



Photographs by BRIAN VAN DER BRUG Los Angeles Times

A MAN HIKES on the Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes in Death Valley National Park, where the temperature has hit 125 degrees every day since the Fourth of July. In the summer, international travelers often schedule trips without considering the weather.

How Death Valley National Park tries to protect its visitors

Extreme heat is one of its greatest intrigues — and its top safety concern

BY NOAH HAGGERTY

FURNACE CREEK, Calif. — As temperatures swelled to 128 degrees, Death Valley National Park rangers got a call that a group of six motorcyclists were in distress. All available medics rushed to the scene, and rangers dispatched the park's two ambulances.

It was an "all-hands-on-deck call," said Spencer Solomon, Death Valley National Park's emergency medical coordinator. The superheated air was too thin for an emergency helicopter to respond, so the team requested mutual aid from nearby fire departments.

They arrived Saturday to find one motorcyclist unresponsive, and medics labored unsuccessfully to resuscitate



DAVE HSU, left, feigns a chill at Furnace Creek Visitor Center, where it was "only" 117 degrees.

him. Another rider who had fallen unconscious was loaded into an ambulance, where emergency medical technicians attempted to rapidly cool the victim with ice as they transported him to an intensive care unit in Las Vegas. The four other motorcyclists were treated at the site and released.

With record heat blanketing California and much of the West recently, Death Valley has hit at least 125 degrees every day since the Fourth of July, and that streak isn't likely to change until the weekend, according to the National Weather Service.

Extreme heat is both one of Death Valley's greatest intrigues and its most serious safety concern. It's not uncommon for a few people to die in the park [See **Death Valley**, A6]

Another major stress test for president

NATO summit news conference is latest hurdle for Biden as he tries to recover from debate performance.

BY NOAH BIERMAN AND JAMES RAINEY

President Biden faced his latest test with a rare news conference on Thursday evening amid concerns that the 81-year-old is not capable of winning reelection or governing for another four years.

But the attempt to demonstrate his mental acuity hit a bump less than an hour before the engagement with reporters, when Biden held a ceremony in Washington with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and accidentally introduced him as his rival.

"Ladies and gentlemen, President Putin," Biden said, mixing him up with Russian leader Vladimir Putin, who invaded Ukraine. Biden quickly caught himself before ceding the lectern. "President Putin! We've got to beat President Putin. President Zelensky ..."

The slip of the tongue would normally go unnoticed. But it illustrated the difficulty Biden now faces as voters are already concerned with signs of decline.

Biden has held fewer news conferences on an annual average than any predecessor since President Reagan. Thursday's engagement with reporters came exactly two weeks after a fumbling debate with former President Trump created mass concern both inside and outside the Democratic Party.

A new Washington Post-ABC News poll released [See **Biden**, A6]



KAREN PRIEM

RICO PRIEM, 66, a studio grip, died on a freeway after two consecutive 14-hour overnight shifts.

‘We are dying to entertain people’

After a studio grip's death in May, film and TV craftspeople protest long hours and overnight shifts.

BY CHRISTI CARRAS

Gathered around a table stacked with battery-operated candles inside plastic cups, Hollywood crew members traded memories of their late colleagues and vented about their working conditions.

When a property assistant posed the question, "How many of you have had a near-miss driving home from work?" the hands of every

person in the Burbank parking lot sprang up.

Dozens of below-the-line workers participated last month in an intimate vigil honoring the lives of "9-1-1" studio grip Rico Priem, "Wonder Man" lighting technician J.C. "Spike" Osorio, "Rust" cinematographer Halyna Hutchins and other crew members who have died in work-related incidents.

When Priem, 66, died on the freeway after pulling two 14-hour overnight shifts in a row on the Pomona set of the TV series "9-1-1" in May, a common refrain among crew members became, "That could've been any of us."

"We are dying to entertain people," Lisa Gardner, a [See **Protest**, A9]

Inflation cooled in June, fueling hopes for rate cuts

Bigger-than-expected decline could prompt a Federal Reserve move in September.

BY DON LEE

WASHINGTON — Inflation cooled more than expected in June, helped by falling prices for cars, gas and airline tickets — a boost for the summer travel season — as well as some much-

needed easing in the cost of housing.

Overall, consumer price inflation for all goods and services rose 3% in June from a year earlier, down from 3.3% the previous month, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported Thursday.

And, importantly, the annual rate of inflation for groceries fell below the Federal Reserve's 2% inflation target, thanks in part to solid yields of California's specialty crops and dairy items.

Whether in political terms the improvement will rally support for embattled President Biden remains an open question, but the good news may encourage the Fed to make a long-hoped-for cut in interest rates as early as September, giving a lift to sagging home sales.

"There is light at the end of the tunnel finally after the central bank's long battle with inflation and interest rate cuts, lots of them, are on the way," said Chris Rupkey, [See **Inflation**, A9]



Photographs by CHRISTINA HOUSE Los Angeles Times

L.A. Influential, the story of Los Angeles in 2024

A special section looking at people who — through their work, their creative ideas or the largesse they distribute — have an outside hand in shaping Los Angeles is part of today's newspaper for print subscribers. It's also available for purchase at latimes.com/store.

More coverage online

For the latest updates on the presidential campaign, go to latimes.com.

Lesbians driving economy in S.F.

Queer women are credited for lifting the city's fun factor with new restaurants and bars. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Inside Chargers practice facility

"The Bolt" is a state-of-the-art building that aims to help team rise under coach Jim Harbaugh. **SPORTS, B10**

Fearing loss of the 'little Vons'

The grocery in Westchester, a community hub since 1952, is threatened by a giant merger. **BUSINESS, A8**

Weather

Mostly sunny.
L.A. Basin: 84/64. **B6**

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