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ATMOS ENERGY

Judge: Explosion records needed

Company is facing four separate lawsuits related to gas lines in Dallas County

By Sue Ambrose
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The plaintiff's attorney stood before the judge and recited the statistic: In 2 1/2 years, gas lines had been struck 2,965 times after the defendant in the case, Dallas-based Atmos Energy, had made a mistake marking them.

The strikes had all happened in the company's Mid-Tex division, which covers the D-FW area and portions of Central Texas.

County Court at Law Judge Melissa Bellan stopped the attorney. She wanted to double-check what she had just heard.

"How many?" she asked. "And

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TEXAS COMPTROLLER

State school review set to target DEI, visas, books

Findings could advance the priorities of the GOP when legislators return to Austin

By Aaron Torres
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AUSTIN — A state review intended to uncover wasteful spending in Texas public schools will also scrutinize diversity policies, foreign workers and library books, extending its reach into some of the most contentious issues in Texas politics.

Internal documents reviewed by *The Dallas Morning News* show that Comptroller Don Huffines' office plans to examine those subjects, along with school districts' spending on lobbyists, in four districts at the request of Gov. Greg Abbott.

The previously undisclosed details

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VAN ZANDT COUNTY

Residents grappling with tragedies that left 6 dead



Photos by Chitose Suzuki/Staff photographer

Fire Marshal's Office and ATF officials check around a Van Zandt County home Wednesday after a fire that killed four children in Canton.

Sheriff's deputy killed in shootout, while 5 people died in fire near Canton

By Jamie Landers,
Michael Cuvillo, Elissa Jorgensen,
and Nicole Asbury
Staff Writers

Residents of a small East Texas town grappled Wednesday with two overnight tragedies — a shootout that killed a sheriff's deputy and a house fire that claimed the lives of a mother and her four children.

The deaths shocked Canton's more than 5,000 residents, who describe it as a tight knit East Texas town that rarely experiences such tragedies. Bill Wright, who has lived in Canton for 72 years, said in an interview he couldn't recall the town facing any tragedy like it in decades.

"In a lot of ways, this is the worst thing that's ever happened in our small town," said Sophia Darnell, a



A makeshift memorial is seen Wednesday in front of a Van Zandt County home, where a fire also killed the children's mother.

23-year-old who was born and raised in Canton.

Community members were first rattled when they learned of an exchange of gunfire Tuesday night at a home south of Canton.

Officers from the Van Zandt County Sheriff's Office and Canton Police Department were attempting to serve multiple felony warrants around 10 p.m. at a home in the 4300 block of State Highway 198, according to a news release from the sheriff's office. About 20 minutes later, law enforcement reported shots were fired from inside the residence toward police at the scene. Officers returned the gunfire.

During the melee, a sheriff's depu-

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Tom Fox/Staff photographer

Gary Alton Matthews Jr., who has fathered multiple children in Texas and Louisiana, meets with his legal team on March 26 in Dallas.

THE FATHER | Part 5 of 5 in a series

He denied fathering their children; now, courts are calculating his debt

Judge determines man easily had enough money to provide for his kids

By Lauren M. Caruba and Erin Sood
Staff Writers

Gary Alton Matthews Jr. had more than enough money to support his children.

That much was clear from the extensive financial records the state of Texas had subpoenaed in his child

support case against Kaitlyn Morris. Kaitlyn was one of seven mothers who accused Gary of impregnating them, largely through reproductive coercion. She was one of five who filed for child support.

What had also been revealed in those records was a financial relationship between Gary and Sheena Chan. In multiple transactions, the records showed, Gary had paid Chan, a Dallas-based private DNA collector, at least \$24,000.

Even before those payments surfaced, Nadia Sutton, another mother whose child support case had overlapped with Kaitlyn's, had been suspicious of Chan. Chan represented in testimony and through testing records that she had collected Gary's DNA three times in 2024: once in Dallas and twice when Gary supposedly flew her to Bahrain.

The DNA samples Chan had col-

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Sunny and warm



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