

Panic buying runs gas stations dry in Southeast after pipeline computer hack

By Cathy Bussewitz,
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Associated Press

CHAMBLEE, Ga. — More than 1,000 gas stations in the Southeast reported running out of fuel, primarily because of what analysts say is unwarranted panic-buying among drivers, as the shut-down of a major pipeline by a gang of hackers entered its fifth day Tuesday, May 11.

Government officials acted swiftly to waive safety and environmental rules to speed the delivery of fuel by truck, ship or rail to motorists and airports, even as they sought to assure the public that there was no cause for alarm.

The Colonial Pipeline, the biggest fuel pipeline in the U.S., delivering about 45% of what is consumed on the East Coast, was hit on Friday with a cyberattack by hackers who lock up computer systems and demand a ransom to release them. The attack raised concerns, once again, about the vulnerability of the nation's critical infrastructure.

A large part of the pipeline resumed operations manually late Monday, and Colonial anticipates restarting most of its operations by the end of the week, U.S. Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm said.

Motorists may still feel a crunch because it takes a few days to ramp up operations, but she said there is no reason to hoard gasoline.

"We know that we have gasoline; we just have to get it to the right places," she said.

S&P's Oil Price Information Service put the number of gas stations encountering shortages at more than 1,000.

"A lot of that is because they're selling three or four times as much gasoline that they normally sell in a given day, because people do panic,"



William Thornton/TNS

Bags cover gas pumps in Southside, Ala., as a station has been affected by shortages brought on by the Colonial Pipeline cyberattack, Tuesday, May 11.

said Tom Kloza, an analyst with S&P. "It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy."

The pipeline runs from the Texas Gulf Coast to the New York metropolitan area. The states most dependent on the pipeline include Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee and the Carolinas, Kloza said.

In Virginia, 7.7% of the state's nearly 3,900 gas stations reported running out of fuel Tuesday, according to Gasbuddy.com, which tracks supply. In North Carolina, 8.5% of almost 5,400 stations were out, the company said.

There were scattered reports of higher gasoline prices, but prices were rising even before the pipeline incident heading into the busy summer driving season. Nevertheless, Granholm warned gas station owners, "We will have no tolerance for price gouging."

To ease brief shortages, the White House is considering

temporarily waiving a law that says ships delivering products between U.S. ports must be built and manned by Americans.

The Transportation Department also is relaxing some workforce requirements and enlisting railroads to deliver fuel inland. And the Environmental Protection Agency lifted some fuel quality requirements on an emergency basis.

"We're looking at every option we have across the federal government and all of the federal agencies," Granholm said.

In Georgia, Gov. Brian Kemp suspended state taxes on motor fuels through Saturday. Georgia collects a gasoline tax of 28.7 cents per gallon and a diesel tax of 32.2 cents per gallon.

"It will probably help level the price at the pump off for a little while," Kemp said.

However, he urged people

not to hoard gasoline, saying he expects the situation to be resolved soon.

"You don't need to go out and fill up every 5-gallon can you've got," the governor said.

Scattered gas stations in metro Atlanta were out of fuel Monday and Tuesday. In Georgia, nearly 6% of about 6,400 stations had run out of fuel, Gasbuddy.com said.

In Florida, drivers in some areas faced long lines, and 3% of gas stations had run out.

Dave Gussak drove from one station to the next in Tallahassee, Florida, in search of gas, seeing a line nearly a mile long at the pumps outside a Costco. He eventually passed a station with gas on the way to Florida State University where he works.

"This is insane," he said.

Irena Yanava's tank was about half full, but she wasn't about to take chances as she sat in her car at the same Tallahassee gas station.

Idaho law seeks to thwart Biden's orders on guns

By Keith Ridler
Associated Press

BOISE — Idaho Gov. Brad Little has signed legislation aimed at thwarting a half-dozen executive actions by President Joe Biden to combat gun violence.

The new law came less than a week after a shooting at an eastern Idaho middle school injured two students and a custodian.

The Republican governor signed the measure Monday, May 10. It passed the Idaho House and Senate with veto-

proof majorities and carried an emergency notice, meaning it went into effect with Little's signature.

The new law is retroactive to Jan. 20, the day Biden was sworn in as president. It prevents all Idaho government entities from enforcing executive orders, federal laws, treaties, agency orders and rules of the U.S. government involving firearms, firearm components and accessories, or ammunition that conflict with the Idaho Constitution.

The signing followed the

Thursday, May 6 shooting in Rigby, where police have said a sixth-grade girl pulled a handgun from her backpack and fired multiple rounds inside and outside Rigby Middle School, about 95 miles southwest of Yellowstone National Park.

All three victims were shot in the extremities and none had life-threatening injuries, authorities have said. The girl was disarmed by a teacher.

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Prosecutor to seek death penalty in March shootings at Atlanta spas

By Kate Brumback
Associated Press

ATLANTA — A man accused of killing eight people, six of them women of Asian descent, in shootings at three Atlanta-area massage businesses was indicted Tuesday on murder charges by two separate grand juries, and one prosecutor filed notice that she'll also seek hate crime charges and the death penalty.

A Fulton County grand jury indicted Robert Aaron Long, 22, in the March 16 slayings of Suncha Kim, 69; Soon Chung Park, 74; Hyun Jung Grant, 51; and Yong Ae Yue, 63. A separate grand jury in Cherokee County indicted Long for a separate shooting there that resulted in the killings of Xiaojie "Emily" Tan, 49; Daoyou Feng, 44; Delaina Yaun, 33; and Paul Michels, 54.

Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis also filed notice that she intends to seek hate crime charges and the death penalty against Long, who is white. The hate crime charges are based on the actual or perceived race, national origin, sex and gender of the four women killed, the notice says.

There was no immediate filing in online court records in Cherokee County to indicate whether District Attorney Shannon Wallace intends to seek hate crimes charges or the death penalty.

Georgia's new hate crimes law does not

provide for a stand-alone hate crime. After a person is convicted of an underlying crime, a jury must determine whether it's a hate crime, which carries an additional penalty.

The Fulton County indictment charges Long with four counts of murder, four counts of felony murder, five counts of assault with a deadly weapon, four counts of possession of a firearm during the commission of a felony and one count of domestic terrorism, according to online records.

The domestic terrorism charge says Long committed a series of illegal acts "which were interrelated by distinguishing characteristics, with the intent to cause serious bodily harm and to kill individuals and groups of individuals, and with the intent to intimidate the civilian population of this state and of its political subdivisions."

Four of the aggravated assault charges have to do with the shootings of the four victims who died. For the fifth, the indictment says Long pointed a gun at another woman, causing her "reasonable apprehension of immediately receiving a violent injury." Willis' notice of intent to seek hate crimes charges says she was targeted based on her actual or perceived sex and gender.

The charges in the Cherokee County indictment are related to the shooting at a spa near suburban Woodstock in which four were killed and one person was wounded.

OREGON BRIEFING

Damage from February ice storm in Salem could reach \$4.6 million

SALEM (AP) — Officials in Salem say damage from a February ice storm will cost about \$4.6 million to repair.

The Statesman Journal reports the money will be spend repairing infrastructure and clearing downed trees.

As of April 21, a total of \$1.3 million has been spent on the city's response and recovery efforts.

According to an informational report submitted to Salem City Council, the total estimated cost of the city's recovery efforts is expected to be \$4.6 million.

While more funds are needed, a significant portion of the storm recovery costs is expected to be reimbursed through insurance or federal funds, according to city officials.

University of Oregon, Western Oregon University to require COVID-19 vaccine

EUGENE (AP) — The University of Oregon and Western Oregon University say students this fall will be required to get COVID-19 vaccines, joining other colleges in the Northwest that have made the same announcement.

"The requirement will help us to reach the highest level of protection possible, reduce infections and protect the health and safety of our university community and the communities we serve. Individuals will be able to request exemptions for medical and non-medical reasons," University of Oregon said in a tweet Monday, May 10.

The University of Oregon, located in Eugene, is the state's flagship public university. It has about 18,000 undergraduate students.

Meanwhile, WOU officials announced during a virtual session on Monday, May 10 that vaccinations will be required for students and employees who either study or work in person at the university's Monmouth or Salem campuses for the fall term.

Washington State University, the University of Washington and Oregon State University are among the schools that will also require COVID-19 vaccinations this fall.

Portland's mass vaccination site likely to close June 19 as demand declines

PORTLAND (AP) — Portland's mass vaccination site is expected to close on June 19 after giving hundreds of thousands of COVID-19 inoculations, organizers said Monday, May 10.

The All4Oregon site, which was set up by four of the city's major hospitals in a joint vaccination effort, has been running since Jan. 20 at the Oregon Convention Center.

The site began offering self-scheduling and walk-in appointments for the first time last week, but organizers said a drop in volume made it clear that demand for a mass vaccination site is waning as shots become more widely available elsewhere.

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