

Panel urges widespread screening for depression in adults / **A3**



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CONVENTION CENTER

Director fired over vendor conflict

Ethics investigation leads to ouster

By **Lucas Sullivan**
The Columbus Dispatch

An ethics investigation into the food-vendor contract at the Greater

Columbus Convention Center has resulted in the termination of the center's day-to-day director.

Rodney Myers, operations director for the region's expo hub and employed by the Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority, was fired on Jan. 15. That

INSIDE: Former Chicago official convicted in Reflex case | A9

came after officials who oversee the facility discovered that he previously had been paid as a consultant by Centerplate, the company that was awarded the

facility's food-vending contract in late 2014.

Myers' relationship with Centerplate was uncovered during an Ohio Ethics Commission investigation, two sources at Columbus City Hall and one close to

SEE CONFLICT, A11



High: 34 Low: 22
Details on Page B12

COAL MINING

Hold on leases may not include the Wayne

By **Laura Arenschield**
The Columbus Dispatch

The Obama administration's announcement this month that it would put a moratorium on issuing new coal-mining leases for federal lands will apply to Ohio's Wayne National Forest, but might not apply to the one coal lease in the works for Ohio's only national forest.

One company, Buckingham Coal LLC, has a pending lease to mine coal beneath the Wayne. That lease

SEE LEASES, A10

ENVIRONMENT / SEBRING WATER



Sebring residents Connor Loy, 23, and Rodney Cunningham, 25, load bottled water into a car. They volunteered their time this weekend to help supply other Sebring residents with safe drinking water. REBECCA DEVEREAUX/YOUNGSTOWN VINDICATOR

No one told them

Officials hid lead contamination from the public

By **Laura Arenschield** | The Columbus Dispatch

State environmental officials knew as early as October that residents of Sebring in Mahoning County were drinking water contaminated with lead but did not warn the public, records show.

Instead, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency sent multiple warnings to the Sebring Water Treatment Plant, demanding that operators there notify the public that tests showed elevated lead

"But beyond the director's call, we also think Ohio lawmakers don't have to wait for stronger federal rules. They can and they should take action now to protect Ohioans' drinking water."

—Ohio Environmental Council director
Melanie Houston

SEE LEAD, A4

ONGOING COVERAGE

Some evicted tenants gain home offers

By **Mark Ferenchik**
and **Encarnacion Pyle**
The Columbus Dispatch

Rental property managers and others have offered homes to residents of the Bryden House apartments who were told by management that they need to be out of the building by this weekend.

Meanwhile, Ben Horne, a lawyer with the Legal Aid Society of Columbus, talked

SEE HOMES, A10



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LEAD

From Page A1

levels. The EPA even set a deadline of Nov. 29 to notify customers of the health threat.

No warnings were issued, according to the EPA.

Tests conducted from June through September found high levels of lead in water at some older homes in the communities served by the Sebring plant. Lead can harm the nervous and reproductive systems and kidneys, and is particularly harmful to young children and fetuses.

High lead levels in children can cause behavioral issues, mental retardation and learning disabilities. And it can be fatal at high levels.

But it wasn't until Jan. 21 that the EPA issued a notice of violation to the plant, prompting public notification. Finally, 8,100 people who get their drinking water from the Sebring public water system learned they were at risk.

This week, the state is sending bottled water and testing kits to Sebring customers. Schools there have been closed since Friday.

Ohio regulators say two of 123 water samples taken at schools in the northeastern Ohio community tested above the federal limits for lead and copper.

On Tuesday, the Ohio EPA said the most recent test from Sunday at three schools in Sebring found excessive lead levels in two drinking-water fountains. State officials say that 22 samples showed evidence of lead that was below the federal limits; the rest had none.

On Monday, the EPA



Sebring Mayor Michael Pinkerton, second from left, addresses a packed house during council meeting at Village Hall on Monday where concerns of high levels of lead in the drinking water were voiced. KATIE RICKMAN / THE VINDICATOR

issued an emergency order barring the water-treatment plant's director, James Bates, from working at the plant. The EPA has said that Bates falsified records to the EPA, which is calling for a criminal investigation.

Reached at home on Tuesday, Bates said he never falsified records in his 23 years there and that the EPA is making him a scapegoat.

He said the plant sent some public notifications in December. "We did 40 samples, and we sent all the information to the 40 people who actually (lived) where the water was tested."

The test period was June 1 to Sept. 30. When asked why notifications didn't go out sooner, Bates said he could not answer that yet.

"That is a very good question," he said. "And I've got to wait until I get the (Ohio EPA) authorization, and then I can definitely answer that question."

Bates has been in trouble for shoddy record-keeping before. In 2009, the Ohio EPA reached a settlement with him over incomplete records and other issues involving the Sebring water-treatment plant, according to EPA records. The settlement allowed him to keep his operator's license.

Ohio EPA Director Craig Butler has called for the federal government to overhaul its regulations over water-treatment plants.

State EPA spokeswoman Heidi Griesmer said the water-treatment plant gave the EPA incomplete data about its public notifications. Each time the system tested for lead, she said, the plant should have notified users.

And, she said, state regulators were too lenient.

"Our field staff was too patient with the village," she said. She said the agency is conducting an internal review and is going over its operating

procedures.

Melanie Houston, director of water policy and environmental health for the advocacy group Ohio Environmental Council, said it is encouraging that the EPA is taking action.

"And the hope is that this will prevent future situations like this," Houston said. "But beyond the director's call, we also think Ohio lawmakers don't have to wait for stronger federal rules. They can and they should take action now to protect Ohioans' drinking water."

Houston said those regulations could include more and better testing, quicker and more effective public notification and better enforcement of operators who don't abide state and federal regulations.

Information from The Associated Press was included in this story.
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DEPRESSION

From Page A3

Hormones can play a role, during pregnancy and after a woman gives birth. The task force cited a study that found about 10 percent of new mothers experienced a postpartum depression episode, more serious and lasting longer than so-called "baby blues."

Why screen?

Depression can go unrecognized, especially if patients don't seek a diagnosis. Updating 2009 guidelines, the task force reviewed years of research and said Tuesday that screening for depression remains an important part of primary care for adults of all ages. This time around, the guideline separately addresses pregnant and

postpartum women, concluding they, too, benefit from screening.

A variety of screening questionnaires are available, such as one that asks how often, over the last two weeks, patients have felt bad about themselves or felt like they're a failure, had little interest in doing things or experienced problems sleeping, or concentrating.

Still undetermined, the task force said, is how often to screen, given that a person's circumstances and risk could change over time.

Those aren't new recommendations; several other health groups also have long urged depression screening, although there's no data on how often it's done. But the task force says one key is that appropriate follow-up be available to accurately diagnose those flagged by screening — and then to

choose treatments that best address each person's symptoms with the fewest possible side effects.

Screening is a first step

Treatment options include psychotherapies such as cognitive behavioral therapy, a variety of antidepressants or some combination. One challenge is that there's little way to predict which patient will respond to which treatment, Dr. Michael Thase of the University of Pennsylvania, who wasn't involved with the task force, said in an accompanying editorial in JAMA. Many antidepressants have modest effects, and typical first-line therapies may not be enough for more severely affected patients, he noted.

Pending a better way to choose, primary care doctors may need to get creative

to be sure patients don't abandon treatment. Thase said. He suggested that health workers call to check if patients have filled their antidepressant prescriptions, or trying web-based symptom monitoring to see if they're responding to therapy or need a switch.

A bigger challenge can be finding a specialist to whom primary care doctors can refer their more seriously affected patients, said Dr. Michael Klinkman of the University of Michigan, who also wasn't involved with the task force.

"Either the capacity is not there, or the wait times are so long that a patient who is referred is in limbo for weeks and weeks while they might be fairly sick," said Klinkman, a family physician who works with rural primary care providers to develop needed support systems.