



Lees-McRae residence hall evacuated, cause unknown

STAFF REPORT

editor@wataugademocrat.com

BANNER ELK — No natural gas leaks were found in Avery Residence Hall, according to Lees-McRae College in Banner Elk, following an evacuation of the building on Aug. 30 that led to approximately 70 brief hospital stays.

“During the initial evacuation and subsequent sweeps, hardwired detectors in the building, and those worn by first responders were not triggered to elevated carbon monoxide levels,” an Aug. 31 statement

by LMC said. “All devices were tested and found to be operational. Investigations continued throughout the day by county inspectors, utilities representatives, professional contractors and college facilities staff. No natural gas leaks were found, and this was eliminated as the possible cause.”

The cause of the incident had yet to be determined as of Aug. 31.

“Additional testing concluded that all equipment is normally functioning, with the release of carbon monoxide below regulatory limits,” the Aug. 31 LMC statement

said. “Officials have not been able to replicate the conditions that led to the initial evacuation.”

The incident started after midnight on Aug. 30, when students started reported feeling unwell to staff.

“In an abundance of caution, we evacuated the building and emergency services was called,” Lees-McRae College’s Vice President for Planning and External Relations Blaine Hansen said on Aug. 30.

LMC evacuated the Avery



PHOTO BY CARL BLANKENSHIP

Avery Residence Hall on the campus of Lees-McRae College is closed due to a suspected gas leak on Friday, Aug. 30.

SEE **EVACUATED** ON PAGE 2

Cement truck overturns

Driver flown to Johnson City

BY KAYLA LASURE

kayla.lasure@wataugademocrat.com

BOONE — First responders used rescue equipment on Aug. 30 to free a driver of a fully loaded cement truck after the vehicle overturned on George Hayes Road.

N.C. State Highway Patrol Trooper R.J. Absher said he received the call at 12:17 p.m. along with personnel from Boone Fire Department and Watauga Medics. The truck had landed on its driver’s side in the yard of a home in the 2100 block of George Hayes Road, and the male driver was trapped inside.

The truck belonged to Hamby Brothers Concrete Inc. out of Lenoir, according to Absher. He said the driver — Kurtis James Yearwood, 32, of Granite Falls — was traveling to a nearby worksite when he lost control in a curve, crossed the center line, ran off the road to the left and overturned.

Yearwood was flown by WINGS to Johnson City Medical



PHOTO BY KAYLA LASURE

First responders tend to the driver of a cement truck after it overturned on Aug. 30.

Center with serious injuries. As of Sept. 3, Yearwood was in satisfactory condition, according to Johnson City Medical Center.

Absher believed Yearwood was traveling between 40 and 45 mph, and said the road did not have a posted speed limit. Absher did not think drugs or alcohol were involved, and Yearwood was wearing his seatbelt. As of Aug. 31, Absher had not issued any citations in the incident.



PHOTO BY KAYLA LASURE

A cement truck overturns in a curve on George Hayes Road.

Motorcyclist airlifted after Tuesday collision

BY KAYLA LASURE

kayla.lasure@wataugademocrat.com

BOONE — A woman from Todd was airlifted after her motorcycle collided with a truck on Sept. 3.

Boone Police Officer Steven Mueck said the call for the incident came in at 2:55 p.m. after a 66-year-old woman on a 2012 Harley Davison

SEE **MOTORCYCLE** ON PAGE 2

County to refinance Watauga High School loan

BY KAYLA LASURE

kayla.lasure@wataugademocrat.com

BOONE — Watauga County is moving forward with plans to refinance its loans on Watauga High School, which opened in 2010, that could save the county roughly

SEE **LOAN** ON PAGE 2



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