



STAYING HOT

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Tuned to your WAVELENGTH

Radio map could improve communication, safety for backcountry travelers



More companies – including Backcountry Access and RockieTalkie – are offering hand-held radios for backcountry travel. This model is tuned to 17.1, the radio frequency assigned to Prospect Gulch outside Silverton.

FORT LEWIS COLLEGE

Student arrested on hit suspicion

FLC police got tip about alleged murder-for-hire scheme

BY ELIZABETH POND
HERALD STAFF WRITER

A 19-year-old Fort Lewis College student was arrested Thursday on suspicion of criminal solicitation for first-degree murder and unlawful possession of a weapon on college grounds, according to a Monday news release from the college.

FLC student Jackson T. Keller was booked into La Plata County Jail after an investigation by the Fort Lewis College Police Department, with assistance from the Colorado Bureau of Investigation, the release said.

Keller, who is listed as a freshman linebacker on the 2025 FLC football roster, was released after posting \$50,000 bail, according to the release.

The murder-for-hire scheme was hatched amid souring relations involving one of Keller's teammates, Marcus Dylke, a defensive back, according to an arrest affidavit filed in La Plata County Combined Courts.

According to the affidavit, Keller first asked a mutual acquaintance to carry out the attack, and after he refused, he asked three unidentified men from Colorado Springs to kill Dylke.

Keller and Dylke had previously been friends, according to the affidavit. They had been living in dorm rooms connected by an adjoining bathroom. Dylke began locking his connecting door in recent weeks to keep Keller out after a string of incidents, the affidavit said.

Dylke told law enforcement that Keller attempted to enter his room on Jan. 28 but could not get in because the door was locked.

See STUDENT, 8A



SCOUT EDMONDSON/Durango Herald photos

Josh Kling, director of Outdoor Pursuits, communicates with Jamie Bernstein via radio Jan. 22 during a ski tour in Prospect Gulch. Recreators are encouraged to dial into certain frequencies when in certain zones in the backcountry to improve safety and communication.

BY SCOUT EDMONDSON

HERALD STAFF WRITER

When Liam Goettelman heads out for a backcountry ski in the San Juan Mountains, he starts by checking the Colorado Avalanche Information Center's avalanche danger forecast, decides on a safe route with his ski partners and makes sure his equipment is in order.

In addition to his skis, boots and poles, Goettelman carries an avalanche beacon, shovel and probe – crucial pieces of safety gear that no

On the web

To view the radio frequency map, visit thesanjuans.org/radio-program.

skier or snowboarder galavanting in the mountains should forego.

Goettelman also carries a portable radio, which have become increasingly common as backcountry skiing has grown in popularity – as much as eight-fold since 1995, according to a study presented in Montana State University's 2024 International Snow Science Workshop.

On Dec. 29, the Friends of

the San Juans introduced the San Juan Backcountry Radio Program. The program assigns radio frequencies to different ski zones – called open channels – which are visible through a map published on the organization's website.

Board member Evan Tyler said the radio frequency map was a community effort partially facilitated by Friends of the San Juans that came about as a result of the growing popularity of backcountry skiing.

"All of a sudden we're seeing a lot more traffic out there on radio channels," he said. "The goal was to create a tool where groups could

effectively communicate between groups, in a consistent manner that was also facilitating safe use."

Goettelman said he was all in when he learned about the program.

"I saw it and was really excited about it," he said. "It means that you can have effective communication and really be on the same page as all sorts of different users, which increases safety and ease of use in the backcountry."

Radios geared specifically toward backcountry recreators – brands like Backcountry Access and Rockie Talkie

See RADIO, 8A



The city of Durango's plan to convert the former Big Picture High School building at 215 E. 12th St. into a new police department has been scrapped in favor of building a brand-new station directly behind the historic former high school, which is to become a new city hall.

See STATION, 8A

Underground parking nixed from plans for new police station

The site of existing city hall and DPD headquarters are 'feasible' alternatives

BY CHRISTIAN BURNETT

HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Big Picture High School building and a proposed underground parking garage have been scrapped from the city of Durango's plans for a new joint city hall and police station.

Durango Police Department originally planned to move into the Big Picture building at 215 E. 12th St. next door to the historic high school at 201 E. 12th Street that is the site of a future city hall.

Now, according to Artaic

Group's John Usery, senior project manager, the Big Picture building is planned to be demolished with a new building to be built behind the city hall site.

In a presentation to City Council, Usery said renovating the Big Picture building and converting it into a police station would cost about as much as demolishing the building and building a new one, with the cost difference being within \$1 million.

Whether the Big Picture building is renovated or a new building is constructed, the building would need to satisfy Risk Cat-

egory IV requirements of the International Building Code, he said. The earlier proposed underground parking garage would be subject to the same requirements, and that would add "significant" cost to the development.

Risk Category IV requirements designate facilities such as fire and police departments as essential facilities that must maintain structural integrity in the event of an emergency or natural disaster, according to the International Code Council.

Voters gave their blessing for the new city hall and police station in April 2025 when they

See STATION, 8A