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Austin chief, NAMI talk about police training

Groups reflect on law training for crisis situations

BY EMILY CUTTS
Post Bulletin

AUSTIN — In the aftermath of a police shooting that killed a 38-year-old Austin man, the head of the Austin Police Department and leaders of local chapters of a national advocacy group on mental illness reflect on the training law enforcement receive for crisis situations.

On Thursday, Dec. 23, Kokou Christopher Fiafonou died as a result of multiple gunshot wounds. His death has been ruled a homicide by the Southern Minnesota Regional Medical Examiner's Office.

Fiafonou's death came after a more than 24-hour stand-off with law enforcement who have said that he had a knife and threatened to hurt others. Fiafonou reportedly confronted officers in the parking lot of a Kwik Trip gas station when a two-year veteran of the police department fired his weapon.

Social media posts have said that Fiafonou had struggled with his mental health.

The officer, Zachary Gast, has been placed on standard administrative leave. The Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension is investigating the incident.

REQUIRED TRAINING

Law enforcement agencies in Minnesota are required to provide at least a total of 16 hours within an officer's three-year licensing cycle of in-service training in crisis intervention and mental illness crises; conflict management and mediation;

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Photos by Brian Todd / Post Bulletin
Gary Nation, a milk truck driver for Caledonia Haulers, steps down from his rig Dec. 16 at Metz Hart-Land Dairy in rural Winona County. Nation has been driving a milk truck since he was 15 years old.

Behind the wheel Trucking industry faces its own shortage

BY BRIAN TODD
Post Bulletin

CALEDONIA Gary Nation's link in the supply chain is about 200 miles long most days.

Nation drives a milk truck for Caledonia Haulers, visiting three or four dairies each day, filling his truck with somewhere north of 40,000 pounds of milk per trip to DairiConcepts, a Dairy Farmers of America plant in Zumbrota.

"I just don't know what I'd do otherwise," Nation says. At age 70, he enjoys his time behind the wheel. "I enjoy the farmers."

He's been loving the job since before he was old enough to do it, legally. Nation started driving a truck – a milk truck



Gary Nation, a milk hauler working for Caledonia Haulers, unravels the hose on the back of his milk truck after arriving at the Wilbert and Scott Feine Dairy on Dec. 16 near Rushford.

– at the age of 15, getting up early to cover a route before going to school. He jokes that

his driving instructor knew Nation drove a truck before he could get a license.

"He asked, 'You going to do this all your life?'" Nation says. "I said, 'Yes.'"

Back in those days, Nation says he'd load 10-gallon cans of milk into the back of his truck before hauling them to a processing plant. Today, the milk goes from a storage tank on the farm to the tank on the back of his rig that holds up to 53,600 pounds of milk.

On a blustery Thursday in mid-December, Nation's route takes him to three dairies where he picks up about 46,000 pounds of milk before hauling it to Zumbrota to offload the goods before returning to the truck barn in Lewiston where, the next day, he makes another milk run and does it all over again.

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Golf pro David Richardson retires

He has taken on more citywide administrative duties recently

BY RANDY PETERSEN
Post Bulletin

After a 40-year career, Rochester golf pro David Richardson sees retirement as an opportunity to play more golf.

"The real truth is I fell in love with playing golf again these past couple of years," said the Soldiers Field golf pro, who is retiring Friday.

Richardson, who has taken on more citywide administrative duties in recent years, said he's periodically tried to fit in one round of golf each week during the season, but his daily duties made it a

struggle.

"This last year, I made a real commitment to playing twice a week, and I just loved it," he said, noting a citywide resurgence in golf activity makes it a good time to retire and join others on local courses.

Richardson came to Rochester in 1989, lured from Owatonna Country Club, where he was the head professional for three years, following his start as assistant professional at Hazeltine National Golf Club in Chaska, Minn.

A native of the Fargo-Moorhead area, Richardson



Joe Ahlquist / Post Bulletin
David Richardson is retiring after 19 years as the city golf pro. Richardson is shown Dec. 21 at Soldiers Field Golf Course in Rochester.

said Tom Murphy, a former Lourdes High School golf coach, recruited him to work at the Rochester Golf and Country

Club to start a juniors program similar to what was being done at Owatonna and Hazeltine.

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Turkish market run by at-risk women at standstill after lira crash

Customers cut back on purchases as inflation surges

BY UMIT OZDAL
Reuters

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey — Hazal Tunc and her friends founded Turkey’s first women-only street market eight years ago to help victims of domestic violence and divorcees, and it has provided them with jobs and security — until now.

Like organizations and companies across Turkey, the market has seen business shrivel dramatically as a result of a currency crisis

in which the lira has lost as much as 48% of its value in the past two months alone.

The market in the mainly Kurdish southeastern city of Diyarbakir enjoyed buoyant trade in its early years but declined in the last two, particularly in the last six months as the lira crash has sent prices soaring and ravaged household budgets.

“Sales have come to a complete standstill. In the past, customers used to buy two kilos of carrots. Now they come and buy three carrots,”

said Tunc, 46, a mother of three who helped found the market for fruits, vegetables and handicrafts.

The lira crisis was prompted by President Tayyip Erdogan’s push for lower interest rates despite a sharp increase in inflation and warnings from economists.

‘EVERYONE HAS GIVEN UP’

In happier days, up to 256 women made a living selling their wares at the street market, but that has dwindled to 69.

“People’s purchasing power is almost completely gone — and so is our selling power,” Tunc said. “Everyone has given up.”

The lira staged a sharp rebound last week after the government unveiled a deposit-protection plan, and the state backed a series of market interventions selling billions of dollars.

Tunc was unimpressed.

“If they (the government) could intervene, why did they wait three months, four months?” she said. “Many people committed suicide, they went into debt. If (the government) could solve this, why didn’t they do it?”

One week ago, before the government moves, one dollar was worth 18 lira. On Monday it was worth 11.4 lira, though still down 35% from a year ago.

Economists say the lira remains vulnerable, and with it people’s living standards. Annual inflation is expected to jump toward 30% next year from 21% last month, as import prices soar and retailers cover rising goods, energy and labor costs.

Vegetable vendor Hanim Dogan said people now struggled even to buy basic food items.

“In the evening bread costs 4 lira, and the next morning it is 7 lira. People are stumped and don’t know what to do. A person who bought 5 kilos of oranges before, now buys 1 or 2 kilos,” she said.

“The financial situation has become very difficult.”

Trucking

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At each stop, he knows the farmers, he knows the cats and dogs, and he knows his routine.

Back up to the milk tank. Connect the hose at the back of the truck to the tank, and start the pump. Collect two samples of milk from each tank. And, when done, rinse out the tank, clean up and put everything back where he found it. Often he slips in and out without the farmers even taking notice.

KEEPING OUT OF THE DITCH

Not every day goes so smoothly.

Driving a truck in Minnesota means dealing with harsh weather.

“We had that chunk snow, 17 inches, a couple of years ago,” he recalls. “I was blocked into the shop up there. I couldn’t get out. But I waited around. At about 12:30 we got going. I worked my way through everything.”

The keys on days like that: communication, patience and perseverance.

“You have to at least try,” he says. “Try more than once.”

He understands that dairies don’t have unlimited storage capacity, so if he can’t pick up the milk, those farmers will lose money. Nation prides himself on not letting that happen.

For a while, Nation owned his own milk route, but eventually he sold it to a processor, then went to work for Caledonia Haulers. He also hauled beef for a bit. But he’s never done the long-haul driving, always sticking to regional routes.

Most days he starts at about 7:30 or 8 a.m. – he’s got coworkers who are up long before the sun – and he’s usually home by 4 p.m. or so.

At 200 miles a day, he still loves his job.

“I’m not the world’s best truck driver,” he laughs as he pulls into Lewiston, the wind buffeting his rig on the two-lane road. “I just keep it out of the ditch.”

SUPPLY CHAIN OF TRUCK DRIVERS RUNS THIN

Got a commercial drivers license and need a job?

They’re ready to hire you at Caledonia Haulers.

“Absolutely. As many as you can send our way,” said Jim Gallup, recruiter of driver services at Caledonia Haulers, a trucking company based in Caledonia. “The freight is out there, but we can’t find employees fast enough.”

The Houston County company is not alone.

According to the American Trucking Association, there’s a shortage of about 80,000 drivers nationwide today, and that number is likely to double in the next 10 years.

Dennis Gavin, president and CEO at



Brian Todd / Post Bulletin

Gary Nation checks the temperature of the milk Dec. 16 in a storage tank at Metz Hart-Land Dairy north of Rushford. Nation visited three dairies that day on his 200-mile milk run across Southeast Minnesota.

The Big Haul

How vital is trucking to our economy, and what is the state of the industry? The following numbers come via the 2020 annual Trucking Trends Report from the American Trucking Associations:

Trucking Jobs	Trucking's Economic Impact	Trucking Industry
3.36 million: Number of professional truck drivers in the United States. The trucking industry supports a total of 7.65 million jobs, which includes mechanics, administration and more.	10.23 billion: The amount of freight moved in tons. That work created \$732.3 billion in revenue.	6 or less: Number of trucks in 91.5% of trucking fleets. Meanwhile, 97.4% of trucking fleets operate with fewer than 20 trucks.
80,000: The industry’s current shortage of drivers. That number could grow to a shortage of 160,000 drivers by 2030 if current trends continue.	96: Percentage of Minnesota manufactured tonnage transported by truck	\$53,000: Median annual salary for a truck driver working a national, irregular route.
42.3 and 7.8: Those are the percentage of minorities and women, respectively, among the nation's truck drivers. While low as a percentage of the population, the 7.8% of women drivers is an all-time high.	70.9: Percentage of the value of surface trade between the U.S. and Canada.	\$86,000: Average annual salary for a private fleet driver.
	83.8: Percentage of the cross-border trade with Mexico	Forum Design Center
	695 billion: Value of goods moved via truck between the U.S.-Mexico and U.S.-Canada worth of goods	

Caledonia Haulers, notes the demographics are not in the industry’s favor. Fifty-seven percent of truck drivers are older than 45, and another 27% are 55 or older. Just 20% of truck drivers are younger than 45.

“That’s a pretty alarming number,” Gavin said.

SHORT SUPPLY, HIGH DEMAND

Gavin can reel off a litany of reasons: Federal regulations on hours you can drive, another rule limiting the range of drivers younger than 21, the pay scale, and, perhaps biggest of all, the lifestyle of a long-haul driver.

Tom Gierok, truck driving instructor for Minnesota State College Southeast in Winona, says wages have come up, and some companies are offering five-figure bonuses to new drivers, but preparing someone for the life of a truck driver is hard to replicate in the classroom.

“The big thing is preparation,” Gierok said. “Preparing these new drivers for the lifestyle. They’re not going to be home as much as their friends. They’re going to be missing things other people don’t.”

Both Gavin and Gierok agree that one problem that makes the long-haul lifestyle hard is that truck drivers have

traditionally been paid by the mile, so when they are stuck in a port or a loading facility waiting for their cargo, they’re not earning any money. And that’s time away from home that’s being wasted.

Gavin adds that new drivers don’t have the same desire to be out on the road 60-70 hours a week. Instead, they want to drive 40 hours and be home for their kids’ birthdays or athletic events. That means it might take twice as many drivers to cover the same mileage, Gavin said.

“Turnover is very high on the first-year drivers,” Gierok added.

RULES AND CONSEQUENCES

Another factor that reduces the productivity of drivers are ELDs – electronic logging devices – a piece of equipment that monitors the number of hours a driver has been working, whether the wheels are turning or not, and effectively shuts down their rig after either 11 hours of driving or 14 hours on the job during a shift.

While he wants drivers to be safe on the road, Gallup says the ELDs take common sense out of the equation.

“A driver knows when he’s tried, but now you have a black box making that decision,” he said.

The result is, as a truck driver gets near

the end of his or her allotted time, they start looking for a place to park for the night or risk having the truck’s engine electronically shut down, sometimes within just an hour or so of the destination.

“There’s nowhere to park these darn things,” Gallup said. “About 5:30-6 p.m., go look at the truck stop in St. Charles, they’re filled up.”

The unintended consequence of ELDs, Gallup said, is sometimes drivers may speed up on the road to try to make a destination before the clock runs out.

FIXES FOR THE SYSTEM

U.S. Rep. Angie Craig, a Democrat who represents Minnesota’s 2nd District, said she’d like to revisit some of the rules that are hampering the trucking industry. She pointed to a pilot program at Dakota County Technical College where students ages 18-20 can be certified with their Commercial driver’s license for driving across state lines, something federal regulations currently prohibit.

Gierok pointed to that restriction as one of the main problems in recruiting young drivers to the industry.

“For kids out of high school that’s a three-year window,” Gierok said. “They’re not going to wait the three years to get their CDL. They’re

going to find another career path.”

Craig also pointed to two other changes she’d like to see. For drivers hauling livestock, she’d like them to be able to continue with their loads if they’re within 150 miles of their destination no matter what the ELD clock says. She’d also like to repeal the excise tax on new trucks.

“One of the barriers right now is there’s a tremendous excise tax on the cost of the big trucks,” she said. “Those newer technology trucks have such a reduction in carbon emissions, and I personally think we should incentivize trucking companies buying the newer trucks.”

John Hausladen, president of the Minnesota Trucking Association, said that while salaries have gone up 29% in the last two years, the fight for new drivers continues. Part of the problem, he said, is perception.

“Fleets have adjusted routes and length of haul to accommodate the needs of the modern truck driver,” Hausladen said. “Truck drivers today can pick from a variety of local, regional and over-the-road options. Today’s trucks are the safest and most comfortable they have ever been.”

At Caledonia Haulers, Emily Burrichter, the company’s financial analyst, said today’s trucks are “specked out” to make them more comfortable. Gavin added that the company has added terminals in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and Janesville, Wis., to allow loads to be relayed between drivers so those drivers don’t have to venture as far from their home.

TRUCKING IS EVERYWHERE

Hausladen notes the impact of trucking on every American.

“It is no exaggeration to say that if you got it, a truck brought

it,” Hausladen said.

“Virtually everything spends some time on a truck. In fact, 96% of Minnesota manufactured tonnage is transported by truck.”

Minnesota state Sen. Gene Dornink, R-Hayfield, sits on a pair of committees that deal directly with trucking. He said trucking is vital to Minnesota’s economy and the nation’s economy.

“Every day when you look out your window, you’ll see trucks delivering packages and semis going the highway,” Dornink said.

He highlighted the agriculture and manufacturing sectors, which need trucks to deliver goods to market and bring in a supply of materials the make products. Like many, he says regulations in the trucking industry have stifled the recruitment of new drivers.

Dornink said that between the regulations drivers face and a reduction in testing stations in Minnesota, the government is making it harder and harder to get and keep that commercial drivers license needed to operate a tractor-trailer on the road.

All this, he said, is compounded by decisions that unnecessarily make more work for truck drivers. Bringing California emissions standards to Minnesota would further back up ports in Minnesota. On top of that, the cry to shut down oil and gas pipelines means that those products must move by rail or, more likely, truck.

“Pipelines are the safest and fastest way to transport crude oil and gas,” Dornink said. “They free up our rail and truck capacity while alleviating the risks of spillage and waste posed by moving these products on the road.”

TRUCKING TOUCHES EVERYTHING

Gavin pointed to his own business to show how vital trucking is to commerce.

While Caledonia Haulers specializes in transporting food products, the list items the company hauls is endless. Soybean oil, milk, apple juice, honey; just those products alone go on to make everything from Tootsie Rolls and cheese and ice cream and hundreds of other milk-based products to candles and wine and hard ciders.

All the company’s trucks are 100% food-grade certified, and while his employees might just haul one ingredient to a bakery or a winery, they have played a part in a lot of what you eat throughout the region, Gavin said.

And he’d like to haul some more.

“I can buy more trucks,” Gavin said. “I just need people.”

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