



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, VIA REUTERS

Peril for Rescuers After Slope's Deadly Collapse

Mud from a landslide that killed at least eight people near Oso, Wash., complicated emergency efforts on Sunday. Page A10.

E-Cigarettes Spawn Poison Sold by Barrel

By MATT RICHTEL

A dangerous new form of a powerful stimulant is hitting markets nationwide, for sale by the vial, the gallon and even the barrel.

The drug is nicotine, in its potent, liquid form — extracted from tobacco and tintured with a cocktail of flavorings, colorings and assorted chemicals to feed the fast-growing electronic cigarette industry.

These "e-liquids," the key ingredients in e-cigarettes, are powerful neurotoxins. Tiny amounts, whether ingested or absorbed through the skin, can cause vomiting and seizures and even be lethal. A teaspoon of even highly diluted e-liquid can kill a small child.

But, like e-cigarettes, e-liquids are not regulated by federal authorities. They are mixed on factory floors and in the back rooms of shops, and sold legally in stores and online in small bottles that are kept casually around the house for regular refilling of e-cigarettes.

Evidence of the potential dangers is already emerging. Toxicologists warn that e-liquids pose a significant risk to public health, particularly to children, who may

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Beneath Cities, a Decaying Tangle of Gas Pipes

This article is by Patrick McGeehan, Russ Buettner and David W. Chen.

It is a danger hidden beneath the streets of New York City, unseen and rarely noticed: 6,302 miles of pipes transporting natural gas.

Leaks, like the one that is believed to have led to the explosion that killed eight people in East Harlem this month, are startlingly common nationwide, numbering in the thousands every year, federal records show.

Consolidated Edison, whose pipes supplied the two buildings leveled by the explosion, had the highest rate of leaks in the coun-

Thousands of Leaks — New York Has the Highest Rate

try among natural gas operators whose networks totaled at least 100 miles, according to a New York Times analysis of records collected by the federal Department of Transportation for 2012, the most recent year data was available.

The chief culprit, according to experts, is the perilous state of New York City's underground network, one of the oldest in the

country and a glaring example of America's crumbling infrastructure.

In 2012 alone, Con Edison and National Grid, the other distributor of natural gas in the city, reported 9,906 leaks in their combined systems, which serve the city and Westchester County. More than half of them were considered hazardous because of the dangers they posed to people or property, federal records show. (There are more than 1.2 million miles of gas main pipes across the country. Last year, gas distributors nationwide reported an average of 12 leaks per 100 miles of those pipes.)

Most of the leaks in New York proved harmless, simply dissipating into the soil or air. But when gas finds an ignition source, the results can be deadly. Three separate episodes in Queens in recent years killed people, and a half-dozen others in the city left people injured, according to federal records dating back 10 years.

Elsewhere in the country, a rupture in a major pipeline in San Bruno, Calif., in 2010 caused an explosion that killed eight people. In 2011, a leak from an 83-year-old cast-iron main in Allentown, Pa., caused a blast that killed five people.

"It's like Russian roulette," said Robert B. Jackson, a professor of environment and energy at Stanford University who has studied gas leaks in Washington,

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ROBERT STOLARIK FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Nearly half of the gas mains operated by Con Edison and National Grid were installed before 1940, federal records show.

NEWS ANALYSIS

3 Presidents And a Riddle Named Putin

15 Years of Wooing, Grievance and Strife

By PETER BAKER

WASHINGTON — Bill Clinton found him to be cold and worrisome, but predicted he would be a tough and able leader. George W. Bush wanted to make him a friend and partner in the war on terror, but grew disillusioned over time.

Barack Obama tried working around him by building up his protégé in the Kremlin, an approach that worked for a time but steadily deteriorated to the point that relations between Russia and the United States are now at their worst point since the end of the Cold War.

For 15 years, Vladimir V. Putin has confounded American presidents as they tried to figure him out, only to misjudge him time and again. He has defied their assumptions and rebuffed their efforts at friendship. He has argued with them, lectured them, misled them, accused them, kept them waiting, kept them guessing, betrayed them and felt betrayed by them.

Each of the three presidents tried in his own way to forge a historic if elusive new relationship with Russia, only to find their efforts torpedoed by the wiry martial arts master and former K.G.B. colonel. They imagined him to be something he was not or assumed they could manage a man who refuses to be managed. They saw him through their own lens, believing he viewed Russia's interests as they thought he should. And they underestimated his deep sense of grievance.

To the extent that there were any illusions left in Washington, and it is hard to imagine there were by this point, they were finally and irrevocably shattered by Mr. Putin's takeover of Crimea and the exchange of sanctions that has followed. As Russian forces now mass on the Ukrainian border, the debate has now shifted from how to work with Mr. Putin to how to counter him.

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Obama to Meet With Allies

President Obama plans to talk with leaders from Europe, Canada and Japan — now back to the Group of 7, without Russia — to seek a united response to the crisis in Ukraine. Page A9.



JAPAN TO LET U.S. ASSUME CONTROL OF NUCLEAR CACHE

A SUCCESS FOR OBAMA

Transfer of Bomb-Ready Material Is Expected to Aid Security

By MICHAEL D. SHEAR
and DAVID E. SANGER

THE HAGUE — Japan will announce Monday that it will turn over to Washington more than 700 pounds of weapons-grade plutonium and a large quantity of highly enriched uranium, a decades-old research stockpile that is large enough to build dozens of nuclear weapons, according to American and Japanese officials.

The announcement is the biggest single success in President Obama's five-year-long push to secure the world's most dangerous materials, and will come as world leaders gather here on Monday for a nuclear security summit meeting. Since Mr. Obama began the meetings with world leaders — this will be the third — 13 nations have eliminated their caches of nuclear materials and scores more have hardened security at their storage facilities to prevent theft by potential terrorists.

Japan's agreement to transfer the material — the amount of highly enriched uranium has not been announced but is estimated at 450 pounds — has both practical and political significance. For years these stores of weapons-grade material were not a secret, but were lightly guarded at best; a reporter for The New York Times who visited the main storage site at Tokaimura in the early 1990s found unarmed guards and a site less-well protected than many banks. While security has improved, the stores have long been considered vulnerable.

Iran has cited Japan's large stockpiles of bomb-ready material as evidence of a double standard about which nations can be trusted. And last month China began publicly denouncing Japan's supply, in apparent warning that a rightward, nationalist turn in Japanese politics could result in the country seeking its own weapons.

At various moments right-wing politicians in Japan have referred to the stockpile as a deterrent, suggesting that it was useful to have material so that the world knows Japan, with its advanced technological acumen, could easily fashion it into weapons.

The nuclear fuel being turned

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Inquiry Is Said to Clear Christie, But That's His Lawyers' Verdict

By MICHAEL BARBARO

With his office suddenly engulfed in scandal over lane closings at the George Washington Bridge, Gov. Chris Christie of New Jersey two months ago summoned a pair of top defense lawyers from an elite law firm to the State House and asked them to undertake an extensive review of what had gone wrong.

Now, after 70 interviews and at least \$1 million in legal fees to be paid by state taxpayers, that review is set to be released, and according to people with firsthand knowledge of the inquiry, it has uncovered no evidence that the governor was involved in the plotting or directing of the lane closings.

The review is the first of multiple inquiries into a scandal that

has jeopardized Mr. Christie's political future. It will be viewed with intense skepticism, not only because it was commissioned by the governor but also because the firm conducting it, Gibson Dunn & Crutcher, has close ties to the Christie administration and the firm's lawyers were unable to interview three principal players in the shutdowns, including Bridget Anne Kelly, the governor's former deputy chief of staff.

But lawyers from the team who led the inquiry are prepared to vigorously defend their work, which they described as an unfettered look into the inner workings of an administration known to prize loyalty and privacy.

Randy M. Mastro, the lawyer

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Another Victim of Global Financial Crisis: Pro Soccer Players

By SAM BORDEN

SANTANDER, Spain — Christmas was the last straw. Agustín Fernández, a powerful defender for the Spanish soccer club Racing Santander, had gone four months without seeing a paycheck, so while corporate mismanagement had left his team on the brink of insolvency, Fernández was the one going broke.

When the holidays arrived and he could not afford to buy his 3-year-old daughter the bicycle she wanted, the realization nearly left him in tears.

"It made me sick that I could not stand up for her as a man," said Fernández, who was supposed to be earning about 2,800 euros, or about \$3,900 a month. "This is professional football. How could this happen?"

Fernández, who left Santander in January for a lower-ranked

team (and the promise of regular pay), is hardly alone in his frustration. While most soccer fans are focused on the glamour of big-money clubs like Real Madrid, Chelsea and Paris St-Germain, unpaid wages are a growing concern among professional

players. The reasons vary — corrupt executives and overspending in the pursuit of trophies are just a couple — but the problem reflects larger economic turmoil.

Eastern Europe, where the global financial crisis has hit hardest, is among the regions most



ANDER GILLENIA/A.F.P. — GETTY IMAGES

Goalkeeper Mario Fernández, second from right, and the Racing Santander team during a protest against unpaid wages.



INTERNATIONAL A4-9

An Economic Model for Africa

Rwanda, a nation once consumed by violence, has reversed its fortunes and is pursuing high-tech investors. Above, a Microsoft worker conducting a video-conference in Kigali. PAGE A4

INTERNATIONAL

A Sighting in the Plane Hunt

As the search for the missing Malaysia Airlines jet entered its third week, satellites again detected objects in the Indian Ocean that could be debris. PAGE A7

New Efforts to Find Warlord

President Obama has ordered aircraft and more military forces to Uganda to search for Joseph Kony. PAGE A7

NEW YORK A13-17

Upgrades, but Not More Praise

The L subway line from Manhattan to Brooklyn has received upgrades, but its riders qualify their approval. PAGE A13

BUSINESS DAY B1-8

G.M. Reaches Out to Owners

After a huge recall, General Motors is trying to engage affected owners on social networks like Twitter and Facebook to address their concerns. PAGE B1

Web Fiction, via an App

With Wattpad, a storytelling app, the once-solitary writing process is becoming intimate and interactive. PAGE B1

SPORTSMONDAY D1-8

N.C.A.A. as Travel Agent

The N.C.A.A. tournament requires ferrying teams without knowing in advance who needs to go where. PAGE D1

SPORTSMONDAY

Early Ends for Top Teams

Kentucky rallied to hand Wichita State its first loss of the season, and Stanford limited the star freshman Andrew Wiggins to 4 points in toppling second-seeded Kansas. PAGE D1



ARTS C1-6

Back to Barricades of Broadway

The musical "Les Misérables" returns to Broadway, capitalizing on the popularity of the recent film version. PAGE C1

Auctions Fight Artist Royalties

Auction houses oppose a bill that would give artists a cut of the profits when their work is resold at auction. PAGE C1

EDITORIAL, OP-ED A18-19

Paul Krugman

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