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NEWS DIGEST

your quick guide to news from around the world

Flood waters drop, damages assessed

1 As flood victims removed soggy carpeting and muddy belongings from their homes Wednesday, county officials began taking stock of the damage from a winter storm that dumped record rainfall on Western Oregon.

Most rivers were dropping, with only a handful expected to crest above flood stage Tuesday.

The state declared an emergency in Lane, Coos and Douglas counties, and Clackamas County declared itself to be in emergency status.

In the Mohawk Valley near Eugene, 50 to 70 people evacuated their homes Tuesday and were expected to remain out until the Mohawk River fell below flood stage.

Cause of small plane crash still unknown

2 QUINCY, Ill. — Investigators removed 14 bodies and the cockpit recorder Wednesday from the wreckage of a fiery runway crash that has raised safety questions about hundreds of U.S. airports with no control tower to guide pilots.

The charred bodies were left on the runway of Baldwin Municipal Airport overnight and removed after investigators examined the wreckage of Tuesday's collision between a United Express commuter plane and a small private plane.

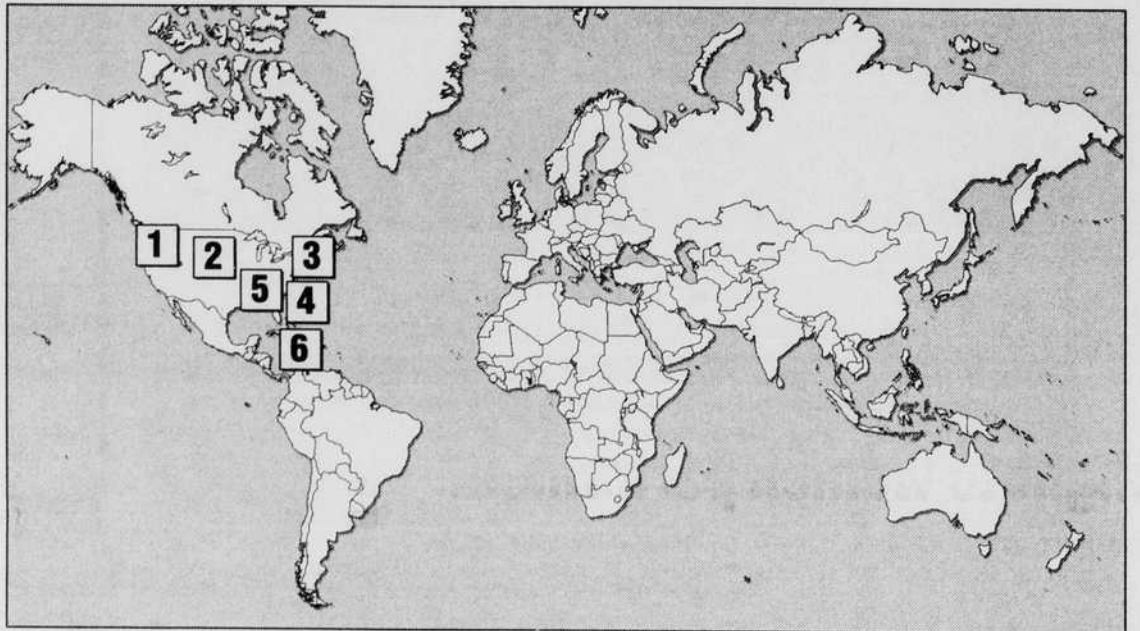
Clues to what caused the accident could come from the cockpit voice recorder taken from the commuter plane. Unlike a jetliner, it had no flight data recorder. The private plane had neither.

EEOC wants to take part in Texaco suit

3 WHITE PLAINS, N.Y. — The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission asked court permission Wednesday to take part in the already-announced \$176 million settlement of the Texaco race discrimination lawsuit.

EEOC Chairman Gilbert Casellas said his agency wants to make sure the settlement produces the changes needed for "real long-term relief at Texaco."

The 1994 lawsuit claimed a "good old boy" network at Texaco insured that whites received the best promotions and biggest raises. Texaco decided to settle after plaintiffs obtained a tape recording of company executives allegedly belittling black workers and plotting to destroy documents.



Gingrich pledges to work with Clinton

4 WASHINGTON — Chosen by Republicans for a second term as House speaker, Newt Gingrich said Wednesday the GOP Congress has an "absolute moral obligation" to work with President Clinton and leave the campaign wars behind.

In a speech following his selection, Gingrich looked ahead to an "Implementation Congress" on issues such as balancing the budget, cutting taxes, attacking drugs and improving the health care system.

President Clinton, too, has indicated a willingness to work with Republicans. "We're in this boat together, and we have to paddle it together," he said shortly after the voters had returned both him and the GOP Congress to power.

U.S. Catholic official passes away in peace

5 CHICAGO — Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, the son of Italian immigrants who rose to become the nation's senior Catholic Church official, was mourned on Wednesday as a man who used his own graceful death as his last sermon.

His funeral Mass, before 1,300 friends, religious leaders and politicians, followed two days of mourning by tens of thousands of people who filed past the casket at Holy Name Cathedral.

"The homily of this Mass has been given over the months of his illness," Monsignor Ken Velo told mourners. "Didn't he teach us? Didn't he show us the way?"

Bernardin died last week after a 17-month bout with pancreatic cancer.

Haitian refugees may have drowned

6 PETIT-GOAVE, Haiti — At least 290 people who set out in a leaky sailboat with hopes of a better life in Florida are missing and feared drowned.

"I can't believe God is so hard-hearted that he would let my whole family perish," Natasha Chery, 35, said Wednesday in Petit-Goave.

Chery has not heard from dozens of relatives since they sailed from Trou Chou-Chou on Nov. 3 aboard "L'Ange Gabriel," a 63-foot motorized wooden sailboat.

With 290 passengers aboard, the boat stopped in Port-au-Prince Bay, and may have taken on more passengers before leaving for Miami two days later.

— The Associated Press

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