

# BRAINERD DISPATCH

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## Snow squall pileup

Steve Kohls / Brainerd Dispatch

Emergency personnel walk among the damaged vehicles at Hole-in-the-Day Drive on Highway 371 in Nisswa Friday after several cars and trucks crashed in the area where the winds blew snow off of Gull Lake. The whiteout conditions contributed to reduced visibility and slippery conditions making it difficult for emergency personnel to help the crash victims.

### Whiteout conditions cause multi-vehicle crash on Highway 371

By Tim Speier  
Brainerd Dispatch

Nisswa

Strong wind gusts ripping across Gull Lake's Hole-in-the-Day Bay brought whiteout conditions to Highway 371, causing a multi-car crash just before noon on Friday and shutting down both lanes of the highway for most of the day.

The Nisswa Fire Department responded to the crash, reported at 11:53 a.m. north of Brainerd. According to Nisswa Fire Chief, Shawn Bailey, there were 23 vehicles involved in the crash, including three semi trailers.

The Minnesota State Patrol reported that a sudden snow squall with white-out conditions was to blame for sending three people to Essentia Health-St. Joseph's Medical Center for treatment of injuries.

Leroy Marvin Lorentz, 66, St. Peter, was driving a 2021 Ram 3500 truck. Lorentz, who was wearing a seat belt, was transported to the hospital with non-life-threatening injuries. No airbags deployed in Lorentz's truck.

Wyatt Joseph Rech, 20, Akeley, was driving a 2019 Chevrolet Silverado. Rech, who was not wearing a seatbelt, the state patrol reported, was transported to the hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.

**PILEUP:** Page A12

## Eichorn, Ruud head toward party nomination fight

### Lueck says he won't challenge Kresha in new House district

By Chelsey Perkins  
Brainerd Dispatch

BRAINERD — A battle for the Republican Party nomination is brewing between state Sens. Justin Eichorn and Carrie Ruud after redistricting placed the two incumbents in the same district.

Meanwhile, two local members of the Minnesota House lumped together within the newly formed District 10A will not find themselves in a similar fight for the party nod after state Rep. Dale Lueck, R-Aitkin, told the Dispatch Friday, Feb. 18, he will not seek



Eichorn



Ruud



Kresha



Lueck

reelection. His counterpart, Rep. Ron Kresha, R-Little Falls, announced plans to run in a Thursday news release.

The political shakeups follow Tuesday's release of new congressional and legislative maps of the state decided by the Minnesota Judicial Branch Special Redistricting Panel. The redrawing of

political boundaries, a once-in-a-decade exercise after the U.S. Census updates population data, is intended to equalize the number of constituents served in each district.

Eichorn, a two-term Republican senator from Grand Rapids, issued a news release Thursday announcing his run for the newly formed Senate

District 6. The district includes the northern three-quarters of Crow Wing County along with portions of Cass and Itasca counties.

He said the redistricting played out differently than he expected, but he noted the current Senate District 5 is an area where he already takes a regional approach to recognize the different priorities of the population centers. The new district would be no different, Eichorn, 37, said during a phone interview Thursday.

**DISTRICTS:** Page A14

## Character profile outlines must-haves in next Brainerd superintendent

By Theresa Bourke  
Brainerd Dispatch

BRAINERD — The next superintendent of Brainerd Public Schools should be a team-builder, a visionary, a spokes-

person for the district and an open-minded, approachable person who puts student needs first.

Those are just a few of the attributes included in the superintendent

profile created after a series of interviews, focus group meetings and survey responses from community members in recent weeks.

Superintendent Laine Larson announced ear-

lier this year she will retire at the end of June after six years in the district. The School Board then contracted with School Exec Connect to begin the search for her replacement.

Consultants from School Exec Connect convened several focus groups composed of staff, students, parents, administrators, business leaders and other community members to

learn what they would like to see in the next superintendent and received 409 responses on a communitywide survey.

**SCHOOLS:** Page A13

## Law enforcement provides tips to avoid cybercrime

By Tim Speier  
Brainerd Dispatch

BAXTER — Though less often reported than other crimes, instances of internet and phone-based fraud and scams are on the rise and, according to officials, show no sign of slowing down.

In 2021, the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center released its 2020 Internet Crime Report. It states in one year, internet-based crimes have risen 69.4%, from 467,361 reported in 2019 to 791,790 reported in 2020.

The FBI's report includes only incidents that are self-reported through its online portal and that number is an understatement of how often cybercrimes occur, said Baxter Police Sgt. Victor Sofie. Most victims do not report their victimization, he said, as they are often embarrassed or may not even know they have been a victim of a crime.

In 2018, the New York Times interviewed the head of the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center and reported the "number of complaints only

represented about 10 to 12 percent of all estimated cybercrime victims in the United States in 2016, and a fraction of all victims worldwide."

By state, Minnesota ranks 24th on the number of reported cybercrimes in 2020 with 6,847 reported.

John Palcher, an investigator with the Brainerd Police Department, and Travis Loeffler, an investigator with the Crow Wing County Sheriff's Office, both talked about the increase in cybercrimes over the past few years.

**CYBERCRIME:** Page A11



Tim Speier / Brainerd Dispatch

Sgt. Victor Sofie, an investigator with the Baxter Police Department, talks about the reporting process Tuesday and how it is used in the department.

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# community RESOURCES



Look for the Community Resources Wrap in the upcoming Sunday, February 27th Edition of the Brainerd Dispatch.