

**WEEKEND:** Check out Hot Ticket to find out what's happening in the area this weekend » C1

GALVESTON  COUNTY

# The Daily News.

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**COMING SATURDAY**

Rather than lure developers of a \$450 million project with large tax incentives, League City is using a new tactic made possible by recent legislative changes.

**LAW ENFORCEMENT INVESTIGATION**

## Autopsy delayed on child's body pulled from Moses Bayou

By **KATHRYN EASTBURN**  
The Daily News

» **TEXAS CITY**

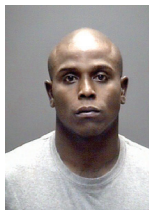
Progress identifying the small child whose body was pulled from Moses Bayou on Wednesday has been delayed by a day because of Wednesday night's storm that knocked out power at the medical examiner's building in Texas City.



**HAZANA ANDERSON**



**TIAUNDR A KAE CHRISTON**



**KENNY HEWETT**

While authorities have not officially said the body is the remains of a missing 2-year-old girl from College Station, police there on late Thursday afternoon charged the girl's mother and the mother's boyfriend with felonies related to her disappearance and the gruesome discovery.

Tiaundra Kae Christon, 21, and Kenny D'Shawn Hewett, 32, were both charged with fabricating physical evidence with intent to impair a human corpse, according to court records.

Hewett was in custody at the Galveston County Jail on Thursday afternoon, according to jail records. He is being held on \$500,000 bond, according to jail records.

See **AUTOPSY** » A8

**LAWSUIT | JUDGMENT**

## City ordered to pay \$15.8M to Ike contractor

By **JOHN WAYNE FERGUSON**  
The Daily News

**GALVESTON**  
A district court judge Thursday ordered the city of Galveston to pay a disaster recovery contractor \$15.7 million, putting a final price tag on a lawsuit the city lost in September.

The payment to CDM Smith, a Massachusetts-based com-

pany, includes \$12.3 million in damages and \$3.4 million in accrued interest on payments a jury ruled the city was obligated to pay.

On Sept. 24, a jury ordered the city to pay up to \$14.7 million to the company for work it did for the city after Hurricane Ike in 2008.

The city hired CDM Smith in 2009, when the company was

still doing business as Camp Dresser & McKee, to manage a program to repair houses damaged by Hurricane Ike. The company was fired in 2011, at the request of the Texas General Land Office, amid complaints about its performance and the progress of the recovery.

The company sued the city, saying it was still owed money for work it completed before it

was fired.

The jury's decision was contingent on a final judgment by 56th District Court Judge Lonnie Cox, who on Thursday ordered the city to pay an even greater amount.

The additional \$1 million added in Thursday's judgment

See **CONTRACTOR** » A3

**FESTIVAL | MOTORCYCLE ENTHUSIASTS**

## Stormy start to rally



**KELSEY WALLING**/The Daily News

Johny Thaitex looks at one of his leather products at his Addiction Brand booth on the first day of the Lone Star Rally in Galveston on Thursday.

## Lone Star party gets underway with some wicked weather

By **KERI HEATH**  
The Daily News

» **GALVESTON**

The island's biggest fall festival got off to a blustery start Thursday morning after a strong storm passed over the city and wreaked havoc on some of the event's many vendors.

The Wednesday night storm brought winds up to 50 mph and drove rain across the island.

When the weather cleared, vendors at the Lone Star Rally, a festival that lures tens of

thousands of motorcycle enthusiasts to the island yearly, found their merchandise soaked and their tents scattered around The Strand.

"I honestly thought it was a tornado at first," said Eli Villarreal, a vendor selling hats and other apparel downtown during the event. "It was crazy. It looked like a tsunami of canopies. I didn't know things were going to be that bad."

Villarreal was downtown as the storm passed through and had to take shelter in a bar to

See **RALLY** » A8

**INSIDE**



**NEWS:** Businesses sustained damage and lost power after a storm tore through the county late Wednesday. A Texas City restaurant had its front wall and part of the roof blown off. » A3

**INFRASTRUCTURE FOUR CITIES**

## Leak in water main could spur water restrictions

By **KERI HEATH**  
The Daily News

» **TEXAS CITY**

A leak in a pipe that supplies water to four county cities might be significant enough to require restrictions on water use next week, officials said Thursday.

The Gulf Coast Water Authority on Wednesday found the leak just north of the intersection of Interstate 45 and state Highway 146 in Texas City in a pipe that supplies water to Galveston, Hitchcock, Tiki Island and Bayou Vista.

Officials didn't know Thursday how significant the leak was, Jake Hollingsworth, water treatment plant manager for the authority, said.

"It's going to have to be repaired and we're planning to repair," Hollingsworth said.

The authority might have to reduce flow to Galveston by more than half, City Manager Brian Maxwell said.

The city learned of the leak Thursday morning and plans to discuss options with the authority soon, he said.

The news came as the annual Lone Star Rally — which brings an estimated 500,000 motorcycle enthusiasts to the island, filling hotels and swelling the popula-

See **WATER** » A3

**CAMPUSES | SAFER ENVIRONMENTS**

## Emotional learning becomes tool to combat school violence

By **STUART VILLANUEVA**  
The Daily News

Social and Emotional Learning coordinator Cherie Spencer, left, works with other members of the Causeway Galveston Design Team, from left, Julie Purser, Beth Auslander and Molly Allmond during a meeting in Galveston on Wednesday.



By **KATHRYN EASTBURN**  
The Daily News

Facing the threat of school violence, districts have reacted with plenty of strategies to prevent such events on their campuses, including beefing up monitoring devices and firearms, exacting harsher penalties on students who issue threats and practicing lockdown.

Ranking at the top of most recommendations for a safer school environment, however, is a strong focus on social and emotional learning, according to

See **VIOLENCE** » A4

**INSIDE**



**SPORTS:** Santa Fe is too much for Hightower and Friendswood ousts Shadow Creek from the high school volleyball playoffs » B1





## WEATHER | STRAIGHT-LINE WIND

# Businesses sustain damage, lose power after storm

By AARON WEST

The Daily News

## » TEXAS CITY

With the front entrance blown off of a restaurant and the power still out at more than 50 businesses and residences, including the Galveston County Medical Examiner's Office, on Thursday afternoon, Texas City got the worst of a late night storm on Wednesday.

The storm, brought in by a cold front that came through the county before midnight, caused moderate damage to businesses, fences and trees in Texas City, Office of Emergency Management Director Tom Munoz said.

The storm produced only 2 inches of rain throughout the county. The wind did the most damage.

"It was mostly straight-line wind damage, but that wind got up to more than 60 mph," said Don Oettinger, meteorologist for the National Weather Service



Jose Alvarez, a friend of the owners of Los Aztecas Bar & Grill, walks through the damaged restaurant in Texas City on Thursday after winds tore part of the roof off during storms late Wednesday night.

in League City. "From what we saw and heard from reports, the most damage in the county was in the Texas City area."

Ricardo Ramirez, a co-owner of Los Aztecas Bar & Grill, 2525 Palmer Highway, would probably agree. The front wall and

part of the roof got blown off the restaurant about 11 p.m., he said.

"We were just about to close, and it was raining real bad, and real windy, too," he said. "From one minute to another we started hearing a big, big noise, like the roof blowing away. It seemed like

a tornado or something and then the wall blew away."

The restaurant would be closed for at least a week for repairs, he said.

Along with the restaurant, a title loan store saw some wind damage, as well as a trailer and a boat, Munoz said.



STUART VILLANUEVA/The Daily News photos  
Ricardo Ramirez, co-owner of Los Aztecas Bar & Grill looks over his damaged restaurant in Texas City on Thursday.

About 7,850 homes and businesses lost power along the Interstate 45 corridor, according to Texas-New Mexico Power company. About 65 of those power outages remained on Thursday afternoon, including at the Galveston County Medical Examiner's Office, 6607 FM 1674.

The outage caused a delay of the autopsy of a child's body that was found in Moses Bayou on Tues-

day afternoon, John "D.J." Florence, spokesperson for the agency, said. Originally scheduled to be completed on Thursday, the autopsy is now planned to be finished by the weekend.

"We have our emergency lights, but our computers and everything else that runs on electricity is down," Florence said.

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## WATER

Continued » A1

tion — was getting underway.

The leak shouldn't affect activities this weekend, however, Maxwell said.

If the leak is severe enough, Galveston might have to order restrictions and enact water conservation measures next week, Maxwell said.

"We have about 20 to 25 million gallons of capacity on the island," Maxwell said.

The city has only about 17 million gallons to use, though, since the reserves can't drop below a certain level, Maxwell said.

The city on average uses 13 million to 15 million gallons of water a day, officials have said during past interviews.

The authority won't know more about the leak's

scale until it starts unearthing the site next week, Hollingsworth said.

"It's not gushing water," Hollingsworth said. "It's just basically created a hole that has water in it now."

There are other water lines the city might be able to draw sources through, but details are not yet clear, Maxwell said.

Keri Heath: 409-683-5241; ker.heath@galvnews.com or on Twitter @HeathKeri.

## CONTRACTOR

Continued » A1

was interest on "unpaid invoiced charges incurred in reliance on the city of Galveston's promises," according to the judgment.

On Oct. 23, city attorneys asked Cox to disregard the jury's findings. The city argued the jury had insufficient evidence to reach its decision and that it should be the state of Texas or the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development on the hook for paying the judgment.

CDM Smith had sought as much as \$30 million from the city, but the attorney who represented the company in the civil trial said he was satisfied with the judgment.

"We were pleased that the court entered a final judgment consistent with the jury's verdict," attorney Roland Garcia said.

There likely will be more

legal proceedings in the lawsuit. The city already had ordered a transcript of the civil trial, an early step in making an appeal to a higher court, Garcia said.

"If appealed, we believe the judgment will be sustained on appeal," Garcia said.

A spokeswoman said the city intended to try to find an "amicable" solution with the company over the judgment, but didn't rule out appealing to a higher court.

"The city is not in agreement that the law supports the amount of damages awarded and we will pre-

serve those issues for consideration by the court of appeals," Marissa Barnett said.

City officials have pointed to another lawsuit, currently in a Travis County court, that could decide whether the Texas General Land Office has any financial liability over CDM's complaints.

No hearing dates have been set in that lawsuit, according to Travis County Court records.

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## COUNTY LINES | IN BRIEF

## NEW SOFTWARE

## City permits unavailable Friday afternoon

## » GALVESTON

Some city permitting services will be unavailable from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Friday while staff members work to launch new software, according to a city announcement.

Friday afternoon, residents won't be able to apply for building permits and the city won't be able to issue them, according to the city.

This installation is the second part of a project upgrading software the city uses to process permit applications, a city spokeswoman said.

The city announced the program in February and completed the first phase during the summer.

Any applications submitted in person to city hall, 832 25th St., Friday afternoon will be processed Monday.

Those with questions Friday afternoon can call 409-797-3660 or email the building division at [buildingdivision@galvestontx.gov](mailto:buildingdivision@galvestontx.gov).

— Keri Heath

## SENTENCING

## Man gets 12 years for Kemah robbery

A La Marque man was sentenced Thursday to 12 years in prison for a 2017 armed robbery in Kemah and an ensuing car chase that ended when he crashed into a house.

Chandrick Michael Benefield, 27, pleaded guilty to two counts of aggravated robbery and was sentenced as part of a plea agreement, court records show.

Police arrested Benefield in December 2017 when the stolen vehicle he was driving crashed into a house near the intersection of Bay Ridge Drive and Ocean Way in League City, according to a probable cause affidavit.

Kemah police earlier that day responded to a report of a robbery at a tax business



CHANDRICK MICHAEL BENEFIELD

armed with handguns entered the business, restrained the staff with cable ties, stole a cellphone and about \$5,000 and fled in two vehicles, according to the affidavit.

Benefield took one of the business owners' Toyota, police said.

An officer responding to the scene saw a vehicle on state Highway 146 matching the description of the owner's vehicle and tried to stop it, police said.

Benefield fled the crash on foot and a League City police dog later found him hiding behind a shed, according to the affidavit.

The second robber was never arrested.

— Matt deGroot

in the 1200 block of state Highway 146, officials said.

Witnesses told police two masked men

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