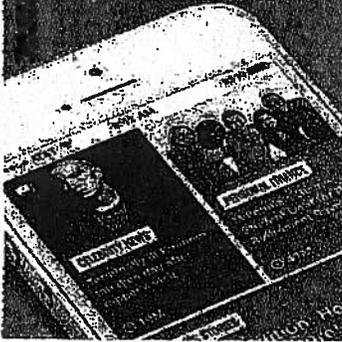


INTRODUCING STATESMAN LIVE

The American Statesman has launched a new mobile app for better access to the latest information.

Statesman Live, available through the Apple and Android app stores, allows you to personalize the news you receive and pushes notifications of important updates to your phone.

Statesman Live is free to download and read.



IN THE NEWS

Police admit to errors in death

Baltimore police said Freddie Gray should have received medical attention where he was arrested. **A2**

NATION & WORLD

Ice cream safe to eat, federal officials say

But the discovery of listeria bacteria at Blue Bell Creameries and an Ohio ice cream company is labeled a "wake-up call." **A4**

Statue of Liberty threat:

A bomb threat made by an anonymous 911 caller forces the evacuation of hundreds of tourists. **A5**

METRO & STATE

Hackers hit Seton patient information

The Seton Family of Hospitals notifies

STATESMAN IN-DEPTH FIRE SAFETY



Austin firefighters respond to the DoubleTree Suites on West 15th Street on April 10; they quickly suppressed a fire.

RICARDO B. BRAZZIELL / AMERICAN-STATESMAN

TOO FEW TO FIGHT

A RECENT HOTEL BLAZE REVEALS FIREFIGHTER SHORTAGE IN DOWNTOWN HIGH-RISE FIRES

By Nicole Chavez
nchavez@statesman.com

On a rainy spring morning two weeks ago, plumes of smoke marred a downtown Austin skyline defined by construction cranes and modern high-rise buildings.

The quick suppression of the April 10 kitchen fire at the DoubleTree Suites hotel on West 15th Street demonstrated the skill and training of the Austin Fire Department, but it was also a reminder of the limited number of firefighters near downtown as more

residential skyscrapers are being built.

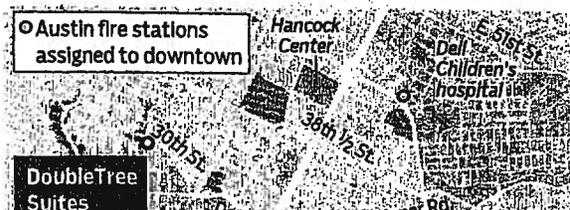
In the past 15 years, the development boom in downtown Austin has brought several apartment towers and condominium high-rises, including the 56-story Austonian condo tower at Second Street and Congress Avenue.

The demand for living spaces in the downtown area has not stopped, and in the coming years, hundreds of apartments will become available in projects such as the Independent, a 58-story tower planned for West Third

High-rises continued on **A7**

1,129
Firefighters working in Austin

332
Firefighters authorized to work per shift



STATESMAN ABORTION

Anti-abortion review in L

Legislator fails, but wins 2013 now!

By J. David McSwane
dmcswane@statesman.com

Following the passage of some of the most restrictive abortion controls on the state's agenda, Texas Republicans have a chance to get this legislation passed on relationships that have been in contention.

In defiance of the leadership, Sen. Dan Claitor broke Thursday when he voted against an amendment to the bill after 20 weeks. The bill would require normalities at birth and survival.

The measure would be a publican from the state line state health care prompted Der

Abortion continues

LEGISLATION THE BUDGET

Williamson two budget

By Kiah Collier and Mary Ann Maroser
kcollier@statesman.com
maroser@statesman.com

Two recent legislative lawmaking sessions in Williamson County have led to serve for a joint House will negotiate something people consider a

Hackers in Seton patient information

The Seton Family of Hospitals notified 39,000 affected individuals about data breach. **B1**

BUSINESS

Austin alcohol sales jump 7 percent

Austin's newest hotel manages to sell close to \$1 million in alcohol during its first full month in business. **B7**

Austin360	E1
Business	B7
Deaths	B4
Sports	C1

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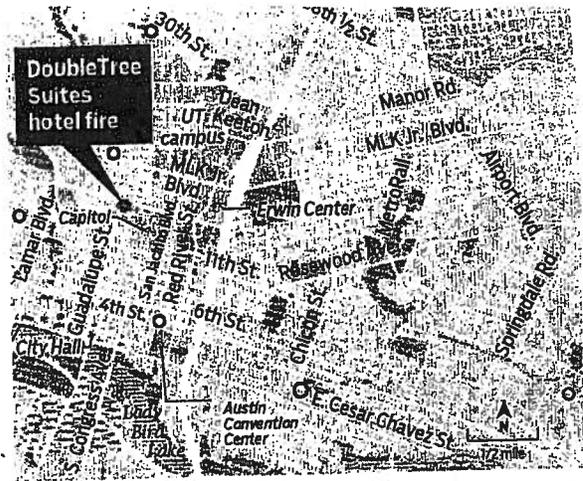
332 Firefighters authorized to work per shift

50 Firefighters who work in fire stations near downtown

45 Number of fire stations across Austin

7 Stations assigned to downtown

1 Fire stations located in downtown



ROBERT CALZADA / STAFF

a joint house will negotiate something po consider a go fast-growing c could indicat cal clout.

First electe ture in 2010, Gonzales of I state Sen. Ch nner of Georg ed this week called confer charged with ferences bet and Senate t

Legislators c

BATTLING TERRORISM

After drone killings, a push for new hc

By Matthew Lee Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The accidental killing of two hostages in a U.S. operation against al-Qa-ida has put a new spotlight on the Obama administration's

reliance on drones in the battle against terrorism — and has also raised pressure on the White House to revise the nation's oft-criticized strategy for dealing with abducted Americans and their families.

A day after President Barack

Also inside
» American hostage's sister in Austin mourns his death, A

Obama apologized and took responsibility for the deaths of American Warren Weinstein and Italian Giovanni Lo Port



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High-rises

continued from A1

Street, and the Seaholm Residences, a 30-story building planned for West Fifth Street.

The DoubleTree Suites hotel built in 1987 is just one of 112 buildings considered by the Austin Fire Department to be high-rises — structures taller than 75 feet — in downtown Austin. The 15-story DoubleTree is certainly not among the tallest, but the fire there drew about 100 firefighters — about 30 percent of the nearly 300 on-duty personnel — from across the city.

Fire crews were summoned to the hotel when smoke from a fire in the kitchen made its way up through the ventilation system and appeared to be coming out of the roof.

For a blaze at a high-rise, dispatchers typically would send 26 firefighters to assess the situation, fire officials said. When they confirm there is smoke or flames, a second group of firefighters is deployed. In the case of a high-rise fire, at least 80 firefighters will be summoned.

Personnel from stations across the city were called in to assist because only 50 firefighters are assigned to downtown from among seven stations in a 2-mile radius. Station 1 at Trinity and

No policy requires a specific number of firefighters per square mile or by population density, fire officials said.

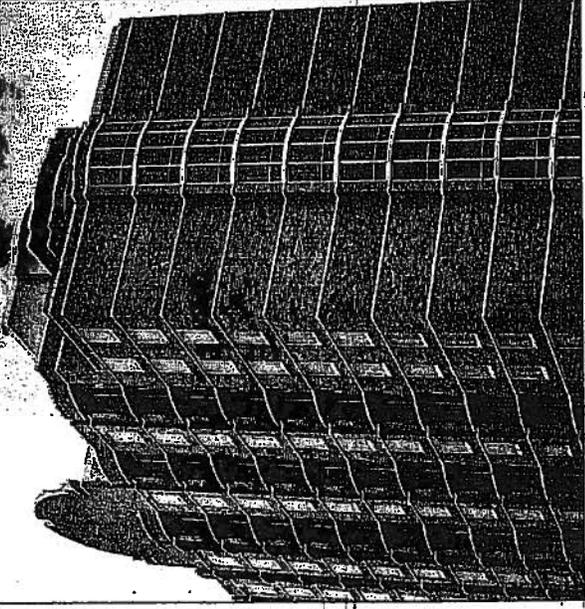


» Read previous coverage of the DoubleTree Suites hotel fire with this story at mystatesman.com.

multiple districts with high-rises, with three to four stations for each area. San Antonio has two stations in its downtown area.

High-rise fires not only pose staffing challenges but also with equipment and training. When firefighters arrived at the DoubleTree, their 100-foot-long ladders could reach only between five to seven floors, forcing them to walk up more than a dozen flights of stairs. Carrying nearly 90 pounds of gear, it took them about 20 minutes to reach the top floors.

"The higher the building, the longer it takes to get there," said Chris Watson, battalion chief and member of the department's high-rise committee. Fire experts praised the response as well as the outcome of the DoubleTree fire as no ma-



Austin fire crews were called to the DoubleTree Suites on West 15th Street on April 10 when smoke from a kitchen fire made its way up the ventilation system and appeared to be coming out of the roof. RICARDO B. BRAZZIELL / AMERICAN-STATESMAN

major injuries or damage were reported, but they agreed there is still a long way to go to keep high-rise buildings safe enough.

In 2008, critical high-rise fire incidents across the country motivated the department's leadership to begin specialized training on high-rise buildings and to make other policy changes, such as requiring a supervisor to be at the scene.

"We were really lacking on prevention measures on high-rises," said Nicks, a former member of the high-rise committee.

Nicks said the department has invested in physical training and strategic planning to fight high-rise fires. One obstacle for firefighters is going inside a building without know-

ing what is inside. For this reason, the Fire Department visits every building to become familiar with fire safety features, such as ventilation systems.

"These buildings are too big; we have to go tour them," Watson said.

The Fire Department also reviews high-rise structures while they are being constructed. Inspectors with the fire marshal's office check sprinklers and fire alarms, among other things, before the building is opened and every year once it is occupied.

Rob Crum, inspector with the department's fire marshal's office, said recent and new skyscrapers are expected to meet stricter standards. Some even have service elevators that are kept in a remote part of the building for emergency crews.

"(The elevator) would never be a sure thing. It can be that it's not safe but having the option helps the firefighter," Crum said.

In the past three years, the Fire Department received 87 calls to high-rises, but crews only found 35 were fires. So far this year, firefighters have responded to eight calls.

"We go to a lot of high-rise calls that turn out to be popcorn," Watson said.

Contact Nicole Chavez at 512-443-3694. Twitter: @nicolechavz

It's up to us to make our roads safer

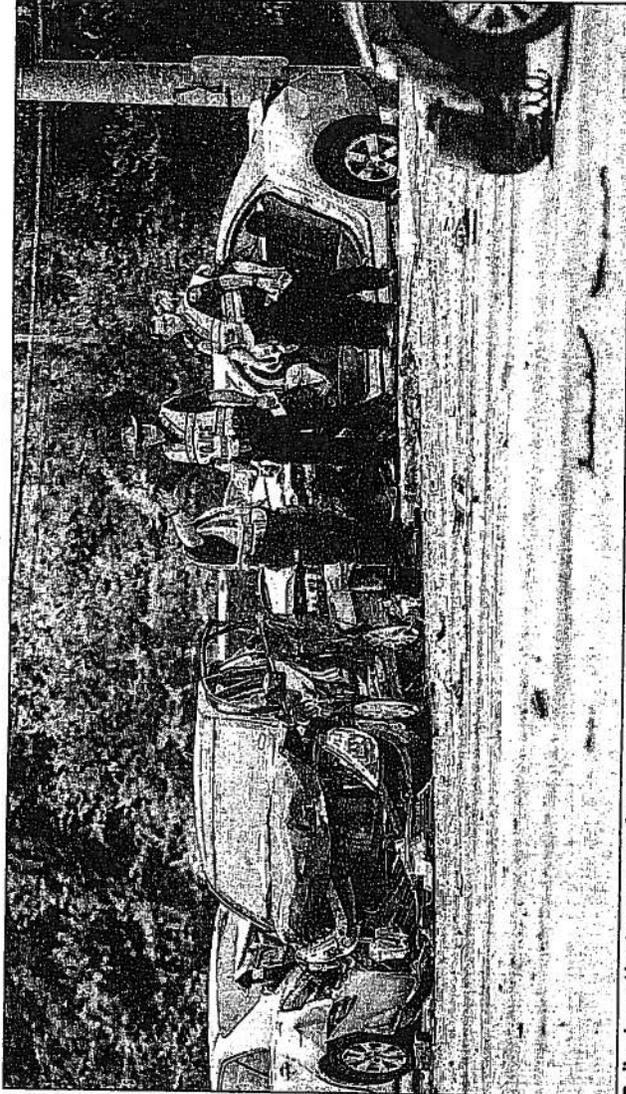
This year is on track to be the deadliest year on Austin's roads, with at least 71 traffic fatalities recorded thus far in 2015. That's 30 more fatalities than were recorded this time last year — and eight more than the 63 recorded in all of 2014. At this rate, more than 90 people will die on Austin's roads by the end of the year.

"Enough is enough. Enough blood, enough destruction," Austin Police Chief Art Acevedo said Aug. 11, as he called on everyone to do their part to end the carnage. Surely we can heed the chief's heartfelt plea to drive more carefully. It shouldn't be too much to ask.

Acevedo and other police and city officials are doing and looking at whatever they can to reduce the number of fatal crashes — from even more strictly enforcing traffic laws to pondering possible engineering fixes to signals and crosswalks, to considering what role a lack of sidewalks in some parts of town play in pedestrian fatalities.

Vision Zero, a city task force created to reduce traffic-related deaths, is putting together an analysis of Austin traffic fatalities over the past 15 years. The group plans to use the analysis to issue recommendations to reduce traffic deaths to the City Council by November.

The police and city, however, can do only so much to try to reduce the number of traffic fatalities. They can only patrol so many areas at any one time,



Police investigate a recent fatal crash on Slaughter Lane. The biggest burden is on Austin drivers. RICARDO B. BRAZZI/EL AMERICANO

ing up to be — stands without context if looked at alone. Taking into account the city's population growth and increased traffic, the number of fatalities per capita so far in 2015 is significantly lower than in 1986, the worst year on record with 81 traffic deaths. The city's population 30 years ago was just under 450,000.

The same is true of 2000, when the city's population was roughly 656,500. Austin's population today is about 865,500.

The 77 traffic fatalities recorded in 2000 were almost equaled the next year, when Austin recorded 76 traffic fatalities. The five-year stretch from 2000 to 2004 was especially deadly, with 349 traffic deaths.

The number of deaths then declined to 61 in 2005 and remained below 65 until 2012, when the city recorded 78 traffic fatalities. The 15-year average number of traffic fatalities from 2000 to 2014 is 65; the annual average since 2012 is 72, and will go higher if 2015 continues its deadly trend.

Any attempt at perspective can't erase the fact that any number is too high — not when we, as drivers, can do better.

Drive responsibly and safely. Slow down. Wear your seat belt. Pay attention to the road. Above all, don't drink and drive. And leave your cell phones alone; that text or call can wait.

Let's all do our part to make Austin's roads safer.

compared with 15 last year, or 32 percent of this year's traffic deaths compared with 24 percent in 2014.

The majority of pedestrians who are killed in traffic accidents are at fault, police say. Of the number of pedestrian fatalities recorded this year, 50 percent involved pedestrians crossing in the middle of a block. Forty-four percent involved pedestrians crossing highways, service roads or shoulders. Drivers failed to yield the right of way in 6 percent of pedestrian fatalities recorded thus far this year.

We should note that one year — as bad as 2015 is shaping

up with another vehicle near Airport Boulevard. One man was killed.

A chart breaking down the causes of this year's fatal accidents undoubtedly will be similar to a chart breaking down the causes of any other year's fatalities, once 2015 is done and the numbers collected. Twenty-five, or 40 percent, of last year's 63 traffic deaths involved alcohol, according to police figures. Another 19 fatalities, or 34 percent of the total, involved speeding.

More pedestrians also have been killed in traffic accidents this year than were killed in all of 2014 — 23 thus far in 2015,

hand out so many tickets, and make only so many changes. The biggest burden is on Austin drivers.

After all, rare is the traffic accident that isn't preventable — that isn't caused by someone's carelessness. Distracted driving, alcohol, speeding, failure to stop — the causes of most fatal accidents — remain stubbornly the same year after bloody year.

The city's 69th traffic fatality likely involved alcohol, police said. Around 2:30 a.m. Wednesday, according to police, a 23-year-old woman got on Interstate 35 going the wrong way and collided head-