

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

For all of Friday night's action, see SPORTS, 1B

MEDAL WORK

The Supply Room in Oxford creates medals, patches and more for the military. 1C

More than **\$182** in coupons in today's Star

The Anniston Star

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COVER STORY

EMERGENCY RESPONSE



Stephen Gross/The Anniston Star

ABOVE: Brad Campbell, systems manager at 911, and radio worker Randall Landers look at transmissions across 911's coverage areas inside the EMA building in Jacksonville on Thursday. BOTTOM: An old radio, left, and one that is new.

The P25 radio system keeps first responders connected — but it needs an upgrade

BY BEN NUNNALLY
Anniston Star Staff Writer

JACKSONVILLE — It wasn't so long ago that Calhoun County 911 dispatchers took it on faith that police were nearing a caller's location.

But modern radio technology has given dispatchers digital maps with live updates of first responder locations, so they can say with authority that help is nearby.

Police and fire and EMS units hooked up with the county P25 radio system — a complex set of equipment, software and signals fired over high-powered microwave frequencies — share their GPS locations, which helps not only reassure 911 callers, but adds a layer of safety for responders.

"Not only can you see where an officer is, but you can see where their portable is," said Kevin Jenkins, 911 director, during a tour of the P25 system's inner workings at the agency's headquarters this week. "Imagine if they have to chase a suspect out into the woods. We can still send backup to their location."



The P25 radio system allows first response agencies throughout the county and state to instantly connect to one another during joint operations. For instance, the system was critical after the March 2018 tornado that hit Jacksonville, allowing quick coordination among police, fire and medical services, including agencies responding from outside Calhoun.

The radio system has been a regular topic for local government since July, when the Calhoun County 911 Board began negotiating a necessary upgrade to the system with city and county leaders.

The upgrade will cost about \$5.9 million with service provider Motorola, and 911, which manages the system, has most local governments on board to help pay.

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COVID-19

Mackey expects more schools to close

BY KRISTA JOHNSON
Montgomery Advertiser

As the end of August nears, and all Alabama public schools have opened up for face-to-face instruction, keeping students in classrooms amid the spike in COVID-19 cases is becoming harder each day, state Superintendent Eric Mackey said.



MACKEY

"It's becoming more and more challenging to keep schools open," Mackey said Thursday afternoon, following the news that the

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Montgomery Public School system had to close two schools to quarantine. "Every day we have more and more teachers and students going home after testing positive. It's been classrooms, schools and even districts. It's just one after another."

Over 4,000 positive cases were reported by Alabama schools this week, as of Friday morning — though

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BUSINESS

Classic on Noble no longer facing foreclosure sale

BY BEN NUNNALLY
Anniston Star Staff Writer

The building where Classic on Noble is located is no longer up for sale, according to an attorney for the mortgage lender.

Legal ads had been placed in The Anniston Star for weeks leading up to a planned foreclosure auction of the property Friday. The property described in the ads matched the address of Classic on Noble, a long-standing Anniston eatery owned by David and Cathryn Mashburn. According to Robert Rives, an attorney for Montgomery-based law firm Capell and Howard, that auction is canceled.

Rives said Friday that he could not discuss circumstances behind the cancellation, citing confidentiality rules.

In a statement provided Friday afternoon, Cathy Mashburn said, "Due to financial difficulties arising out of COVID, Classic on Noble has struggled, as have many other restaurants."

"We are currently restructuring our debt and with the love and support we have received from the community, we believe our restructuring will be successful and we will be able to continue serving the community out into the foreseeable future."

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WEATHER

Hurricane Ida arrives on Gulf Coast

BY JOHN SHARP
Alabama Media Group

The Alabama Department of Tourism was to meet Sunday at The Lodge at Gulf State Park for its annual meeting with some 300 expected to attend.

But Hurricane Ida, which is expected to intensify into a powerful Category 4 as it moves toward the south-central coast of Louisiana, on Friday canceled the "Governor's Conference on Tourism," in which Chief of Staff Jon Bonner was scheduled to speak.

"We thought it was unwise to encourage people to come

to the beach when the hurricane was approaching the Gulf of Mexico," said Lee Sennell, the director of tourism. He said that his agency is sending out notices so people can cancel their trip.

The conference's cancellation comes as some worries have surfaced along Coastal Alabama about rental units being largely occupied throughout the weekend. The worry, according to a Gulf Shores spokesman, is if the storm's trajectory shifts eastward, it will be difficult to evacuate Gulf Shores and Orange Beach in a timely manner.

Rental units are expected

to be 68 percent occupied on Saturday, and 64 percent on Sunday despite the deteriorating conditions within the Gulf. Double-red flags, which close the waters to swimmers, were flying Friday.

The Baldwin County Commission declared a "local state of emergency" and are awaiting a follow-up declaration from Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey's office sometime this weekend.

"I hope some of the people who are trying to make up their minds, do not come down here," said Commissioner Billie Jo Underwood. She said she was hopeful the county's declaration will assist visi-

tors in making that decision.

Grant Brown, spokesman with the city of Gulf Shores, said there is no reason for an evacuation because the storm's current path is toward the New Orleans area. But he said if there is a shift overnight toward the east, it could be concerning for Alabama's Pleasure Island.

"This is a scary storm for us," said Brown, noting the weekend occupancies, which drop down to mid-30s by Monday. "If overnight tonight, that storm's (path) shifts and comes this way, we're losing time because it's moving fast."

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