



GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times
JEFF GARCIA, Dan Tellez, Brian Bement, Ray Barron and Eric Butikofer, from left, of San Bernardino County Fire Protection District Station 53 in Baker, stabilize an accident victim who was thrown from her car on Interstate 15 at Mountain Pass.

The rain was pounding in the Mojave Desert on the Saturday before Easter when the first call came in about a crash along Interstate 15. Details were sketchy: head-on collision, Mercedes versus another car, a 7-year-old not breathing, a nurse on scene performing CPR.

San Bernardino County Fire Protection District Capt. Dan Tellez and his crew were more than a half hour away. The next closest responding ambulance was more than 70 miles away, and the nearest trauma center was more than an hour away by road — if there was no traffic.

Fire Station 53 in the tiny town of Baker, home to the “world’s tallest thermometer,” has the only dedicated emergency medical services to cover a 93-mile span of the four-lane highway between Yermo and the Nevada border.

A lonely desert lifeline for many Vegas travelers

Expect a long wait for help if you crash along I-15 from L.A. to Sin City. There’s only one fire station for a 93-mile stretch.

By Rachel Uranga

The freeway draws more than 15 million vehicles a year through an immense, mostly empty land of extreme heat and occasional bitter cold between Las Vegas and Los Angeles. Every day, well over a hundred times Baker’s own population of 422 people blazes by — often at very high speeds, sometimes intoxicated — and the rescuers in this little blip out their windows will be the ones who try to save them in a wreck.

“The freeway is our population,” Tellez said. “When somebody crashes out here, when somebody needs help, we are it.”

At any one time, there are only five people assigned to the station, set on the edge of a sandy basin speckled with yucca and scrub. The crews work four-day shifts and cover roughly 5,000 square miles, an area larger than Los Angeles County. And this ar-

[See Station, A8]

Sets and the city: NYC’s surging studios

Big Apple doubles down on TV and film to compete with L.A. for a bigger slice of the production pie.

By Stephen Battaglio

NEW YORK — Pat Swinney Kaufman may have enough ceremonial shovels in her office to start a small construction firm.

As commissioner of the New York City Mayor’s Office of Media and Entertainment, based above the Ed Sullivan Theater in Manhattan, Kaufman helped break ground on a number of studios and soundstages to accommodate the TV and movie producers shooting in the region.

Next year, Sunset Pier 94 Studios will open on the west side of Manhattan, adding six state-of-the-art soundstages blocks from midtown and the theater district. In Queens, a new facility called Wildflower, backed in part by Robert De Niro, will add 775,000 square feet of stage space. And East End Studios, which has four soundstage facilities in California, is scheduled to open a space in Sunnyside, Queens, in 2025.

“We are the creative and artistic capital of this country, and we are very committed to building on that,” Kaufman said. “We want it to flourish.”

The aggressive studio expansions signal New York’s continued determination to double down on the film business and compete with its main rival, Los Angeles, for a bigger slice of the Hollywood pie — even as the industry is struggling to rebound nationwide.

Last year, the New York state Legislature boosted the annual film tax credit allocation to \$700 million from \$420 million. It also raised the credit on qualified expenses (including actors’ salaries) to 30% (with an extra 10% for upstate productions) and accelerated the timeline for claiming credits — a big issue for producers.

[See Studios, A11]

Pope lauds Newsom’s pause of death penalty

Francis commends moratorium on executions, one of governor’s most controversial acts

By Taryn Luna

VATICAN CITY — In an opulent hall in the Apostolic Palace framed in marble and adorned with Renaissance murals, Gov. Gavin Newsom waited in a line of governors, mayors and scientists for an opportunity to greet Pope

Francis.

The queue wasn’t the ideal setup envisioned by the governor’s advisors. Newsom traveled more than 6,000 miles from California to the Vatican to give a speech before — and hopefully talk with — the pope about climate change.

Francis, however, had

other topics on his mind besides the warming planet.

“I was struck by how he immediately brought up the issue of the death penalty and how proud he was of the work we’re doing in California,” Newsom said afterward. “I was struck by that because I wasn’t anticipating that, especially in the

context of this convening.”

The talk was brief and informal. But the politically astute head of the Roman Catholic Church still took advantage of the moment to support one of Newsom’s most controversial actions as governor.

Through executive order two months after his inaugu-

ration, Newsom issued a temporary moratorium on the death penalty and ordered the dismantling of the state’s execution chambers at San Quentin State Prison. Families of murder victims criticized the decision, and legal scholars called it an abuse of power.

[See Newsom, A10]

SAUDIS STEAMROLL INTO SPORTS

Kingdom’s oil riches provide a push into soccer, golf and Formula One

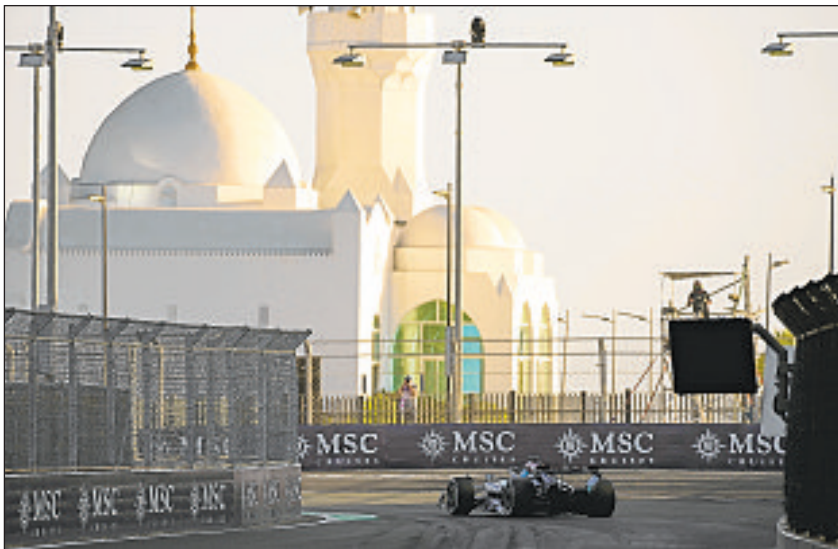
By Nabil Bulos

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia — To understand the scope of Saudi Arabia’s ambitions in the sporting landscape, don’t look just to the Formula One race in Jeddah — which ended with a predictable one-two win for the Red Bull team in March. The revealing action was at the after-party.

Amid a bloom of fireworks over Jeddah’s coast, dozens of drones buzzed in synchronicity to spell out the kingdom’s goal: “Saudi Arabia. Home of Sporting Events.”

It’s a vision that increasingly seems within reach. Backed by funds from the state-owned oil giant Aramco and the vast endowment of its Public Investment Fund, the autocratic monarchy has in only a few years steamrolled its way onto the sporting world’s most hallowed grounds.

[See Saudi Arabia, A4]



DARKO BANDIC Associated Press
MERCEDES driver George Russell steers his F1 race car in practice ahead of the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix at the Jeddah Corniche Circuit.

Mobilization law divides Ukrainians

Russia’s new offensive is straining Kyiv’s military and pummeling the second-largest city of Kharkiv. **WORLD, A3**

Tough choices at L.A. restaurants

Mom-and-pops struggle to survive. At Wax Paper, an owner says, “We can’t even afford to close.” **WEEKEND, L6**

Weather
Clouds, then sun.
L.A. Basin: 70/55. **B10**

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