

California News in Brief

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Body

SIGNAL HILL

Disgruntled employee shoots 3 co-workers

An employee who went on a shooting rampage Monday morning at a menu printing plant was upset the company had cut his hours in recent months.

Yet after entering Kenyon Press armed with a semiautomatic handgun, Jose Mendez, 68, walked past a female supervisor and opened fired on three co-workers before killing himself.

Why the gunman targeted fellow employees instead of his boss has confounded police in their search for a motive.

"We're as confused as everybody else," police Capt. Mary Risinger said. "If he was mad about the hours, he should have been mad with her, not the co-workers."

The business owner told police that the reduction in hours applied to all employees.

Victims Rafael Mendoza, 46, shot once in the back and once in the left elbow, and Sergio Garcia, 49, shot once in the chest and once in the left shoulder, were in fair condition at Long Beach Memorial Medical Center. There was no immediate information on the other victim.

BERKELEY

Faculty considering strike authorization

Frustrated by stalled negotiations, the faculty of the nation's largest four-year public university system began casting their first strike authorization vote Monday.

The vote, expected to be completed over the next two weeks, comes after nearly two years of negotiations have failed to yield a new contract.

Both sides agree the faculty should be paid more, but the union wants larger across-the-board raises than California State University administrators have offered. The two sides also disagree on merit pay.

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The issue is now before an independent fact-finder. If the faculty authorizes a strike and there is no contract resolution, the CSU faculty could strike later this spring at CSU's 23 campuses.

CSU spokeswoman Clara Potes-Fellow said administrators have made a fair offer and are ``working hard to complete the fact-finding process with the goal of reaching an agreement with the faculty union."

Union leaders say they would minimize the impact on CSU's more than 400,000 students by having **brief** strikes that roll from campus to campus.

SAN FRANCISCO**A victory in court for Christian schools**

Municipal agencies may provide tax-exempt bonds to a religious school -- as long as its curriculum includes secular classes, the **California** Supreme Court ruled Monday.

The 4-3 decision reverses an earlier ruling and hands a victory to three Southern **California** Christian schools.

In 2002, Oaks Christian School, **California** Baptist University and Azusa Pacific University wanted to construct cafeterias, a mail center and athletic facilities using bonds from ``joint power authorities."

California has more than 350 joint power authorities -- public consortia that provide tax breaks to institutional investors who fund public interest projects with low-interest loans. The municipal groups often finance housing and schools.

Critics complained the tax-free bonds violated church-state separation in **California**'s constitution.

LOS ANGELES**Police battle graffiti with high-tech tools**

Law enforcement has gone high-tech to fight graffiti, including the use of global positioning systems, mass data storage and digital photography to track vandalism.

Sheriff's detectives are also logging on to MySpace .com to catch vandals who use the networking site to brag about their crimes.

``The technology five years ago wasn't what it is today," said Tim Kephart, founder of Graffiti Tracker, which has contracts with 13 Southern **California** cities.

The system uses a camera fitted with a global positioning device to photograph and record the location of graffiti. A police officer or city worker usually takes a picture of the vandalism and a Graffiti Tracker analyst reviews the markings and categorizes them based on whether they appear to come from a gang or an individual.

The information is then uploaded into an Internet database that police can search to determine patterns of graffiti incidents.

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