

Seattle's murder rate is getting dangerously high

SEATTLE (AP) — The death of a store clerk early Wednesday puts Seattle on track for its most murderous year.

The number of homicides this year is higher than Seattle's 1993 total of 67 murders and only one short of the 69 murders in 1969, the city's deadliest year.

At a rate of about six killings a month, Seattle could see 73 murders by year's end — if all the homicides are classified as murders.

Seattle police reported 73 homicides in 1993 but classified only 67 of them as murders. One homicide, for example, involved a Washington State Patrol trooper shooting a man.

The 68th homicide of this year occurred about 3:45 a.m. Wednesday with the shooting death of a clerk at a 7-Eleven store along the city's Rainier Avenue. The victim was identified as Samone Villarosa, 66, of Seattle.

Police said Villarosa had struggled with a gunman who demanded money. The gunman fled in a car with two young women.

Seattle police arrested a 21-year-old man Wednesday afternoon in connection with the shooting, said spokeswoman Vinette Tichi.

While Seattle might be breaking a record for murder victims, the city's homicide rate is not especially notable compared with other cities. Seattle has 527,700 residents.

Taxpayers may get refund in 1996

SALEM (AP) — The state's economic boom could mean refunds of more than \$140 million to Oregon income taxpayers in 1996, the state economist said today.

State law requires that when income tax collections exceed estimates by 2 percent or more, all the excess revenue in the two-year budget period be given back to taxpayers.

That's what is expected to happen with taxes paid next year, economist Paul Warner said. Although the decision won't be made until next July, Warner estimated the rebates would amount to about 5 percent of taxes paid.

However, the Legislature can amend the law as it did in 1989, and spend the extra money.

Warner, releasing a new quarterly economic forecast, said the current projection is slightly over the 2 percent threshold to trigger the rebates, which would be credits on income tax returns filed in 1996.

Whether rebates are due won't be known until 1994 tax returns are in next summer. Forecasters say it's all but certain businesses will get a rebate, about \$130 million under current estimates, of corporate income taxes.

Warner said that amount would be almost half of corporate taxes for the 1993-95 fiscal period.

"The state economy is doing extremely well at

this point," Warner said. "We're seeing a good deal more strength than expected."

Warner warned that a slowdown is inevitable, however, in large part because of federal actions raising interest rates.

Forecasters now predict the lottery will bring in \$715 million in net revenue to the state in the 1995-97 budget period. That's up by \$99 million from the last forecast, in September, and compares with \$462 million in lottery revenue in the current budget period.

Virtually all the growth is in video poker.

Economist David Griffiths cautioned that development of Indian-operated gaming centers around the state could cut into the Lottery's growth.

Warner estimates that the general fund budget for 1995-97, with which the 1995 Legislature will deal, will total about \$7.3 billion, up by \$500 million from the current budget.

The general fund is separate from lottery revenue.

Warner said virtually all the economic news for Oregon continues to be good. Besides the lowest unemployment rate in five years, personal income growth this year is the highest the highest since 1978.

Construction jobs are 22 percent ahead of a year ago, and employment in the electronics industry has increased by 13 percent over the past year.

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School district in Washington victim of three bombings

OMAK, Wash. (AP) — Police Wednesday were investigating the explosions of three bombs that damaged three cars and blasted pieces of metal 135 feet.

No one was hurt in the explosions, which occurred within a four-hour span on Tuesday.

Two of the blasts involved Omak School District employees or property, and police were investigating whether the district or its employees were targeted.

"I don't know if there's some connection with the school district or if it's coincidental," Police Chief Ron Bailey said.

The first bomb exploded in a mailbox in a residential neighborhood and did little damage, Bailey said.

About two hours later, a bomb planted beneath a driver's education car at the Omak High School parking lot exploded while a basketball game was being played in the school.

Finally, a bomb planted in a car parked in the driveway of the home of two school district teachers exploded.

The third bomb carried the most force of the three and caused the greatest damage, Assistant Chief Mikael Cramer said. Material from the blast hit another car parked nearby and was found in the street about 135 feet away, he said.

Both bombed vehicles were impounded and were being examined by police, Bailey said. The cars' gas tanks were punctured by the blasts, and both vehicles sustained additional damage.

"They were small bombs, but they could have been deadly," he said.

Police had no suspects and were unsure if more than one person may have been involved, he said.

An agent from the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms was en route to Omak to assist in the investigation, he said.

School district officials notified teachers to be alert, Superintendent Barry McCombs said.