

Good Morning, here are today's top stories and the weather forecast for Wednesday
September 8, 2010

Albuquerque Weather: High 85 (slim chance for rain)

Rio Rancho Weather: high 85

Espanola Weather: high 81

Santa Fe weather: high 77

Belen/Los Lunas weather high 86

and now the news:

Several events are planned around Albuquerque to commemorate those who lost their lives in the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

The city's featured event will actually take place Friday — Sept. 10.

The 45-minute ceremony begins at noon on Civic Plaza. Albuquerque Fire Department Chief James Breen, who commanded a New Mexico contingent at the Pentagon after the terrorist attacks, will deliver the keynote address.

City public safety spokesman T.J. Wilham, who organized the event, said the decision to hold the ceremony Friday was twofold.

"It gives everyone — not just city employees, but everyone — who works Downtown a chance to come," Wilham said. "So we think we'll get a better turnout. And the city has several other events scheduled for Saturday that we didn't want to conflict with."

The city has three events scheduled Saturday:

- AFD's annual 9/11 Memorial and Tribute will be at 8:30 a.m. on the drill field at the Fire Academy on Nine Mile Hill.

- APD's second annual Public Safety Appreciation Day will run from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the APD Academy at 5412 Second NW.

- At 9:08 a.m., a group of firefighters will climb 110 stories in full gear at the Bank of America Building Downtown. The time and height are meant to mirror the firefighter dispatch from nine years ago.

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>>NYC Mayor Bloomberg Supports Pastor's Right To Burn Koran

(New York, NY) -- A Florida pastor refuses to back down from his plans to burn copies of the Koran, and he's now getting support from the mayor of New York City. Mayor Michael Bloomberg says he agrees that pastor Terry Jones at the Dove World Outreach Center in Gainesville has every right to do what he's planning, but personally finds the demonstration distasteful. The protest is slated to take place Saturday on the ninth anniversary of 9-11.

>>Detroit Firefighters Deal With Numerous Fires

(Detroit, MI) -- Detroit fire officials do not suspect arson in connection with numerous fires throughout the city Tuesday evening. At least 85 fires were reported over a four-hour period and many were started by downed powerlines and fanned by wind gusts of up to 50 miles per hour. Meanwhile, at least 92 structures have been destroyed in what officials in Colorado are calling the largest and most destructive fires in Boulder County history. The Fourmile Fire has more than doubled in size to over seven-thousand acres since it started Monday.

>>Search Turns Up No Bomb On Thai Airways Plane

(Los Angeles, CA) -- A search of a Thai Airways plane that landed at Los Angeles International Airport last night turned up no evidence of a bomb. Before Flight 794 from Bangkok landed, a written threat was found in a bathroom of the aircraft. The FBI is shifting its focus of the probe to determine who is responsible for making the threat. It was not immediately known if passengers were aware of the bomb threat while the plane was in the air.

>>Obama To Talk About Economy In Midwest

(Washington, DC) -- President Obama heads to Ohio today to talk about the economy. Obama is expected to unveil a sweeping new proposal for business tax cuts. White House spokesman Robert Gibbs said it's part of a continuing effort by the President to promote longterm economic recovery. During a Labor Day speech in Wisconsin, President Obama proposed a 50-billion-dollar jobs plan to rebuild and modernize U.S. highways, rails and runways.

>>BP Probe Of Oil Spill To Be Released

(Houston, TX) -- An internal investigation into the Gulf of Mexico oil spill by oil giant BP will blame the company as well as others for the tragedy. Eleven men died when the Deepwater Horizon oil rig exploded in flames April 20th, leading to the world's worst oil spill of more than five-million barrels. "The Wall Street Journal" reports results of the investigation will be released today. The "Journal" says that engineers aboard the rig missed important signs that the well was dangerously unstable. In addition to BP, blame is expected to be assigned to oil drilling firm Transocean and oil services company Halliburton.

>>NASA Says Two Asteroids To Pass Near Earth Wednesday

(Pasadena, CA) -- NASA says two asteroids will pass within the moon's distance of Earth today. NASA officials were quick to add neither asteroid will hit the planet. The first one, 2010 RX30 is estimated to be 32 to 65 feet in size and was expected to pass within 154-thousand miles of Earth about an hour ago. The second, 2010 RF12 is estimated at 20 to 46 feet in size and will

pass within 49-thousand-088 miles from Earth at 5:12 p.m. Eastern. NASA says the Catalina Sky Survey near Tucson, Arizona discovered both objects Sunday morning.

>>Reality Star Snooki In Court Today

(Seaside Heights, NJ) -- "Jersey Shore" star Snooki is scheduled to be in court today. The 22-year-old, whose real name is Nicole Polizzi, was taken into custody in Seaside Heights, New Jersey in late July on a disorderly conduct charge. After she was arrested, the MTV star was quoted as saying she was "too pretty to be in jail." That comment resonated with Arizona Senator John McCain, who told radio listeners in Phoenix that he sided with Snooki, saying, quote, "I kind of think she might be too good looking to go to jail." Snooki faces no time behind bars, but she could be fined up to one-thousand dollars in the case.

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>>Two Whistleblowers Fired By Secretary Of State's Office

(Albuquerque, NM) -- New Mexico's secretary of state has terminated the two employees who told federal investigators about alleged misconduct in the office. Public information officer James Flores and office administrator Manuel Vildasol were informed in a letter dated September 3rd they are no longer employed in Secretary Of State Mary Herrera's office. The lawyer for Flores and Vildasol said he intends to file on lawsuit on their behalf alleging Herrera terminated them in violation of the Whistleblower Protection Act. Both Flores and Vildasol told the Federal Bureau of Investigation last month that Herrera had allegedly instructed employees to campaign for her on state time. They also revealed alleged breaches of state code governing contracts for outside work.

>>County: Sheriff Violated Policy Prohibiting Political Activity

(Albuquerque, NM) -- The Sandoval County Sheriff may have violated rules for allegedly creating and passing around a petition on department letterhead during work hours. The county has accused John Paul Trujillo of allegedly creating the petition in support of Undersheriff Tim Lucero in his upcoming bid for sheriff. City policy prohibits employees from engaging in political activity during work hours. According to a memo, Trujillo asked sheriff's office employees on September 1st to sign the petition. Lucero is a Democrat running for County Sheriff against Republican Doug Wood.

>>Two Police Officers Investigated For Fighting At Wine Festival

(Albuquerque, NM) -- State police are investigating the circumstances surrounding a fight between two officers at the Bernalillo Wine Festival. An officer from Bernalillo City allegedly used force when he tried to remove veteran Rio Rancho police officer John Francis from the festival on Sunday after the two had just tried to stop a fight between a man and a woman. Francis says he was assigned to patrol the festival and the other unnamed officer had just recently arrived after Francis called for backup. The officer allegedly put Francis in an arm bar before State Police officers broke up the altercation.

>>Body Of Man Discovered In Albuquerque Park

(Albuquerque, NM) -- An anonymous tip led authorities to a body in northeast Albuquerque yesterday. Police officials said they found the body of a man in the 42-hundred block of Tulane Drive who they say died within the previous 24 hours. Officials say the investigation is now focused on the west side of Leucking North Park. That area receives more than normal amounts of foot traffic.

>>New Mexico Vote Now Left To The Dogs

(Albuquerque, NM) -- The voting process in New Mexico is literally going to the dogs. Albuquerque resident Don Pizzolato got his wacky wish recently when he received a letter in the mail allowing his 11-year-old Labrador-Golden Retriever Mix named "Tuckup" to vote in the November elections. Now he wishes he didn't have such a vivid imagination. Several years ago Pizzolato submitted a false voter registration card with a faked Social Security number using Tuckup's name. That prank landed Pizzolato on probation for nine months and authorities eventually dropped the case. But just last week, a second voter card was sent to Pizzolato that again gives his pup the okay to vote.

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Today is your last chance to buy tickets for the 87th annual burning of Zozobra for \$10.

On Thursday — the day of the burning — the only tickets available will be \$15 at the gate into Fort Marcy Park.

This is the second year that the Lensic Box Office has handled tickets for Zozobra. Before 2009, they were sold at banks and other local businesses.

The change was made so that there would be a better estimate of the crowd. Fort Marcy Park is not supposed to hold more than 25,000 people. No estimate of the number of tickets sold so far this year was available Tuesday.

You can also buy \$10 tickets today over the phone at 988-1233 or online via ticketssantafe.org.

Details on road closures and handicapped parking for the annual event are available online via zozobra.com.

The New Mexico Rail Runner has moved its final train leaving Santa Fe on Thursday night from 9:30 p.m. to 11 p.m. to accommodate people staying late for Zozobra.

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The Santa Fe Police Department is still looking for Chris Garcia, a 33-year-old man indicted along with three others on first-degree murder charges stemming from the 1998 shooting death of Mitchell Hanrahan in his South Meadows Road apartment.

A state grand jury on Thursday indicted Garcia, who police believe may be in the Rio Rancho area, with one count of first-degree murder, one count of tampering with evidence and one count of conspiracy to commit murder.

Police already have in custody three other men charged with the same three offenses. Frankie King and Marcos Montoya, both 31, were already in a Santa Rosa prison on unrelated charges when last week's indictments were returned, and Andrew Roessler, 32, was arrested late Friday night without incident.

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ALBUQUERQUE — New Mexicans heading to the State Fair can check out the latest technology in energy-saving outdoor lights.

The Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department says an exhibit of different types of outdoor light fixtures with light-emitting diodes, or LEDs, have been installed on four light poles near the food court at the fairgrounds. The lights use a fourth of the energy of a standard outdoor fixture and last four to 10 times longer.

One of the LED fixtures will be selected to replace the 90 light pole fixtures at the south parking lot of the fairgrounds. The change is expected to save up to \$9,000 in yearly electricity costs.

About \$71,000 in federal stimulus money will pay for the 90 light fixtures.

The fair opens this Friday Sept. 10.

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ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. -- Former state Republican Party chairman Allen Weh has formed a political committee to promote issues such as a strong national defense, limited government and free enterprise. Weh established the committee, called For Country, with the Internal Revenue Service. It's known as a "527" organization because of the federal tax code section that provides for its tax-exempt status. The committee can accept donations in unlimited amounts from individuals and corporations, and can give contributions to state and local candidates. However, a 527 group can't directly contribute to federal candidates. Weh ran unsuccessfully for the GOP nomination for governor this year.

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DAVENPORT, Iowa -- Despite two terms as governor of New Mexico and recent visits to 26 states, most Americans have never heard of Gary Johnson.

The former Republican governor is mulling a run for president, and his libertarian views and small government platform fit the disenchantment many voters feel toward Washington. Among his supporters is Texas Republican Rep. Ron Paul, who drew a committed following in his

2008 campaign for president and was quoted in the conservative online website The Daily Caller as saying if he didn't run again in 2012, the best candidate would be Johnson.

Johnson says he knows most people have never heard of him, but he's hoping to change that.

"There are two courses of action. One would be to do nothing and the other would be to burn some shoe leather and see what happens," Johnson said during a stop in Davenport, Iowa. "I'm burning some shoe leather."

Johnson, who served as governor from 1994 to 2002, supports slashing government spending, including big cuts to Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security. He also calls for simplifying and reducing taxes.

Those stands might please many Republicans, but some would likely bristle at his opposition to the war in Iraq or his support for cutting defense spending, legalizing marijuana, expanding legal

Johnson certainly sounds like a candidate, and he's made two extended visits to Iowa and four trips to New Hampshire.

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(Albuquerque) Drug Task Force members wore special suits to enter a suspected meth lab at California and Zuni in Southeast Albuquerque on Tuesday. Those suits included protective boots and breathing equipment; Task Force members don't take chances when they work with meth. The same can't be said for a 3-year-old girl found living with her father in the home where the meth was discovered. Authorities say the little girl tested positive for the drug. CYFD officials say she received medical care but that it's hard to know what the long term health consequences of the exposure might be. The girl is now in a foster home. Bernalillo County sheriff's officials say her father, Michael Lollis, is currently facing a probation violation because he didn't show up to probation and parole for over two months. Lollis will now additionally be facing drug charges.

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>>U.S. Religious Leaders Condemn "Anti-Muslim Frenzy"

(Washington, DC) -- American Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders are denouncing what they called the "anti-Muslim frenzy" gripping the U.S. They held a news conference at the National Press Club at which they blasted a planned burning of the Koran on Saturday, as well as last month's protests against the so-called Ground Zero mosque. General David Petraeus warns it could cause a backlash against American troops in Afghanistan.

>>New York Governor Wants No Mosque Talk During 9-11 Remembrance

(New York, NY) -- New York Governor David Paterson wants New Yorkers to stop talking about the mosque near Ground Zero, at least for the week. The governor wants to put a temporary

moratorium on the controversial topic as the Jewish and Muslim holidays take place and as the anniversary of the September 11th attacks nears. The Muslim holiday of Ramadan wraps up at the end of the week, while the Jewish new year of Rosh Hashanah kicks off Thursday. Paterson says the focus should not be on the proposed mosque this week, but on those who lost family during the September 11th attacks.

>>Federal Court Upholds Rights Of College Religious Group

(Madison, WI) -- A ruling that the University of Wisconsin-Madison discriminated against a religious student group was upheld by a higher court. CitizenLink says the university refused to fund the student-led Badger Catholic organization because events included prayer and worship. Alliance Defense Fund represented Badger Catholic and argued the university was guilty of viewpoint discrimination.

>>Baptist University Launches National Prayer Initiative

(Mobile, AL) -- A Baptist school in Alabama is calling on Christians to pray for the U.S.A. Baptist Press says the University of Mobile is urging Christians to pray for and work toward a national spiritual and cultural transformation during the month leading up to mid-term elections. The initiative is called "twelve-23 Prayer Movement for America." Joe Savage is director of the university's Center for Leadership and says they are asking Christians to pray for our nation each day at 12:23 a.m. or p.m. from October 1st through November 2nd. For more information log on to www.twelve23.org.

>>Virginia Teen Turns Sweet 16 Party Into Help For Needy Children

(Chesapeake, VA) -- A Virginia teen decided to fully fund the construction of a church-orphanage in Kenya after decided to her forgo a traditional "sweet 16" birthday party. Megan MacDonald requested party guests donate to the 30-thousand-dollar construction project overseen by International Cooperating Ministries. MacDonald was able to visit the facility and was deeply moved during a visit there with her parents. Some of MacDonald's friends were inspired by her decision and began volunteering.

>>Pope Sends Rosaries To Trapped Miners In Chile

(Chile) -- Cardinal Francisco Errázuriz recently celebrated Mass near the mine in Chile where 33 men have been trapped for almost a month. Zenit says the archbishop also brought a special gift for each of the miners, a rosary blessed and sent them by the Pope. The Catholic church leader spoke with the miners telling them Benedict the 16th remembered during a recent public address and promised continued prayers for a speedy rescue. During a press conference the Cardinal said, quote, "It is impressive how this event has united all of us as a family; there is no one in Chile who is not concerned day after day about what is happening to them."

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That's the news, I'm Frank Haley, cjf for God's Glory alone..