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Riding the rails



The Norfolk & Western Class J No. 611 steam locomotive is back into service for a limited series of passenger excursions this fall at Virginia Scenic Railway.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY ZAC MCGINNIS

Shenandoah Valley Limited 611 steam engine excursions return

Monique Calello
Staunton News Leader
USA TODAY NETWORK

The Virginia Scenic Railway announced July 9 in a press release that a joint venture between the Virginia Scenic Railway, The Virginia Museum of Transportation, Inc., the Steam Railroad Institute and the Virginia Mechanical Preservation Society will bring the famed Norfolk & Western Class J No. 611 steam locomotive back into service for a limited series of passenger excursions this fall.

The sleek and powerful locomotive, designed and built in Roanoke by the Norfolk & Western Railway, has been widely hailed as the finest steam locomotive in the world, the release said.

The 1950 Norfolk & Western Class J No. 611 is the sole surviving Class J 4-8-4

steam locomotive. After entering service in 1950, it transported passengers until it retired in 1959.

The 611 is owned and operated by Virginia Museum of Transportation as a traveling exhibit. It is the official Steam Locomotive of the State of Virginia, a National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Starting on Sept. 26, the Virginia Scenic Railway will operate the steam-led passenger excursion as the Shenandoah Valley Limited for five consecutive weekends.

Tickets are expected to be available for purchase later this summer through Virginia Scenic Railway's website.

"We are excited to partner with new and old friends to bring back the thrill of

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The 1950 Norfolk & Western Class J No. 611 is the sole surviving Class J 4-8-4 steam locomotive. After entering service in 1950, it transported passengers until it retired in 1959. PHOTO PROVIDED BY LESLIE W. KIPP

VSP: Motorists exchange gunfire along Interstate 64

Brad Zinn
Staunton News Leader
USA TODAY NETWORK

Virginia State Police said a road rage incident on Interstate 64 resulted in two motorists opening fire on one another in Waynesboro.

Police sent out a press release seeking the public's assistance concerning the July 9 incident.

Just minutes after 5 p.m. on I-64 eastbound, a black Genesis sedan cut off a white truck, possibly a Toyota with large tires, near Exit 96 in Waynesboro.

The two vehicles stopped in the travel lane, and the driver of the truck pulled a gun and fired at the other vehicle, police said. The driver of the Genesis returned gunfire. The truck drove away from the scene onto Exit 96.

The driver of the truck in question was described as a man in his early to mid-30s, and police said he had light brown or reddish hair with a distinct jaw line.

The driver of the sedan, who was not injured, remained on the scene

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Woman pleads guilty, sentenced for hit-and-run

Brad Zinn
Staunton News Leader
USA TODAY NETWORK

STAUNTON – A Staunton woman has been sentenced for a hit-and-run that killed a man earlier this year on U.S. 250 in Augusta County.

On March 15 at about 11 p.m., 44-year-old Rosa A. Merida Francisco was driving along U.S. 250, just outside of Staunton near Desper Hollow Road, when she struck a man in the road.

Raachell L. Turner, 20, of Staunton, died at the scene.

Merida Francisco, though, didn't stop her vehicle. She continued onto Desper Hollow Road, then Maine Circle to her home.

In Augusta County Circuit Court on July 10, Augusta County Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Holly Rasheed said authorities traced a fluid leak from the scene to Merida Francisco's residence, where her vehicle had front-end damage and bloodstains. A shield plate from her vehicle was also found at the scene of the hit-and-run.

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