feet in diameter was probably built about 1469.

He said it could be the spot where Aztec emperors were cremated and buried. Researchers have been on a five-year quest to find the tombs of Aztec emperors.

ONLINE TODAY



See pictures of statewide tactical training conference in the Shoals this week at TimesDaily.com.

WHAT'S YOUR OPINION?

Thursday's question: Has anyone ever stolen anything from your vehicle?

Yes: 59%
No: 40%
Don't own vehicle: 1%

Today's question: What is your favorite Apple product?

Vote daily online at: TimesDaily.com

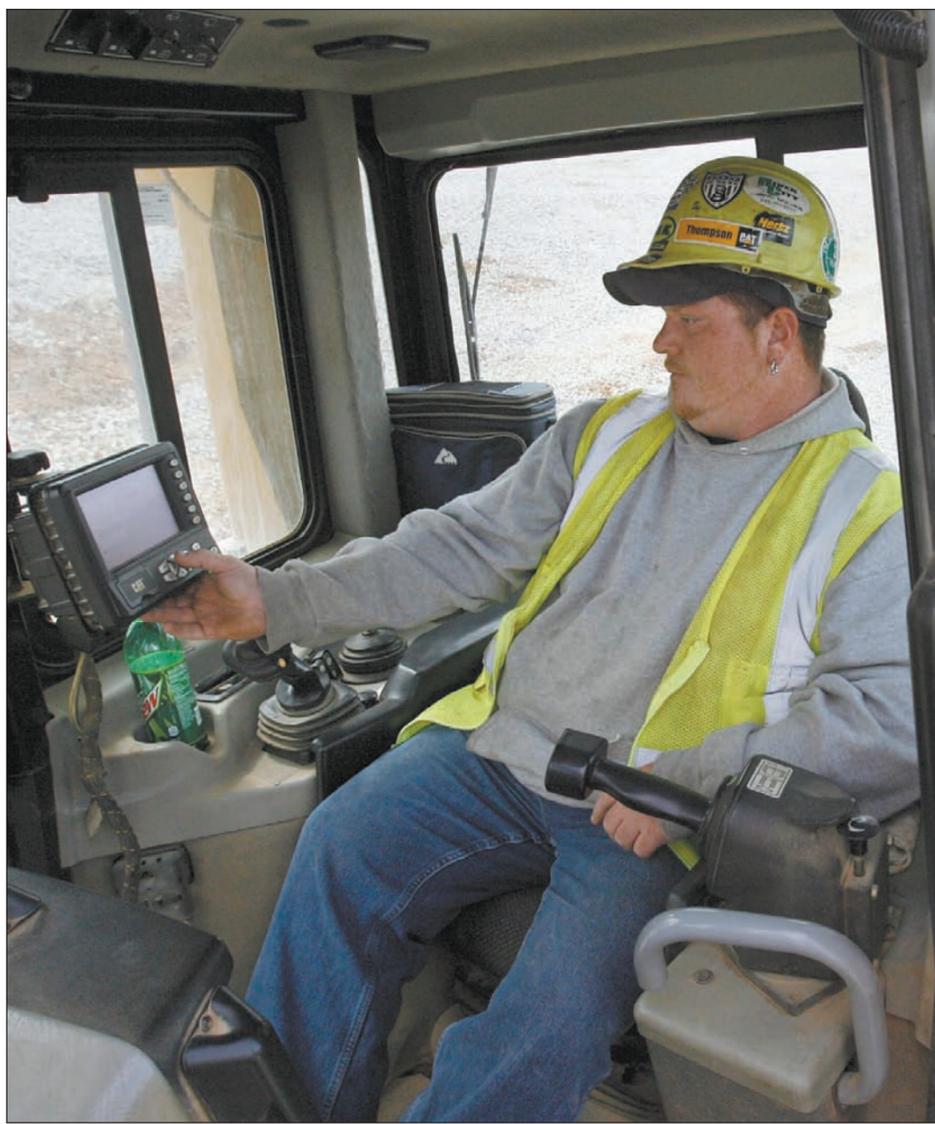
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High-tech highways



Jim Hannon/TimesDaily photos

Jessie Skelton, of Tuscaloosa-based RayCON Construction, operates a bulldozer with GPS-guided equipment on a road-building project on Alabama 24 in Franklin County. Below, a GPS screen shows changes in the position of the blade on a bulldozer.

GPS transforms road construction

By Russ Corey
Staff Writer

Technology has changed drastically since Alabama Department of Transportation engineer Allen Teague became involved in building roads.

Calculations that were once commonly made with a slide rule are now done completed with the aid of a computer and software programs.

Plans that were once drawn by hand are produced quicker on a personal computer.

Younger transportation department engineers such as Clint Baker joke that they don't know how to use a slide rule.

From the beginning of the road-building process, when surveyors plot the alignment for a new road, to the design process and finally, the construction phase, technology has and will continue to have a major impact.

The biggest change technology has brought to the road-building process, according to Teague and Randy Skelton, a general superintendent for Tuscaloosa-based contractor RayCON, is saving time and money across the entire process.

Engineers such as Teague at one time took information from a surveyor and drew plans by hand on large pieces of graph paper with a pencil. His younger counterparts these days are accustomed to having the surveyor's information being downloaded in digital form to a computer.



They will use the distance and elevation information from the surveyor to design a roadway or new lanes for an existing roadway with the aid of computer-assisted design programs such as Microstation and InRoads.

“They can do in less than a minute what would take me all day to do,” Teague said.

Baker said changes to a road project are made easier by working with digital files.

The programs show lanes of a roadway, shoulders, drainage ditches, overpasses and other objects and areas. They can show a cross-section of a road project or even a “drive through” view of a finished project.

Please see GPS, Page 3A

WASHINGTON

Millions face long-term unemployment

By Martin Crutsinger
AP Economics Writer

For more Americans, being out of work has become a semi-permanent condition.

Nearly one-third of the unemployed — nearly 4.5 million people — have had no job for a year or more. That's a record high. Many are older workers who have found it especially hard to find jobs.

And economists say their prospects won't strengthen even after the economy starts to strengthen and hiring picks up. Even if they can find a job, it will likely pay far less than their old ones did.

The outlook is unlikely to improve today, when the government issues its monthly jobs report. Economists predict it will show that employers added a net 56,000 jobs in September.

That's far fewer than needed to reduce unem-

ployment. The unemployment rate is expected to remain 9.1 percent for a third straight month.

Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke last week called long-term unemployment a “national crisis” and said it should be one of Congress' top priorities.

When people are out of work for a year or more, their skills often decline. Their professional networks shrink. Companies hesitate to hire them.

Please see Long, Page 3A

FLORENCE

Irons won't run in 2012

By Robert Palmer
Staff Writer

Florence Mayor Bobby Irons won't be a candidate in the 2012 municipal election.

After serving two consecutive terms, Irons announced Thursday morning he won't toss his hat in the ring for a third term.

Earlier this year, he said he would run again, facing a challenge from Lauderdale County License Commissioner Mickey Haddock and possibly other candidates.

Among the reasons he cited for not running again was the dysfunction that has crept into government, including City Hall.

“It's become a really serious matter the way our elected officials — some of them, not all of them — are fighting and bickering and cannot come to terms with what the real issues are and get something done for the people,” Irons said.

“It's an environment I'm not comfortable in. That is part of the reason I am frustrated,” he said. “We need good, conscientious elected officials who will take their responsibilities seriously to resolve some of our problems.”

The City Council has become mired in gridlock over what to do about disposing of municipal solid waste. Half the six councilmen want to build a transfer station and hire a contractor to haul it to a regional landfill.



Irons

Please see Mayor, Page 5A

Web calculator helps pin down college expenses

By Justin Pope
AP Education Writer

It sounds like a simple question: How much is a college actually going to cost?

In fact, it's a slippery one. But thanks to a federal mandate, a new tool to help students and families pin down an answer is finally arriving this month: a fairly simple online calculator to estimate what you can expect to pay to attend college in the United States.

The new “net price calculators” — many already up and running on college websites ahead of the Oct. 29 legal deadline — are designed to provide the non-binding cost estimates based on a few relatively straightforward questions about family finances.

More broadly, they're supposed to help students navigate one of the most confusing aspects of the college matchmaking process. While a school's “list price” is usually easy enough to identify, students often don't hear until long after they've applied and gotten acceptance letters what will be their “net price” — the sometimes substantially lower cost after scholarships and discounts are applied.

Now colleges are obliged to make the estimating calculators publicly available on their websites. Supporters predict two main effects, both positive. Some families may be surprised how much college will still cost them, but at least they'll know more accurately which schools are affordable, and how much they need to save.

Other families, meanwhile, may be pleasantly surprised by the discounts, and won't cross off potential matches for fear they're unaffordable.

That could lead to more students considering high-priced private institutions where applicants are often scared off by sticker price shock.

Please see Calculator, Page 3A