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Suit aims to undo gun laws

Larimer's Smith, other sheriffs call new measures unenforceable



Smith

By TOM HACKER
REPORTER-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Calling a new package of Colorado gun laws "not enforceable," Larimer County Sheriff Justin Smith said Thursday he'll join other Colorado sheriffs in a lawsuit aimed at striking them down.

Smith said he and more than 40 other county sheriffs in the state would seek through the courts to dismantle a raft of gun-control laws that passed swiftly through the Colorado Legislature and that Gov. John Hickenlooper has signed into law.

They'll enlist University of Denver

constitutional law professor and gun rights authority David Kopel to represent them in their challenge.

"People are saying, 'The sheriff says he won't enforce these laws,'" Smith said. "That's not what I've said. What I've said is they're not enforceable."

SEE SMITH, PAGE A2

Man charged in ricin letters case described as troubled

OXFORD, Miss. — A Mississippi man charged with sending ricin-laced letters to the president and other officials was described Thursday as a good father, a quiet neighbor and an entertainer who impersonated Elvis at parties. But accounts also show a man who spiraled into emotional turmoil trying to get attention for his claims of uncovering a conspiracy to sell body parts on the black market.

Paul Kevin Curtis, 45, detailed in numerous Web posts over the past several years the event that he said "changed my life forever": the chance discovery of body parts and organs wrapped in plastic in small refrigerator at a hospital where he worked as a janitor more than a decade ago.

He tried to talk to officials and get the word out online, but he thought he was being railroaded by the government. Authorities say the efforts culminated in letters sent to President Barack Obama, a U.S. senator and a judge in Mississippi. "Maybe I have your attention now even if that means someone must die," the letters read, according to an FBI affidavit.

"He is bipolar, and the only thing I can say is he wasn't on his medicine," his ex-wife, Laura Curtis, told The Associated Press.

Jim Waide, an attorney for the Curtis family, said Paul Kevin Curtis was prescribed medication three years ago. "When he is on his medication, he is terrific, he's nice, he's functional," Waide said. "When he's off his medication, that's when there's a problem."

Paul Kevin Curtis made a brief court appearance Thursday, wearing shackles and a Johnny Cash T-shirt. Attorney Christi R. McCoy said he "maintains 100 percent" that he is innocent. He did not enter pleas to the two federal charges against him. He is due back in court this afternoon.

— The Associated Press



Curtis

Ashley Tobias, left, and her son Aleczer Ramirez, 4, chat with Bill Burgoyne after stopping to check out the dinosaur snow sculpture he built Thursday outside his home near First Street and Dotsero Avenue in Loveland. Burgoyne said the sculpture took about five hours to complete and is of a stegosaurus, Colorado's state fossil.

Reporter-Herald/
STEVE STONER



19 inches, and done

Snowstorm's total is more than five times April average

By TOM HACKER
REPORTER-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Loveland's total snowfall from a three-day storm that moved in Monday was a hair over 19 inches.

That figure shows in data collected from home-based stations of the Colorado Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network.

And because the National Weather Service doesn't keep good track of snow depth totals, it's the best number available to people who want to know.

The volunteer network has scores of amateur weather stations scattered around Larimer County, and the breadth of its data offers a pretty clear picture of what the storm brought.

And two of those backyard stations in Loveland belong to professional meteorologists at the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder.

"I think it's a pretty good number," said Chris Knoetgen, also a National Weather Service co-op observer, who lives exactly 2 miles north of Lake Loveland.

"I have a snowboard in a place that's unaffected by wind and other factors, and that's what I use."

Knoetgen measured 19.2 inches of snow from the storm, amounting to 1.92 inches of water.

An NCAR colleague, Joe Grim, measured 19.3 inches of snow at his station in

SEE SNOWSTORM, PAGE A2

"You're strong through (the search-and-rescue operation) because that's your job. That's what you've been trained to do. But you're reminded of the tragedy and your family. And that it could be you. Then it's a completely different story."

Firefighter Darryl Hall

Crews seek survivors, bodies after Texas blast

Authorities don't offer estimate of fatalities

By NOMAAN MERCHANT AND JOHN L. MONE
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WEST, Texas — Rescuers searched the smoking remnants of a Texas farm town Thursday for survivors of a thunderous fertilizer plant explosion, gingerly checking smashed houses and apartments for anyone

still trapped in debris while the community awaited word on the number of dead.

Initial reports put the fatalities as high as 15, but later in the day, authorities backed away from any estimate and refused to elaborate. More than 160 people were hurt.

A breathtaking band of destruction extended for blocks around the West Fertilizer Co. in the small community of West. The blast shook the ground with the strength of a small earthquake and crumpled dozens of

homes, an apartment complex, a school and a nursing home. Its dull boom could be heard dozens of miles away from the town about 20 miles north of Waco.

Waco police Sgt. William Patrick Swanton described ongoing search-and-rescue efforts as "tedious and time-consuming," noting that crews had to shore up much of the wreckage before going in.

There was no indication that the blast,

SEE TEXAS, PAGE A2

JUST WEIRD

Exotic snakes stuck in Brighton basement after fire

BRIGHTON — Dozens of snakes are in good condition after a home in the Denver suburb of Brighton caught fire. The trick now is to get them out of the basement.

Two adults and five children also got out safely after the fire broke out early Thursday. The home is a total loss.

Brighton Fire Chief Mike Schuppe said firefighters are working with the homeowner to get the hundreds of exotic snakes out of the debris and into a new home.

According to KMGH-TV, the cause of the fire has not yet been determined.

— The Associated Press

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