Top Stories

- According to the Associated Press, a fire in the basement of the DuPont chemical plant in Fort Madison, Iowa caused about $30,000 to $40,000 in damage on December 3. The building was evacuated. (See item 3)
- The Associated Press reports that backpacks have been banned and eight students have been suspended from Keyser Primary-Middle School in Mineral County, West Virginia after bomb threats disrupted class four days in a row the week of November 30. Police are also investigating a bomb threat at Keyser High School. (See item 33)

Fast Jump Menu

PRODUCTION INDUSTRIES
- Energy
- Chemical
- Nuclear Reactors, Materials and Waste
- Critical Manufacturing
- Defense Industrial Base
- Dams

SUSTENANCE and HEALTH
- Agriculture and Food
- Water
- Public Health and Healthcare

SERVICE INDUSTRIES
- Banking and Finance
- Transportation
- Postal and Shipping
- Information Technology
- Communications
- Commercial Facilities

FEDERAL and STATE
- Government Facilities
- Emergency Services
- National Monuments and Icons

Energy Sector

Current Electricity Sector Threat Alert Levels: Physical: ELEVATED, Cyber: ELEVATED
Scale: LOW, GUARDED, ELEVATED, HIGH, SEVERE [Source: ISAC for the Electricity Sector (ES-ISAC) - http://www.esisac.com]

1. December 4, Occupational Health and Safety – (U.S. Virgin Islands) Refinery fined $222,500 for workers burned by boiler spray, other hazards. OSHA has cited Hovensa LLC for 56 alleged serious violations of workplace safety and health standards at its oil refinery located in Christiansted, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands. The company faces a total of $222,500 in proposed fines following two OSHA inspections,
a programmed inspection conducted as part of OSHA’s National Emphasis Program on Petroleum Refinery Process Safety Management, and an inspection opened in response to a June 4 accident in which three workers suffered serious burns after being sprayed with hot boiler feed water while they were performing maintenance. The citations issued as a result of the programmed inspection address the company’s failure to properly document process safety information, conduct proper process hazard analysis, comply with recognized and generally accepted good engineering practices, obtain contractor safety and health programs, properly train employees, conduct maintenance on critical instruments and equipment, update operating procedures and resolve incident investigation findings in a timely manner, and additional citations. The accident investigation, which was conducted by OSHA’s Puerto Rico Area Office, resulted in citations for exposing workers to the hazards of hot water and steam condensate, not developing and documenting procedures to prevent the unintended release of hot water and steam, and not training workers on the safe application, usage, and removal of energy control devices. The oil refinery employs about 2,500 workers.


2. December 3, Associated Press – (Northeast) Northeast gets driving rain, blustery winds. A storm packing blustery winds and driving rain knocked out power to thousands of homes and businesses in the Northeast on Thursday before giving way to sunny skies and record high temperatures — all in the same morning. Utility officials reported sporadic power outages from Maine to New Jersey after wind knocked down trees and power lines early Thursday. Central Maine Power, the state’s largest electric utility, reported 6,700 customers in the dark at the storm’s peak. In New Jersey, more than 10,000 homes and businesses lost electricity. Other northeastern states, including New Hampshire, also suffered power outages.


For more stories, see items 26 and 54

Chemical Industry Sector

3. December 4, Associated Press – (Iowa) Fire damage to cost more than $30,000 at Iowa chemical plant. A fire in the basement of a Fort Madison chemical plant caused thousands of dollars in damage and the building was evacuated. No one was injured in the fire at the DuPont plant on Thursday morning. Investigators say the factory suffered about $30,000 to $40,000 in damage. Employees first reported the fire in the basement and shipping area of the plant, which makes colorants and pigmented inks for digital printing systems. The Fort Madison fire chief says employees cutting metal for maintenance likely set fire to the wooden floor framing accidentally.

Source: http://www.wqad.com/news/sns-ap-ia--dupontfactoryfire,0,119783.story
4. **December 3, Associated Press** – (Pennsylvania) **No injuries in central Pa. train derailment.** Norfolk Southern railroad is cleaning up debris from a train derailment in rural central Pennsylvania. No injuries were reported. A railroad spokesman said an investigation is under way to determine why 28 cars of a 121-car eastbound freight train headed for Allentown left the tracks late Wednesday night near McVeytown in Mifflin County. He said one derailed car contained a hazardous chemical but was not damaged. The Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) says other cars carried corn syrup, wheat and plastic pellets. A PEMA report says that rail service through the area may not be restored until at least late Friday night. Source: [http://www.lehighvalleylive.com/newsflash/index.ssf/?/base/national-81/1259869224230660.xml&storylist=penn](http://www.lehighvalleylive.com/newsflash/index.ssf/?/base/national-81/1259869224230660.xml&storylist=penn)

5. **December 3, KARE 11 Twin Cities** – (Minnesota) **Second trucker dies in Rosemount ammonia leak.** A second person has died following an anhydrous ammonia leak last month in Rosemount. The man was exposed to the anhydrous ammonia leak on November 16 at CF Industries in Rosemount. That leak also killed another truck driver from Oklahoma. A plant manager at CF Industries told KARE 11 a loading arm may have disconnected, causing the incident. Source: [http://www.kare11.com/news/news_article.aspx?storyid=829825&catid=391](http://www.kare11.com/news/news_article.aspx?storyid=829825&catid=391)

6. **December 3, RFID Journal** – (International) **BASF tracks chemical-carrying railcars in real time.** Chemical company BASF is completing the installation of a wireless asset-tracking system to monitor the location and condition of its fleet of railcars containing the company’s six most hazardous chemicals. The tracking units provide BASF with visibility of approximately 1,000 of its 7,000 railcars as they travel from chemical plants to customers throughout North America. A VeriWise asset-tracking unit contains a GPS receiver, a communications satellite transceiver and a battery, as well as optional sensors, such as those used for detecting impact and motion, or for measuring temperature. The entire unit measures 2.5 inches by 11 inches by 30 inches, and is bolted to the top of a railcar. Once installed, the device transmits its ID number, its location and any other data at predetermined intervals over a low-orbiting communication satellite, to a VeriWise server hosted by GE. BASF can then access the information via the Internet. According to BASF’s logistics technology manager, VeriWise software running on the server can also send alerts to BASF and authorized users in the event of a specific incident—such as a railcar collision, an unacceptable temperature fluctuation or tampering with a car’s dome. Some improvements throughout the multiple versions include the most recent tracking units’ ability to both transmit and receive data (thus enabling BASF to communicate directly with the device), and software that allows a variety of access levels for authorized users, such as BASF’s staff and customers. The company has installed VeriWise units on every railcar used to transport its most hazardous chemicals, as well as 90 percent of the cars utilized for the five next most hazardous chemicals. More than 1,000 cars already been equipped to date; BASF’s goal is to equip a total of 1,200 cars. Source: [http://www.rfidjournal.com/article/articleview/7255](http://www.rfidjournal.com/article/articleview/7255)
7. **December 4, Reuters** – (Arizona) **APS shuts Ariz Palo Verde 3 reactor.** Arizona Public Service shut the 1,247-megawatt Unit 3 at the Palo Verde nuclear power station in Arizona from full power on Thursday, the company told the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission in a report. In the report, the company said operators shut the unit after the loss of instrument air to containment that was apparently caused by the failure of an outboard containment isolation valve solenoid valve. All systems worked as designed to safely shut the reactor, the company said.


8. **December 4, Seacoastonline.com** – (New Hampshire) **Turbine vibrations hold nuke plant at 65% power.** The Seabrook Station nuclear power plant is currently operating at only 65 percent capacity because of turbine problems experienced as operators tried to bring the plant up to 100 percent power after a refueling outage. NextEra Energy Resources LLC, a subsidiary of FLP Inc., the operator of Seabrook Station, has kept the 1,245-megawatt nuclear power station at this level since mid-November due to a vibration in a low pressure turbine, a spokesman at the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission told Reuters news service Monday, December 1. That was confirmed by a plant spokesman on Wednesday. “We’re conducting an analysis of turbine vibrations,” the spokesman said. “We continue to work with General Electric, the makers of the turbine.” Neither the NRC spokesman, nor the plant spokesman would say when the unit would return to full power. The spokesman said he could not say how much money the utility was losing as a result of not operating at full power for nearly a month.


9. **December 3, Asbury Park Press** – (New Jersey) **Oyster Creek tritium leak enters second aquifer.** Radioactive tritium that was in water which leaked from the Oyster Creek nuclear power plant has migrated into a second aquifer, the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) reported. Leaks at the plant, owned by Exelon Nuclear, were reported April 15 and August 25. The DEP deputy commissioner stated in a November 19 letter to Exelon’s Nuclear Mid Atlantic Operations senior vice president, that tritium is migrating at the site and has entered the Cohansey aquifer — an underground, water-bearing area — which is below the Cape May aquifer. “Based on modeling of potential routes of exposure, there appears to be no current public health impact, and no samples have exceeded New Jersey’s surface water standard,” the DEP deputy commissioner wrote.


10. **December 3, Jacksonville Patriot** – (Arkansas) **Nuclear density device stolen from shipping container at landfill, police say.** Jacksonville police officers investigated the theft of a nuclear density meter possibly containing radioactive material from the landfill on November 18. The device apparently belonged to Crayco of Tennessee, according to a public information officer of the Jacksonville Police Department. The investigation began at about 8:15 a.m. on November 18 and the recovery of the device
happened at about 1 p.m. on that same day. A police report indicated that city police were notified by the Pulaski County Sheriff’s Office about receiving a call of a “suspicious looking” box near the side of the road in the 2700 block of Wooten Road, which is located in the unincorporated area of the county. A Jacksonville police officer noted that the case was not processed for fingerprints because they were advised not to come in close proximity to the device. The police report also listed a red Polaris Ranger all-terrain vehicle valued at $9,500 as having been stolen during the incident. The case, which contained the nuclear density meter, had been attached to the rear of the all-terrain vehicle prior to the incident. According to the police report, the device contained radioactive material.


11. December 2, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission – (Pennsylvania) Exelon institutes corrective actions at Peach Bottom plant, other facilities under settlement agreement with NRC. Exelon Generating Co., LLC, is implementing a series of corrective actions designed to deter deliberate misconduct by employees at its Peach Bottom nuclear power plant and other plants it owns and operates under an agreement reached with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. The settlement was achieved under the NRC’s Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) process after two violations of agency regulations were identified during separate investigations conducted at Peach Bottom by the Region I Field Office of the NRC’s Office of Investigations. The investigations were performed to determine if two former Peach Bottom employees deliberately violated NRC requirements by reporting inaccurate information in one instance and failing to inform Exelon of information required to be reported in the other.


For another story, see item 31

Critical Manufacturing Sector

12. December 4, Elko Daily Free Press – (Nevada) Judge orders construction of Nevada gold mine halted. The U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals on December 3 ordered a temporary halt to construction at Barrick Gold of North America’s Cortez Hills Mine in Lander County, Nevada. The ruling is a blow to Barrick, which has nearly completed construction of the Cortez Hills facilities and is developing the open pit with an expectation of production beginning early next year. It is a victory for environmental organizations and Western Shoshone tribes that filed an appeal after the U.S. District Court in Reno denied their request for an injunction against the project. The three-panel appeals court in San Francisco approved the appeal, claiming the BLM violated the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) by failing to perform sufficient study of dewatering impacts and potential mercury air emissions for ore transport at the mine. The judges wrote that they took into account Barrick’s arguments about the economic
impact of an injunction but stated that the injunction would likely be temporary. The Cortez Mine, including the $500 million Cortez Hills Project and the Pipeline operations, employs close to 1,000 people in northern Nevada, including employees working the Cortez underground mine that is not part of the litigation. The appeals court opinion states that “plaintiffs have shown a likelihood of success on the NEPA claims because there was inadequate study of the serious effects of processing refractory ore and exhausting scarce water resources.” The likelihood of irreparable environmental injury without adequate study of the adverse effects and possible mitigation is high, according to the opinion.


13. December 4, Travel Blackboard – (National) **Successful wing test results could see Dreamliner fly before Christmas.** Speculation is rife that the long-delayed Boeing Dreamliner could fly before Christmas following the completion of a wing test which the jet had previously failed. The completion of the test was confirmed by Boeing in a statement, which said it would take 10 days to do a full analysis of the results. According to the Seattle Times, engineers found that the composite fibers in the wing did not delaminate when it was bent passed “limit load,” the same point as in the previous test. “Limit load” is also the maximum load the wing is expected to bear in service. The wings will be bent further next year, passing “ultimate load” in order to gain approval from the Federal Aviation Administration to fly passengers. However, engineers still have not given the official okay, and the current target date for the first flight on December 22 hinges on the success of the wing test. But if all goes well and the Dreamliner wings are able to be filled with jet fuel for initial engine runs and system tests and proceed to taxi tests, it will be in the air by Christmas.

Source: http://www.etravelblackboard.us/showarticle.asp?id=92690

14. December 3, Aviation Week – (National) **Temporary fix opens way to G650 flight.** The landing gear door vibration that cut short the first flight of Gulfstream’s G650 flagship on November 25 in Savannah has been remedied with a temporary “work around,” according to the Gulfstream’s communications manager. “We’re working on a permanent solution,” he said, adding that the second flight is expected to be “imminent.” No information was available on the exact cause of the vibration or steps for a permanent fix, nor a target date for releasing the aircraft to resume the flight test program. The second test aircraft has been released by production to the flight test department for installation of “orange gear.” Gulfstream plans to use three dedicated test aircraft and two production aircraft in the 1,800-hour G650 flight test program. The communications manager said the aircraft remains on schedule for certification in 2011 and customer deliveries in 2012.


15. December 3, Winona Daily News – (Minnesota) **Fire put out at foundry.** Firefighters put out hot spots on December 2 after dousing flames at Engineered Foundry Solutions
on Breezy Lane in Winona. They contained most of the fire to the attic of a back building, and flames were extinguished minutes after crews arrived at about 5 p.m., the assistant Winona fire chief said. Crews were briefly concerned the flames could threaten kilns in another part of the business, and computers stored beneath the attic needed to be removed to avoid further damage, he said. Officials were not sure how the fire started.
Source: http://www.winonadailynews.com/news/local/article_7418d472-dfcb-11de-b3b1-001cc4e002e0.html

Defense Industrial Base Sector

16. December 3, Online Defense and Acquisition Journal – (National) Boeing tests IED blasting laser. Some defense thinkers believe directed energy weapons, lasers, hold out real battlefield promise, particularly against future enemies armed with large numbers of relatively cheap precision guided weapons. For example, the folks at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments in Washington say lasers provide a potential solution to the so called G-RAMM (guided rockets, artillery, mortars and missiles) problem. Using missiles to shoot down incoming rounds can get very costly and a counter G-RAMM arsenal can be rapidly depleted; lasers solve the finite counter-munition arsenal problem. Granted, directed energy weapons are not ready for prime time, although they are getting closer. Boeing has been developing a laser system mounted on the Avenger vehicle, an air defense version of the ubiquitous Humvee; in stock form, the Avenger comes with Stinger missiles and a .50 cal machine gun. In tests over the last couple of years, the Laser Avenger has shot down a couple of small aerial drones. In September, Boeing says Laser Avenger destroyed 50 Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in tests sponsored by the Joint IED Defeat Organization (JIEDDO) at Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama. The IEDs included large-caliber artillery munitions and smaller bomblets and mortar rounds, according to Boeing, and the laser fired at the rounds from different ranges and angles.

17. December 3, Defense News – (National) New submarine on sea trials. The New Mexico (SSN 779), the sixth submarine of the U.S. Navy’s Virginia class, has successfully completed the first two rounds of builder’s sea trials and, if an upcoming sea trial by the Navy’s Board of Inspection and Survey passes muster, Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding expects to deliver the sub to the Navy before the end of the year. Work on the submarine was delayed most recently by workmanship problems discovered earlier this year in the weapons room handling system. The submarine was about 99 percent complete when the problem was discovered in early August. Similar problems also were found on at least three other Virginia-class submarines. Before the latest problems surfaced, the New Mexico had been scheduled for delivery at the end of September. The New Mexico’s first sea trials, known as Alpha and Bravo, were conducted virtually back to back. The sub headed out for Alpha trials November 24 and came back to its builder’s yard at Newport News, Virginia, on November 26 -
Thanksgiving Day. The vessel headed back out for Bravo trials the following day. Even with the delays, the submarine’s building schedule remains well ahead of its contract schedule, which calls for delivery by April 30, 2010. The New Mexico is expected to be commissioned into Navy service next year at Norfolk, Virginia. Source: http://www.defensenews.com/story.php?i=4404044&c=AME&s=SEA

Banking and Finance Sector

18. *December 3, IDG News Service* – (International) **Two sentenced to prison for online money laundering.** Two Bulgarians have been sentenced for their roles in an online money-laundering scheme that collected about $1.2 million from U.S. residents and sent it to a criminal group in Eastern Europe, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) said. The two used eBay and other Web sites to advertise expensive vehicles and boats they did not own, the DOJ said. The two defendants and co-conspirators ran the scheme from about July 2005 to May 2006, the DOJ said in a news release. When victims expressed interest in the vehicles or boats, they were contacted directly by an e-mail from a purported seller, the DOJ said. The victims were then instructed to wire transfer payments through eBay Secure Traders, an entity with no affiliation to eBay. EBay Secure Traders was supposedly an escrow account service, but instead, the victims’ funds were wired directly into bank accounts in Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Greece that were controlled by the two and their co-conspirators. Both were sentenced in U.S. District Court in the District of Columbia on December 2. Source: http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9141748/Two_sentenced_to_prison_for_online_money_laundering

19. *December 2, Reuters* – (International) **Who’s afraid of high-frequency trading?** High-frequency trading now accounts for 60 percent of total U.S. equity volume, and is spreading overseas and into other markets. Yet critics worry fast trading may undermine the integrity of the U.S. equity market and could even spark another financial crisis. They question the amount of money high-speed traders make, especially after holding a stock for only a few seconds. They wonder what purpose such quick turnover serves. The market “is not trading on fundamentals anymore. It makes no sense, it’s very frustrating for traders,” said the director of floor trading at NYSE member Kabrik Trading. “It’s all programs.” But high-frequency traders point to last year’s steep sell-off as proof of their value in helping the market run smoothly. While over-the-counter and other markets seized up, exacerbating the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, fast traders continued to buy and sell shares. Proponents also laud computerized trading for eliminating the shady transactions that often occurred in the past when people were directly involved in trading. But many institutional money managers are uneasy about how the fast traders anticipate their transactions, and worry that there might be information leakage about their trading intentions. Critics fear an errant computer code, similar to the program trading behind the Black Monday crash of 1987, could engender another deep market plunge. With
worries over systemic risk growing, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission has jumped into the fray. It has proposed a ban on so-called flash orders and wants to crack down on the scores of anonymous trading venues known as dark pools. The regulator plans to issue a report early next year that officials said would focus on whether markets reliant on high-frequency trading are more or less efficient for long-term investors, including those trading small- and mid-cap stocks.

Source: http://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKN173583920091202?pageNumber=1

Transportation Sector

20. *December 4, Associated Press* – (New York) **NY terminals evacuated when wired box found on jet.** Syracuse airport officials say hundreds of passengers were evacuated from two terminals after a wired black box was found aboard a Delta regional jet. Hancock International Airport officials say a pilot doing a preflight check found the box around 5:30 a.m. Friday on a plane that had arrived from Atlanta the night before. The airport’s north and south terminals were evacuated, causing flight delays for about 600 passengers. Federal aviation security officials say the wired device with a switch turned out to be a control device for sanding equipment. Airport officials say operations were back to normal by midmorning.

Source: http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5if9GVNB8A7s_AslyHC2StUUBWxkwD9CCJ0T87

21. *December 3, KMTV 3 Omaha* – (Nebraska) **Emergency landing at Eppley after plane hitting flock of birds.** A Comair plan hit about five birds Thursday night. The flight was five miles out on its way to Detroit when the bird strike happened. The 72 passengers and crew on board were not hurt. The plane landed safely back in Omaha. The flight was canceled and all passengers re-booked on flights leaving Friday morning. The Federal Aviation Administration is now investigating the bird strike.


22. *December 3, Global Security Newswire* – (Massachusetts) **Simulated toxic gas to be released on Boston subway.** The U.S. Homeland Security Department plans to study the circulation of airborne contaminants through public transit networks the week of December 7 by releasing harmless gases and dye tracers in Boston’s subway system. The study, aimed at examining how smoke and airborne toxins move, is expected to assist in the development of future chemical-agent monitoring and to provide guidance for improving air-purification systems, evacuation plans and emergency-response protocols for transportation systems. “This study is one of many efforts the department is undertaking across the country to inform our emergency response planning in preparation for chemical or biological terrorist attacks,” the Homeland Security Secretary said in a press release announcing the study. “This project — combining the resources and expertise of scientists from around the world — will refine best practices for responding to the release of toxic gas or chemicals in public transportation.
systems,” the Homeland Security Undersecretary added in the statement. The study begins December 5 and runs through December 11 in more than 20 below-ground subway stations and trains overseen by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority.
Source: http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20091203_8974.php

For more stories, see items 4, 6, and 24

Postal and Shipping Sector

23. December 3, Lincoln Journal Star – (Nebraska) Gov. Heineman receives suspicious letter. A suspicious letter addressed to the Nebraska governor’s office has been turned over to the FBI for further investigation. The Executive Protection Division of the Nebraska State Patrol was made aware of the letter a little before 11 a.m. Thursday. The FBI was notified and the Lincoln Fire and Rescue Hazardous Materials Team responded and did a field test on the envelope and its contents. The test proved negative for any hazardous materials. The governor was never in contact with the letter.

24. December 3, WKTV 2 Utica – (New York) FedEx plane makes emergency landing in Lake Delta field. Experience and the ability to stay calm in a crisis helped a Federal Express pilot safely land his plane in a field after losing power to the aircraft’s only engine at 7,000 feet. The pilot departed Hancock International Airport in Syracuse between 7:00 and 7:30 Thursday morning. About half an hour into the flight, the pilot heard a loud ‘bang’. He contacted Griffiss International Airport in Rome with a mayday at 7:40. The pilot tried to land at Griffiss, but the aircraft was losing power. At 7:45, the pilot contacted Griffiss again, telling them the airport was no longer an option and he was going to try and put the plane down in a field. An official with the Federal Aviation Administration out of Albany is expected on the scene Thursday, to begin the investigation into exactly what went wrong with the plane’s only engine. The plane was a Cessna 209 B, carrying roughly 300 pounds of cargo.

Agriculture and Food Sector

25. December 3, Channel 3000 – (Wisconsin) DNR says contractor’s actions resulted in massive fish kill. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) said a contractor trying to remove carp from Lake Puckaway failed to remove game fish from the net soon enough, resulting in a kill that killed thousands of game fish. The DNR has been investigating to determine what caused the deaths of an estimated 3,000 dead game fish, like walleye, at Lake Puckaway, which is located about 70 miles northeast of
Madison. The DNR said that the operation that was supposed to remove carp from the lake did not go as planned. “Through the investigation we found that the cause for the mortality was that the game fish weren’t removed from the netting operation,” said a DNR warden. “And it was a matter of them removing the rough fish and leaving the game fish. And if you don’t remove the game fish then you have mortality through bumping in with other fish, or depletion of oxygen.” The DNR warden said he would like to see a better selection process for carp contractors. The DNR said the case will be forwarded to the district attorney for possible civil charges.


For another story, see item 4

Water Sector

26. December 4, Environmental Health News – (National) **Selenium from power plants poses ecological risks, spurs EPA review.** Selenium is an essential nutrient, but excess amounts can be dangerous to wildlife and people. Now the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is preparing a new regulation that would require more than 600 coal-fired power plants to clean up — perhaps even eliminate — wastewater discharged into lakes, rivers and other waterways. The national standards would replace a patchwork of state regulations that EPA officials say are too lax to protect fish and wildlife from toxic metals and other elements, particularly selenium, in the plants’ wastewater. Some states allow the plants to emit selenium at levels hundreds of times higher than EPA’s water-quality standards, while others do not even require monitoring for it.

Source: http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org/ehs/news/selenium-from-power-plants

27. December 3, Environment News Service – (Texas) **Texas Environmental Agency creates Office of Water.** To cope with severe drought and a rising population, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) announced Tuesday that it has established a new Office of Water. The new office will include the three existing water divisions in the agency - Water Planning, Water Supply, and Water Quality. “The new office is in recognition of the fact that the state’s population is expected to double in the next 30 years,” the chairman said in a statement. According to a report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Risk Management Agency, final tallies for 2009 released in November show that almost half of the total acreage of cotton, corn and sorghum was lost to the drought. In September, soaking rains in parts of the Lower Rio Grande Valley broke record heat of summer. But according to the National Weather Service, rain is not in the forecast for deep South Texas as weather patterns are not conducive to a wet winter. “Water planning, water supply, and water quality are all issues that are important to the future of our state,” said the TCEQ commissioner.

28. **December 2, Muskogee Phoenix** – (Oklahoma) **Flooding damages water plant.** Emergency repairs of up to $25,000 were approved for Fort Gibson’s water plant in an emergency meeting of the Utilities Authority on December 1. The utilities director said he was notified about 1:30 a.m. November 30 that a valve at the plant had failed to close during a backwash of filters and several motors and monitoring equipment had been submerged. The extent of the damage has not yet been determined, but at least two turbidity meters will have to be replaced, he said. They are $2,500 to $3,000 each. He said the town may be able to have some motors cleaned and rewound rather than replaced. The mayor said the town put $1.2 million into upgrading the plant several months ago. “I’ve heard nothing since then but about how it does not work,” the mayor said. The utilities director said that upgrade made the plant fully automated. This is not the first time the plant has flooded since it was automated, the utilities director said. He said he was not in charge of the plant at the time, but he has been told the equipment was flooded shortly after the equipment upgrade. Steps also will be taken to reroute the flow of water in case there should be a similar overflow in the future, he said. The rerouting would take the water outside and away from the plant instead of into the pump wells. The plant’s water quality was not jeopardized with the flooding, he said.


For another story, see item 9

### Public Health and Healthcare Sector

29. **December 4, Detroit Examiner** – (Michigan) **Warren police, feds raid pain management clinic.** A suburban Detroit pain clinic was raided by a multi-jurisdiction force Thursday morning on the strength of federal search warrants. Before they were finished, the force had made arrests and questioned employees and on-premise patients. Several other patients who had showed up during the course of the raid were turned away. While participants of the raid were reticent to discuss it, information can be gleaned from questions asked of temporarily detained patients, and inferred from the federal agencies involved. Investigators from the Warren police, the FBI, the DEA and the Department of Health and Human Services descended upon the Pain Management Center at about 9:30 Thursday morning. Though the center contains two medical suites, the task force appeared to focus on one doctor. The Warren police commissioner would not reveal details of the investigation, referring reporters to the FBI which has yet to comment on them.


30. **December 3, United Press International** – (California) **No one hurt in Calif. chemical explosion.** A fire department spokesman in Anaheim, California, said no injuries were reported after a chemical explosion occurred at a local company Thursday morning. An Anaheim fire department spokeswoman told the Orange County Register 25 employees
were inside ConMed Linvatec facilities when a 55-gallon drum of electromagnetic discharge exploded. Following the blast, the employees were evacuated and a hazardous materials unit responded along with local firefighters. The hazardous materials team determined the drum that exploded at the global medical technology company contained electromagnetic discharge, the spokeswoman said.


31. December 3, Endocrine Today – (International) **ATA notice: Global radioisotope shortage now impacting I-131 supply.** The American Thyroid Association (ATA) is warning health care professionals that no further shipments of radioiodine (I-131) are expected at local hospitals until mid-December 2009 in different regions of the United States. The shortage is driven by production problems experienced by nuclear reactors that supply raw materials for the preparation of radiopharmaceutical I-131 solution. In May, the ATA released a news update warning of a potential shortage of radioisotopes linked to a nuclear reactor shutdown in Chalk River, Ontario, Canada, which has been North America’s main supplier of radioisotopes for medical imaging. The current shortage has led to prioritizing the use of existing I-131 products for patients with thyroid cancer and need urgent treatment as well as the possibility of rescheduling patients who are in the process of preparing for radioactive iodine scans or treatment. In the meantime, the association advises health care professionals to determine the status of the local I-131 supply with the hospital nuclear medicine department or with vendors who provide the product for office-based procedures.


**Government Facilities Sector**

32. December 4, Associated Press – (District of Columbia) **Secret Service puts 3 on leave over crashers.** The head of the Secret Service asserted Thursday that the security breach at the recent White House state dinner was an aberration and the President was never at risk. The Secret Service director said three uniformed officers have been put on administrative leave. The chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, a Democratic Representative from Mississippi, said the country is fortunate the affair did not end in a “night of horror.” Appearing before the chairman’s panel for questioning, the Secret Service director acknowledged that mistakes were made and that the Secret Service must have a “100 percent” performance record. The chairman also said that Congress needs to talk not only to the couple who got in without invitations, but also to the White House social secretary. All three have declined to appear. The chairman said he is likely to authorize a subpoena for the couple to testify. And the top Republican on the committee, a Representative from New York, said if the chairman does not subpoena the White House social secretary, he will.

33. **December 4, Associated Press** – (West Virginia) **Bomb threats disrupt week of class at W.Va. school.** Backpacks have been banned and eight students suspended from Keyser Primary-Middle School after bomb threats disrupted class four days in a row. Police are also investigating a Wednesday bomb threat at Keyser High School that canceled a basketball game. Backpacks also have been banned from that school. The Mineral County Schools superintendent says administrative hearings for the students have been scheduled for December 15. The students are also facing criminal charges. Since the students are juveniles, their names are not being released. Bomb threats at the primary-middle school disrupted class and prompted police searches from Monday through Thursday the week of November 30. Source: [http://dailymail.com/News/200912040277](http://dailymail.com/News/200912040277)

34. **December 3, Gadsden Times** – (Alabama) **Bomb threat clears City Hall.** Gadsden City Hall was evacuated just after noon Thursday after someone called and threatened to blow up the courtroom and the building, a Gadsden police captain. The call came in after noon when many of those usually in the building were out for lunch, the police captain said. Those who remained in the building were evacuated while the Gadsden Police Department’s bomb squad searched the building, the police captain said. An investigation is continuing, he said. Source: [http://www.gadsdentimes.com/article/20091203/NEWS/912034004?Title=Bomb-threat-clears-City-Hall](http://www.gadsdentimes.com/article/20091203/NEWS/912034004?Title=Bomb-threat-clears-City-Hall)

35. **December 3, Associated Press** – (Utah) **Bomb threat called in to FBI Salt Lake City office.** The FBI says an anonymous caller phoned in a bomb threat to the agency’s field office in Salt Lake City. The FBI says the threat was called in around 7:30 a.m. Thursday. A mandatory evacuation was found not to be necessary. The FBI says the investigation is ongoing. It says it would not release further details. On Wednesday, a bomb threat called into West High School in Salt Lake City forced the evacuation of the school. A bomb squad investigated and determined there was no threat. Students were readmitted to the building later Wednesday morning. Source: [http://www.localnews8.com/Global/story.asp?S=11616053](http://www.localnews8.com/Global/story.asp?S=11616053)

36. **December 3, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette** – (Pennsylvania) **Lockdown ends at Seneca Valley school after bomb threat.** A lockdown of Seneca Valley Intermediate High School has been lifted following an extensive search of the building because of a bomb threat a student found Wednesday scrawled in a boys’ restroom. A District spokeswoman said police searched the building Wednesday afternoon and found nothing. As a precaution, however, all students passed through metal detectors Thursday morning and were moved to the high school auditorium while police conducted a more thorough search. The building was deemed safe Thursday afternoon, and students returned to the intermediate high school. Source: [http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/09337/1018189-100.stm?cmpid=localstate.xml](http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/09337/1018189-100.stm?cmpid=localstate.xml)
37. *December 3, CNSNews* – (National) **U.S. not fully prepared to stop cyber attacks, federal report says.** A government audit found that the threat of cyber attacks on federal computer networks is increasing and that the United States is not entirely prepared to deal with the threat. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) in a November 17 report titled “Cybersecurity: Continued Efforts Are Needed to Protect Information Systems from Evolving Threats” said “reports of security incidents from federal agencies are on the rise, increasing by over 200 percent from fiscal year 2006 to fiscal year 2008.” Cyber attacks at the Department of Homeland Security during that time, for example, rose from 5,503 to 16,843, according to the report. The culprits include foreign nations, criminals, and hackers, the report says, entities that can use technology to “cross multiple state and national borders” to carry out an infiltration at high speed by “attacking a vast number of victims at the same time.” In so doing, attackers “can more easily remain anonymous,” said the GAO. These threats can be targeted at a specific system, or untargeted, which would be a virus, worm, or malicious software released on the Internet with no specific target. The lack of preparedness could hit home for the average American as “sensitive information, such as taxpayer data, Social Security records, medical records, intellectual property, and proprietary business information, could be inappropriately disclosed, browsed, or copied for purposes of identity theft, espionage, or other types of crime,” said the GAO. According to the report, “resources, such as federal payments and collections, could be lost or stolen,” and “computer resources could be used for unauthorized purposes or to launch attacks on other computer systems.” Further, the report states, “Critical operations, such as those supporting critical infrastructure, national defense, and emergency services, could be disrupted,” that “data could be added, modified, or deleted for purposes of fraud, subterfuge, or disruption,” and “agency missions could be undermined by embarrassing incidents that result in diminished confidence in the ability of federal organizations to conduct operations and fulfill their responsibilities.” The GAO found significant weaknesses at 23 of 24 major federal agencies it surveyed for the study.


For more stories, see items 23 and 48

38. *December 4, Associated Press* – (Maine) **Maine sheriff investigates release of wrong inmate.** The Cumberland County sheriff’s department is conducting an internal investigation to determine how a maximum security inmate was mistakenly released from the county jail. Meanwhile, Portland police, sheriff’s deputies and the Southern Maine Violent Crime Task Force are continuing to search for the inmate. He is considered dangerous. The 23-year-old was released Wednesday when someone arrived at the jail to bail out another 20-year-old inmate, whose bail had been set at $240. The sheriff could not explain why the released inmate’s yellow jumpsuit, worn to indicate a maximum-security prisoner, did not alert officers that he should not be
released.

For another story, see item 35

[Return to top]

**Information Technology Sector**

39. *December 4, V3.co.uk* – (International) **RIM warns of BlackBerry server risk from PDFs.** Research in Motion (RIM) has issued a security alert warning of a new attack vector targeting its software. BlackBerry users are being warned about accessing PDF files after RIM discovered flaws in the BlackBerry Attachment Service used to send and read the files on mobile devices. “Multiple security vulnerabilities exist in the PDF distiller of some released versions of the BlackBerry Attachment Service component of the BlackBerry Enterprise Server,” the company said. “These vulnerabilities could enable a malicious individual to send an email containing a specially crafted PDF file which, when opened for viewing on a BlackBerry smartphone that is associated with a user account on a BlackBerry Enterprise Server, could cause memory corruption and possibly lead to a denial of service condition or arbitrary code execution on the computer that hosts the BlackBerry Attachment Service component of that BlackBerry Enterprise Server.” RIM has posted up several security updates to fix the flaws in its BlackBerry Enterprise Server and Professional software. As a workaround, RIM also suggests that users open PDF attachments only from trusted sources. “RIM has advised customers that it has removed PDF files from the list of allowed extensions as a stop-gap measure,” said a senior technology consultant at Sophos. “Of course, PDFs are widely used in business, so I can’t imagine that many firms will find that an acceptable solution for very long.”

40. *December 3, IDG News Service* – (National) **New study calls for cybersecurity overhaul in U.S.** The U.S. government and private businesses need to overhaul the way they look at cybersecurity, with the government offering businesses new incentives to fix security problems, the Internet Security Alliance said. The alliance, in a report released on December 2, also called for permanent international cybersecurity collaboration centers, new security standards for VoIP (voice over Internet Protocol) communications and programs to educate corporate leaders about the benefits of enhanced cybersecurity efforts. Many groups have called for better information security education for students, but education for enterprise leaders is often overlooked, said the president and CEO of Direct Computer Resources, a data security products vendor. “At some point, almost every public official who addresses this subject stresses the need to train our kindergarten to 12th-graders on this topic,” he said. “In many instances, these officials also note the need to upgrade cyber expertise in the federal workforce. Something else is necessary.” The report, intended as a response to the U.S. President’s call in May for increased cybersecurity efforts, proposes to create more educational
programs on risk management for C-level executives. ISA has already begun an education effort aimed at chief financial officers and other executives. The report as a whole focuses largely on changing the economics of cybersecurity with incentives and other programs.


41. December 3, The Register – (International) **Linux kernel cured of remote panic-attack bug.** Developers of the Linux kernel have patched a bug that allowed attackers to remotely crash a machine by sending it malicious Wi-Fi signals. The flaw in the deIBA handling of mac80211 has been fixed in version 2.6.32, the latest stable release of the Linux kernel. Various distributions of the open-source operating system have already acknowledged the issue and are expected to push out updates soon. Based on developer notes on the official Linux website, the vulnerability appears to have been introduced in February. The flaw stemmed from faulty code that called the BUG_ON macro before various checks were performed. That raised the possibility of NULL being passed to TX/RX_STOP parameter, which in turn caused a kernel panic. The end result: an attacker within Wi-Fi range of a vulnerable machine might be able to effectively shut it down.

Source: [http://www.theregister.co.uk/2009/12/03/linux_kernel_bug_patched/](http://www.theregister.co.uk/2009/12/03/linux_kernel_bug_patched/)

42. December 3, SCMagazine – (International) **Microsoft slates six fixes for decade’s final Patch Tuesday.** Microsoft on December 8 expects to push out six patches to address 12 vulnerabilities as part of its monthly security update, the company announced. The fixes — three are rated “critical,” the rest are labeled “important” — will address bugs in Windows, Internet Explorer (IE) and Microsoft Office, according to an advance notification released on December 3. The update plans to address at least one known zero-day vulnerability, an issue impacting IE versions 6 and 7. Microsoft confirmed the flaw, rated critical on all Windows platforms except Server 2008, in an advisory it released late last month. “We know that customers are concerned about this issue, and we are also aware that proof-of-concept code is available publicly,” a senior security program manager at Microsoft wrote on November 30 in a blog post. Experts at Rapid7, a vulnerability management firm, said organizations should make this patch a priority. The other critical bulletins set to be released impact Windows and Microsoft Project, a project management software program for Office. Apparently not slated for repair is a zero-day vulnerability in the Server Message Block (SMB) protocol, according to an advisory released last month. The company said successful exploitation of the flaw, which affects Windows 7 and Server 2008 Release 2, can lead to a denial-of-service that results in a system crash — but not the injection of malicious code. Exploit code has been published, but Microsoft is not aware of any active attacks underway.

43. December 3, IDG News Service – (International) **With new attack released, Adobe to patch next week.** Adobe Systems’ security response team is scrambling to fix a newly disclosed bug in its Illustrator software, even as it readies another security patch the week of December 7. On December 1, an unidentified hacker posted a proof of concept attack, showing how the Illustrator vulnerability could be leveraged to run unauthorized software on a victim’s computer. Adobe said on December 1 that it was investigating the attack, but it is not clear when the software company will fix the issue. For this attack to work, the users must open a maliciously crafted Encapsulated PostScript (.eps) file in Illustrator, Adobe said in a blog post. Because this attack code is now public and available to cyber-criminals, this flaw could become a serious issue. However, the Adobe director of Product Security said on December 1 that his team has not yet confirmed that the attack could be used to install a virus on a computer. “We’ve been able to trigger a crash on at least one version and platform,” he said. “As soon as we get all of our details together we’ll do an advisory.” Security vendor Secunia says the flaw exists in Illustrator Creative Suite versions 13 and 14, and that other versions of the product may be affected. Meanwhile, Adobe plans to fix other critical bugs in its Flash Player software on December 8. This update is not related to the Illustrator issue and had been previously scheduled, the director said. “As far as we can tell, the [Illustrator] bug has absolutely nothing to do with Flash Player.”

44. December 3, CNET News – (International) **Defense Dept. pulls software over privacy issues.** The Department of Defense has pulled a parental control product from its online store serving military families after learning that the company collects children’s data, according to documents the Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC) obtained from the government agency. EPIC has filed a complaint (PDF) with the Federal Trade Commission alleging that Echometrix, maker of FamilySafe parental control software, violates the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act by collecting personal information from children and disclosing it to third parties for market intelligence purposes. Echometrix denies the allegations. After learning that the Defense Department’s Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) Web site offers the Echometrix product for sale, EPIC filed a Freedom of Information Act request with the Defense Department. The agency complied with the FOIA request. Among the documents provided to EPIC were e-mails between Echometrix and a manager at the AAFES Exchange Online Mall who wanted to know how customer information is collected and whether it is used for marketing purposes.

For more stories, see items 37 and 46
Communications Sector

45. **December 4, PC World** – (International) **Microsoft Bing suffers outage.** Microsoft’s Bing site was offline Thursday night. Bing suffered an outage and was offline for about half an hour Thursday. It was particularly bad timing for Microsoft, though, considering that it just unveiled an array of changes and updates and there has been a lot of attention focused on the beta rollout of the new Bing Maps. Users were unable to use Bing from around 6:30pm to 7:00pm (give or take 10 minutes on either side) Pacific time. Initially the site was simply unresponsive or returned partial search results. Eventually Microsoft published an error page explaining that the site was unavailable. Microsoft responded rather quickly and leveraged social networking tools like Twitter to communicate the current status with users. Microsoft’s senior vice president of the online services division wrote a blog post about the outage. The executive explained that “The cause of the outage was a configuration change during some internal testing that had unfortunate and unintended consequences.”


46. **December 3, Computerworld** – (International) **Flash storage should be a top data center priority, Gartner says.** Flash-based storage will quickly become one of the most important technologies in the data center, Gartner, a global technology research company, said recently. Flash-based solid state memory is still 25 to 30 times more expensive than spinning disk drives on a per-gigabyte basis, and there are questions about its durability, but it carries several advantages over traditional storage devices, a Gartner analyst said at the research firm’s annual data center conference. “If you compare it to disk drives it’s a lot faster,” he said. “It’s small. It’s very rugged so you can put flash memory in something where a rotating disk drive would fail because of the shock.” There are technical limits that place a ceiling on the number of times you can rewrite data to a particular location with flash drives, but clever use of software that controls how, where and when data is written is extending product lifespan. “The reality today is you can create flash that lasts about as long as a real disk drive,” he said. “We’re really getting to the point where this is interesting.” The biggest strategic reason that flash is gaining prominence in the enterprise is that, for years, server processor speeds have improved exponentially while disk access speed has improved at slower rates. “The gap between the two keeps getting wider,” he said. Using RAM cache and other mechanisms can help eliminate performance penalties, but enterprises
are still struggling with erratic application performance because of slow disk drives, he said. Flash should not replace disk on a one-to-one basis because of the cost, but applications can be sped up dramatically if files and bits that are critical to system performance are moved onto flash, he said. Flash was one of several products Gartner listed as among “the most important technologies in your data center future.”

Source:
http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9141749/Flash_storage_should_be_a_top_data_center_priority_Gartner_says

For another story, see item 41

Commercial Facilities Sector

47. December 4, Bloomberg – (International) Police arrest bomb hoax suspect before World Cup draw. South African police said they arrested a journalist at the Cape Town International Convention Center for making a hoax bomb threat before the World Cup draw. The suspect had dropped his bag as he entered the center, where the draw will take place tonight, saying there was an explosive device inside, a police spokesman told reporters. Police apprehended him today when he tried to run away and explosives experts determined that his claims were false.


48. December 3, KING 5 Seattle – (Washington) Vandals wreaking havoc in Kitsap County. Vandals have struck about 20 different locations in Central Kitsap County, Washington over the past several weeks. According to the Kitsap County Sheriff, the vandals have been targeting churches, schools and private homes. Deputies say the primary weapon of choice has been a BB gun — used to shoot out windows. Several small fires have been set, as well. Silverdale Baptist Church has been one the targets. Someone shot out five large, custom windows in the building’s foyer. Faith Community Bible Church has also been hit twice in as many months. Seven windows that were installed with the original church about 60 years ago have been shot, according to a church member. Fairview Junior High School has also been hit. Investigators say they have absolutely no leads at this point, and they expect the attacks to continue unless the vandals are caught in the act.


49. December 3, Las Vegas Sun – (Nevada) Homeland Security cancels Strip nuclear response training. The Department of Homeland Security has canceled a Federal Emergency Management Agency training exercise scheduled for May 2010 that would have simulated the detonation of a nuclear device on the Las Vegas Strip. A Senator and several Southern Nevada tourism and business leaders objected to the scenario, suggesting that it could create unnecessary anxiety to efforts to boost tourism and investment in Las Vegas. The Senator said, “At a time when Las Vegas is beginning to
show signs of improvement, including the first increase in tourism in a year, an exercise of this magnitude would have created unnecessary anxiety and possibly undo our efforts to strengthen the engine of Nevada’s economy.”

50. December 3, Associated Press – (Florida) **Security stepped up for Fla. football trifecta.** On Thursday, law enforcement officials outside Land Shark Stadium rolled out a display of equipment to protect Miami’s postseason football trifecta: the Orange Bowl, Pro Bowl and Super Bowl No. 44. The message was not subtle: anyone, terrorist or otherwise, plotting an attack on any of these high-profile events had best think again.

A swath of the stadium parking lot was filled with armored SWAT vehicles, bomb-handling robots, mobile command posts, explosive-sniffing dogs, even a large X-ray device used by the U.S. Homeland Security Department to screen ocean-going shipping containers. The federal coordinator this year is the Coast Guard Rear Admiral, who commands the district based in Miami. The Super Bowl, to be played this year on February 7, is annually designated a special security event requiring ramped-up protection. This year, officials added the January 5 Orange Bowl and January 31 Pro Bowl because they are being played at the same venue, as well as the concerts, parades, parties, and other happenings that go along with games. “High-profile events are something that terrorist groups would love to interrupt somehow,” said the chief of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s Miami office. “We can’t just think of the stadium. There are events all over the place.”
Source: http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5i6A5xsFrGV8CAVQVTWHH BzJ7__fwD9CC0P181

[Return to top]

**National Monuments and Icons Sector**

51. December 3, Associated Press – (Utah) **Parts of Utah canyon get historic designation.** Parts of a remote central Utah canyon decorated with ancient Indian art have been added to the National Register of Historic Places. The Bureau of Land Management said Thursday that the nomination of 63 sites in the area were signed by the Keeper of the National Register on Monday. The canyon, which holds more than 10,000 prehistoric rock carvings and paintings, is a prized destination for rock art enthusiasts. It has also been a place of controversy because of plans for nearby mineral development.

[Return to top]

**Dams Sector**
52. December 4, Reuters – (International) **China jails officials over dam collapse cover-up.** China has sentenced 13 low-level officials to jail for an iron mine dam collapse just before the Olympic Games opened in Beijing last year, which was hushed up despite killing at least 43 nearby villagers. The tailings dam, which is used to retain mining waste, collapsed before dawn on August 1, 2008, just one week before the Olympic Games opened in Beijing on August 8. News of the disaster only trickled out weeks later. The mine in Loufan county, Shanxi province, belonged to a subsidiary of state-owned Taiyuan Iron and Steel Group, or Taigang, China’s flagship stainless steel producer. The local mine managers and local mine safety officials were sentenced to between 14 months and four years jail. They were charged with responsibility for the accident, and dereliction of duty. About a month later, a nearly identical collapse of another Shanxi iron mine tailings dam buried 276 villagers. China’s coal mining industry is the world’s most dangerous, killing about 3,000 people in 2008. Accidents at other types of mines are less common.


53. December 3, Wired – (National) **Dams could alter local weather, cause more rain.** As if America’s aging dams were not in enough trouble already, new research suggests that their reservoirs could be increasing the intensity of extreme rainstorms in their immediate vicinities. That is a problem because the dams were designed for the climate that existed in the area before they were built. If by virtue of their creation, they increase the chance that an extreme weather event will exceed the dams’ capacity, they could be less safe than previously thought. “What if the dam itself, its reservoir, could have accelerated or intensified the heavy rainfall patterns?” said a hydrologist at Tennessee Tech University, who has co-authored a paper and editorial on the topic accepted for publication in Natural Hazards Review and Water Resources Research, respectively. There is strong evidence that a standing body of water, like a lake, can alter precipitation patterns, she said. Increasing the amount of liquid water in a region increases the amount of evaporation in a region, too. That water vapor will eventually condense and fall as precipitation. So, it is logical to think that a dam’s reservoir could have the same impact. And dams allow irrigation, which can transform the land in the area, possibly leading to local climactic impacts. A research meteorologist at the University of Georgia, called the findings “interesting and plausible” in an e-mail to Wired.com. “The literature contains many examples of how extreme land use changes alter precipitation patterns,” she wrote, whose own work focuses on climactic changes induced by cities. She would like to see more detailed analysis of the mechanics behind how a dam could change local precipitation.


54. December 3, McAllen Monitor – (Texas) **Falcon power plant manager, co-worker face embezzlement charges.** The head of the Falcon Dam Power Plant and the facility’s operations manager have been arrested on federal embezzlement charges, the U.S. Attorney’s Office said Thursday. Prosecutors allege two men conspired to embezzle thousands of dollars from the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC), the government body that oversees border water rights issues between the United States and Mexico. According to a three-count indictment unsealed Thursday
morning, both men conspired to use a government credit card issued to the 40-year-old plant superintendent — one of the defendants — to make hundreds of dollars in personal purchases. The other man, the plant’s former operations manager, is also accused of directing power plant employees to conduct work on his personal property with $7,000 worth of stolen commission equipment including tool boxes, piping, batteries and a boom lift. The IBWC uncovered the alleged theft during a July asset audit of the Falcon facility, a commission spokeswoman said. Both men are scheduled to appear at a detention hearing on December 3. If convicted, one could face up to five years in prison and fines of up to $250,000. The other man faces a 10-year prison sentence if found guilty on all counts. The Falcon Dam Power Plant, managed by the IBWC, generates hydroelectric energy used to supply the power grid throughout western Starr County.

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