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STATE BRIEFS

Murdered prison nurse not sexually assaulted

RIVERTON -- A prison nurse murdered at the Wyoming Honor Farm in April was not sexually assaulted, according to police.

"No evidence of sexual assault came out through the autopsy," police Chief John Snell said.

Tammy Sue Watts, 39, of Hudson, died from strangulation and a blow to the head, according to an autopsy. Her body was found by a co-worker in her medical office.

An inmate is suspected but has not been named or arrested. He remains in custody at the Wyoming State Penitentiary in Rawlins.

Officials find cause of Bridger Teton forest fire

JACKSON -- A fire that charred 3,595 acres in the Bridger Teton National Forest last July was sparked by hot charcoal, according to federal investigators.

Ash from the charcoal spilled onto a rotten log in the cook area of a campsite used by Sands Wildwater River Trips, starting the blaze that cost \$4.2 million to extinguish over 10 days, a report stated.

The blaze also forced the closure of Snake River Canyon for three days.

According to the report, burn patterns indicated the fire originated next to the company's cook area and was fanned by high winds.

Hospital board reverses surgery center decision

SHERIDAN -- Sheridan Memorial Hospital board members have voted to reverse their decision to build the hospital's own outpatient surgery center.

Hospital board member Ernie Schmidt said the board took the action this week to send investors in a separate, private outpatient surgery center a message that the hospital board wants to work on a cooperative surgery center venture.

A group of private doctors is planning to start building an outpatient surgery center soon, saying the community needs the facility.

19-year-old faces murder charge

By GREG TUTTLE
Laramie Times

A Laramie man found dead last week in a smoldering house had his throat slashed and his face burned with a torch, prosecutors said in court documents filed Tuesday.

The grisly details of Michael Timothy Boerner's death emerged at the first court appearance of his accused killer, Ricci Lee Hofferber. The 19-year-old Laramie man was charged in Justice Court with deliberate homicide for the slaying in a rented house at 40 Jackson St. Hofferber will be arraigned Friday in District Court.

Hofferber, 19, was ordered held in the county jail on \$250,000 bond after prosecutors said he was trying to flee Laramie before his arrest last Friday,

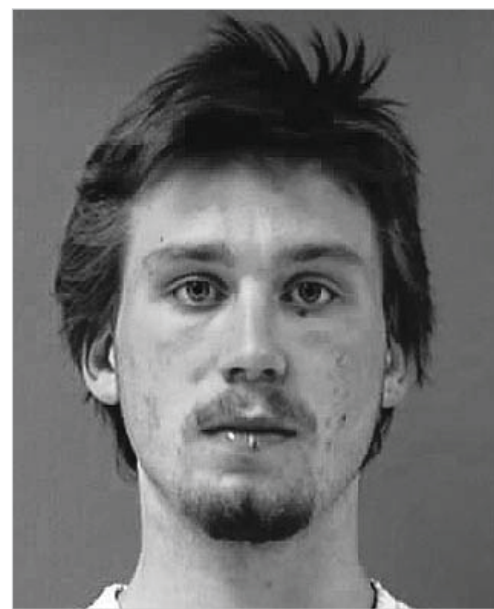
two days after the killing.

Deputy County Attorney Scott Twito said prosecutors have not decided whether to seek the death penalty.

A motive for the murder remained unclear Tuesday. The affidavit charging Hofferber does not explain why Boerner was killed. Twito, who is the lead prosecutor on the case, said it is "too early to pin down a motive."

Hofferber appeared calm through the brief appearance before Judge Pedro Hernandez. Hofferber appeared by video from the county jail and told Hernandez he could not afford to hire his own attorney.

Hofferber was arrested at 8:20 p.m. Friday at an apartment on Avenue C. According to court records, Hofferber told several people how Boerner was killed, but he declined to give a



Ricci Lee Hofferber

statement to police and asked for an attorney.

Firefighters responding to a 911 call found Boerner's body in the living

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Photo by Bob Ekey

UNSEASONABLE WEATHER -- WYOMING Department of Transportation work crews throw out a rooster tail to clean up Interstate 80 between Laramie and Cheyenne after a freak May snowstorm. All highways remained open, although WYDOT did not recommend unnecessary travel on Wyoming 130 between Laramie and Centennial. Snowpack around the state has been below normal this year.

Approval for wolf plan likely

By PAUL SMITH
Laramie Times

Wyoming's recently passed statute governing the management of the gray wolf is the state's wolf plan and should be accepted as such by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Gov. Dave Freudenthal said this week.

The statute adopted by the Wyoming Legislature during the recent session offers thorough and specific



"I am very interested in seeing the delisting process move forward."

- Gov. Dave Freudenthal

guidance that responds to each of the conditions set forth by Fish and Wildlife at a meeting in December 2006, Freudenthal said in a letter to regional director Mitch King.

"I am very interested in seeing the delisting process

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Wyo dorms in need of fire sprinklers

By MEAD GRUVER
Laramie Times

Less than 26 percent of the dormitory space in Wyoming's community colleges and at the University of Wyoming is protected against fire by sprinkler systems -- an issue that has gained new urgency since a fire gutted a dorm at Northwest College in Powell.

Putting sprinklers in the rest of state dormitories -- as well as equipment like pumps to keep the systems pressurized -- would cost up to \$7 million, State Fire Marshal Jim Narva said Friday.

Narva said his office and the Wyoming Community College Commission have been studying the subject.

The commission hopes to work with engineers over the next few months to develop a more solid estimate of how much sprinklers would cost before asking Gov. Dave Freudenthal to put funding for dorm fire sprinklers in his proposed state budget.

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