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Kids just can't avoid car seats

■ New law will save lives, CHP says

By Jimmy Biggerstaff
Hi-Desert Star

TWENTYNINE PALMS — A properly installed car seat saved a child's life during a rollover here Tuesday.

Valentin Gonzalez, 18, was driving westbound in the family's 2004 Altima about 2:25 p.m. Tuesday on Indian Trail. Mother Franchesca Bredwick was the front seat passenger and sister Isabella Bredwick, 2 1/2, was firmly strapped into a child safety seat in the middle of the back seat. Gonzalez had just gotten his driver's license at the Department of Motor Vehicles office, only one mile away.

A red vehicle suddenly veered into the Altima's path.

Gonzalez swerved onto the soft sand on the shoulder of the road, where the car flipped three times.

Bredwick had a complaint of pain in her wrist; her children were not hurt.

Not surprisingly, Bredwick

Do you fit?

Starting Jan. 1 Children under the age of 8 or under 4 feet, 9 inches tall must be secured in a car seat or booster seat. Children under age 8 must be secured in the back seat. For more information, including exceptions, visit www.chp.ca.gov/community/safeseat.html.

declared from the scene she is an advocate of child safety seats.

"I check my car seat religiously," Bredwick said. "I actually sit on it and tighten it as tight as I can get it and make sure all the little clamps are clamped. NASCAR tight, that's what I do."

California Highway Patrol Officer Eric Brewer said soon

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JIMMY BIGGERSTAFF Hi-Desert Star

Onaga Elementary School first-grader Jesse Layne straps himself into his car seat after school Tuesday. Jesse will be 7 next month and, according to a new state law, must use a car seat until he is age 8 or 4 feet 9 inches tall.

School to get new rooms

■ Say goodbye to portables

By Courtney Vaughn
Hi-Desert Star

MORONGO BASIN — Two schools may be revamped in the near future. Morongo Unified School District is accepting bids for building upgrades at Yucca Valley High School and Palm Vista Elementary School in Twentynine Palms.

Construction on the \$8 project is expected to start immediately after this school year ends.

At Yucca Valley High School, crews will replace 12 portable classroom buildings on the north side of the campus that are more than 30 years old, according to a recent Board of Education report.

In place of the portables, the school district is planning a two-story building with 12 classrooms and a lecture hall.

"Some of those portables we have down there were put there in the 1970s, that's how old they are," Ron Smith, facilities director for MUSD, said by phone Tuesday. Smith said replacing portables with physical buildings is a main goal for the district.

The improvements are expected to cost \$5.6 million and take two years to complete.

29 Palms project less expensive

At Palm Vista Elementary School, two buildings, including the school's multipurpose room, are slated for remodel.

Twelve classrooms in the west wing will get teaching walls, computer stations, standard technology, heating, ventilation and air conditioning units and roofing.

The multipurpose room needs a stage lift, new ceiling and lighting, according to the

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Protesters call fire fee double taxation

■ Homestead Valley files complaint

By Rebecca Unger
Hi-Desert Star

FLAMINGO HEIGHTS — The Homestead Valley Community Council fired off an eleventh-hour protest Tuesday against the collection of fire-protection fees.

The unincorporated communities of the Homestead Valley — Yucca Mesa, Flamingo Heights, Landers and Johnson Valley — are united in opposition to the new state fee, charged to landowners in certain rural areas.

"Homestead Valley properties in the designated State Responsibility Area are already assessed for fire prevention and protection," Jim Harvey, the community council's president, wrote in a letter to the state's Office of Administrative Law. "We believe this proposed fee is nothing more than a tax and will



Harvey

constitute double taxation."

The state Assembly passed the bill creating the new fee last year. It requires the Board of Equalization to adopt emergency regulations to establish a fire prevention fee, not to exceed \$150, to be charged on each structure on a parcel within a State Responsibility Area.

The bill also requires the Board of Equalization to collect the fire prevention fees, effective Sept. 1, 2011.

Each Jan. 1, the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection is required to provide the Board of Equalization the names and addresses of

people who are liable for the fire prevention fee, and the amount to be charged.

Harvey told the state the fire-fee boundaries applied to the Homestead Valley communities do not discern between areas of high and low fire risk as determined by Cal Fire. "We feel the boundaries are arbitrary and outdated," he wrote.

Harvey noted to the council board that Yucca Mesa and Landers are not included in the boundaries for fire charges, but Flamingo Heights, Johnson Valley and neighboring Lucerne Valley are.

The council approved the letter Monday and sent it Tuesday, just inside the public-comment period.

The six-day public comment period set by the state Board of Forestry and Fire Protection on the emergency collection included a weekend and a federal holiday, he pointed out.

"They don't have the infrastructure for collection and distribution set up yet, but it looks like they just want to get this thing in and get the money collected so they're invoking these emergency rules," Harvey told the Homestead Valley board at its public meeting Monday.

In a final salvo, the Homestead Valley letter cast doubt on the standing of the fee program.

"The rush to implement collection under such rules is questionable and projects an appearance of impropriety and uncertainty as to the legality of the bill. This misguided program should not be implemented through emergency regulations," Harvey wrote.

Howard Jarvis' California Taxpayers Association has joined several state communities and local lawmakers, including San Bernardino County Supervisor Neil Derry, in opposing the bill.

Who is affected by Gov. Brown's budget?

Cuts spread across the board in proposal

By Stacy Moore
Hi-Desert Star

MORONGO BASIN — From preschoolers headed to kindergarten to elderly people who receive state-subsidized home care, the budget proposed by Gov. Jerry Brown this month has the potential to affect every Californian. His 2012-2013 plan reduces spending on welfare, child care, health care and higher education.

Brown projects a \$9 billion deficit in his \$96 billion budget. That's if voters approve two tax measures he will place on ballots in November. His budget assumes voters will endorse two temporary tax measures, increasing the sales tax by 1/2 percent and imposing higher levies on the state's wealthiest taxpayers. If the measures fail, the budget will fall

short by more than \$4 billion.

"The stark truth is that without some new taxes, damaging cuts to schools, universities, public safety and our courts will only increase," Brown warned in a cover letter to his proposal.

Brown will release a revised budget in mid-May, followed by negotiation with lawmakers. The final plan should be enacted in the summer.

Brown did point out the outlook is improving: A year ago, the state faced an immediate \$26.6 billion shortfall. This year, it's only \$9.2 billion.



Brown

The proposal

Gov. Jerry Brown's initial budget proposes \$4.2 billion in cuts and \$4.6 billion in revenue increases. Here's a quick breakdown of spending.

Department of Education	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13 (proposed)
	\$53.9 billion	\$52.3 billion	\$56 billion

If voters turn down Brown's tax proposals in November, spending will be cut by \$4.8 billion.

Department of Aging	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13 (proposed)
	\$211 million	\$200 million	\$195 million

Includes senior nutrition programs.

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Inside today

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Quote of the day

“If someone else needs an organ and mine are useful, I'll go for that. I'll be gone anyway.”

Jim Thrawl **A7**



A3 Pets

Van and his pal Paco need new homes.

Online

www.hidesertstar.com
Just added to photo galleries: Yucca Valley High School basketball, soccer and wrestling!



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