

GFD investigates fire at abandoned warehouse

By Robert Q. Tupaz
robert@mvguam.com
Variety News Staff

THE Guam Fire Department is investigating a fire that erupted yesterday afternoon in Tamuning at the abandoned warehouse formerly occupied by Goodwill.

"GFD fire investigators have determined that (Friday) evening's fire was intentionally set," said Lt. Eddie Artero, GFD spokesman. "This is an ongoing investigation."

As the structure burned, passers-by could see thick black smoke billowing along Marine Corps Drive between Kmart and a Shell

The fire was concentrated in the center of the one-story building, which once housed the Goodwill Thrift Store and industries, but now sits abandoned.

Service station.

Artero said a 911 call was received at 5:01 p.m. of a burning building in Tamuning. Less than 15 minutes later, GFD units were at the scene along Route 1, Tamuning, directly across John F. Kennedy High School.

Artero described the fire

► The Guam Fire Department responds to a fire at the former Goodwill warehouse in Tamuning yesterday afternoon. The blaze was under control by 6 p.m.

as a multiple alarm fire and said units from Tamuning, Dedado, Sinajana and Barrigada responded.

The fire was concentrated in the center of the one-story building, which once housed the Goodwill Thrift Store and industries, but now sits abandoned.

Artero reported that fire units had the blaze under control by 6 p.m.

The cause of the fire is still being investigated.



Mar. 13, 2015, by Robert Q. Tupaz / Variety

Data breach at Kmart last year affects local customers

By Robert Q. Tupaz
robert@mvguam.com
Variety News Staff

THE theft of credit and debit card information from consumers who swiped their cards at Kmart stores nationwide late last year also affected consumers on Guam.

Philip J. Flores, president of BankPacific, told Variety that the local Kmart had been mum about how the security breach would affect residents who used their cards at the Tamuning store.

"When Kmart was breached last year they said nothing here," Flores said. "We had several cards used fraudulently," he added. "The 'wave' has stopped. We refunded all customers who notified us."

Flores explained that when information is breached like it was at Kmart or other big chain stores, the information associated with the credit card is made available for purchase on the Internet. "Someone purchased and used some of the Kmart information and if affected some of our customers who used their cards at Kmart."

On Thursday, BankPacific took the lead locally in addressing the issue. A form letter via email was sent to BankPacific customers. "We recently discovered that our BankPacific Visa Debit cardholders may be vulnerable to fraudulent activity as a result of Kmart's in-store data payment systems breach that occurred between September 1 and October 9,

2014," Flores wrote. A hard copy of the letter will be sent to BankPacific customers who used their Visa cards at Kmart.

Stolen number

Flores said although the initial wave of fraudulent activity has stopped, the stolen credit/debit card numbers and information remain "available for purchase on the Web and could be used later. All one needed to do was Google respective sites to find an account, Flores said."

Variety found some websites confirming Flores' statement.

Flores said that because BankPacific customers who used their Visa debit cards were affected, all Visa debit cards issued by the bank would be reissued with new numbers and personal identification numbers.

The debit card replacement will be free; however, Flores reminded consumers that upon receipt of their cards, they would have to update information with individual companies regarding any automatic or recurring payment programs linked to their debit cards. Flores said all BankPacific Visa debit holders should receive new cards by April 13.

Flores urged consumers to closely monitor their Visa debit accounts. "Because payment data system breaches are on the rise, no one can predict when debit cards will be compromised," Flores wrote. "We urge you to closely monitor your account and report any unauthorized transactions to us immediately."

He added that the institution takes customer fraud protection seriously and invited customers who have further questions or concerns to contact the bank at 472-6704 or visit their nearest BankPacific branch during normal business hours. "We will be glad to assist you," he said.

Last October, newswire reports revealed that retailer Sears said the payment data systems at its Kmart stores had been compromised on Sept. 1, 2014, though its discovery was made on Oct. 9 — the latest in a series of computer security breaches to hit U.S. companies in recent months.

The U.S. Secret Service confirmed it was investigating the breach.

Typhoon...

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and increase to more than 16 feet tomorrow night. Forecasters expect Guam and Rota to get about 2 to 4 inches of rain as Tropical Storm Bavi moves through the area.

Typhoon

The storm has the potential to become a typhoon, a statement from the Joint Information Center said yesterday afternoon.

A forecast graphic from the NWS

uploaded at 7 p.m. last night outlined Tropical Storm Bavi's path. The illustration of Bavi's projected track showed the storm looked like it would pass just south of Guam, sometime between Sunday night and Monday.

The NWS public advisory issued at 5 p.m. yesterday said the storm was moving west-northwest from the Marshall Islands headed to the Mariana Islands at 20 mph.

Meteorologists measured the storm's maximum sustained winds to be around 50 mph yesterday and computer models

showed that 130 mph winds would extend north of Tropical Storm Bavi. This is a concern for Guam and Rota since the storm is tracked to pass below the two islands.

"The strongest winds of Bavi are located north of the center which would put Guam and the CNMI in the strongest portion of the tropical storm. However, the system is still evolving and is expected to slowly intensify before reaching the Marianas," NWS officials posted yesterday. "Fortunately, upper-level shear is keeping a check on the intensification of Bavi. Hopefully the system will remain sheared and rela-

tively weak as it travels over 1,000 miles to reach the Marianas over the weekend."

Calvo and Bolivar urged residents to take proper precautions and secure their belongings outdoors and indoors in the event of damaging weather conditions. Regular updates will be publicized on local radio stations and through Facebook posts on Guam Homeland Security/Office of Civil Defense's page and on the governor's Facebook page.

NWS forecasters will also be posting regular updates on its website at www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/cyclone.php.

Status...

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Public discussions on the long-delayed self-rule plebiscite occasionally emerge, but almost always, the fervor fizzles out. A hindrance related to the voter eligibility blocks the completion of the decolonization registry.

The law requires the Guam Election Commission to register 70 percent of eligible voters for the plebiscite to occur, but

so far only 7,192 have signed up for the Guam Decolonization Registry, falling short of the necessary number of voters.

During her address Thursday night, Guam Delegate Madeleine Bordallo proposed the removal of the percentage requirement. "I urge the legislature to set the vote and let those who are eligible register by a certain deadline," she said. "Achieving decolonization will be a multistep process that will take time, but we must begin to set the stage for this to

completely play out."

In his HBO late-night talk show "Last Week Tonight," political satirist John Oliver mocked the Supreme Court's century-old ruling, which held that individuals born in U.S. territories should not have the same constitutional rights — like voting for the president — as those born in the U.S.

"Mr. Oliver clearly and simply laid out the inequality of the U.S. territories to a global audience," Calvo said. "With such a large viewership, I hope

his commentary will help spark interest in our efforts to improve our political status and general rights as American citizens."

Bordallo noted that resolving Guam's political status with the United States "through a legitimate act of self-determination is the most important step that we can take to address many long-standing legacy issues we have with the federal government, and it would provide us with a stronger foundation to ensure that policies enacted serve the best interests of our people."

"Over the years, we have worked to move this issue forward, but whether it has been a lack of political will or our quest to obtain the perfect process for the political status vote, we have been unable to move off of square one," Bordallo said. "I believe that we must get on with this process, and I am urging the governor and the legislature to work with the Commission on Decolonization to begin the process so that we can make the self-determination vote a reality."

Election commission assures it has purged inactive voters

By Zita Y. Taitano
zita@mvguam.com
Variety News Staff

MARIA Pangelinan, executive director of the Guam Election Commission, has assured that her agency has purged inactive voters from the current voter roster.

Pangelinan made the assurance during a presentation before members of the Rotary Club of Northern Guam during the organization's regular meeting yesterday.

According to Pangelinan, GEC has purged voters who had not voted in two consecutive elections, thus bringing the number of registered voters down to 47,272.

The largest turnout for elections on Guam was back in 2002 when there were about 61,052 registered voters.

Pangelinan said voters who were purged received a notice and were asked to come in and re-register. With this in mind, Pangelinan is looking into making the number of voters go up again to at least 55,000.

Pangelinan also said they are under decree by the District Court of Guam to ensure registered voters who are deployed get their chance to vote under the

Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act.

GEC was cited a few years ago for not following the mandate and the agency is being closely monitored this election year by the federal government.

Bingo initiative

Pangelinan also informed the group that the proponents of the commercial bingo initiative have so far turned in 1,000 signatures, and her staff is in the process of verifying signatures to ensure the individuals who signed the petition are registered voters.

Meanwhile, she said GEC is accepting applications to fill 290 vacancies for precinct officials.

"The forms are available online or at the office. One of the requirements is they must be a registered voter," she said. "We will have precinct official seminar training starting the first week of August."

Pangelinan was asked if the commission has any comments about the recent federal court recommendation to dismiss the plebiscite case filed by Arnold "Dave" Davis. She said the GEC board will discuss the recommendation at their next meeting, which is next week.



Maria Pangelinan, executive director of the Guam Election Commission, made a presentation yesterday before members of the Rotary Club of Northern Guam during the organization's regular luncheon meeting. David Castro / For Variety

TIP OF THE WEEK:



Horns are warning devices. Using your horn to get the attention of your friend can cause other drivers to be distracted. Only use your horn when necessary to warn others of danger.

Tip provided by Guam Public Safety Educators



Power bill increases face scrutiny

By Zita Y. Taitano
zita@mvguam.com
Variety News Staff

THE Legislature's utilities chairman is asking the Guam Power Authority to hold off on terminating services for commercial customers until the information briefing this Thursday at 6:30 p.m.

Sen. Tom Ada in a statement said his office had been inundated by calls from several businesses which had received monthly billings with more than a 50 percent increase.

"In the briefings I have sat in, I do not recall hearing about increases of that magnitude," Ada said.

He was assured by GPA acting General Manager Melinda Camacho that the agency won't disconnect customers affected by the new charge until GPA resolves the issue.

Meanwhile, businesses aren't the only ones feeling the brunt of the power bill increase. Residential customers have also been calling the Governor's Office about the matter.

Acting Gov. Ray Tenorio has instructed Governor's Chief of Staff Frank Arriola to meet with the Consolidated Commission on Utilities this week regarding the increase.



John Benavente, Consolidated Utility Services general manager, said affected customers can call Guam Power Authority's customer service department at 647-5787 if they have any more questions. Variety file photo

general manager, explaining that those affected are within rate schedules J, K, L, and P.

"These rate schedules are typically your commercial or large customer classes that would also include government

accounts. The estimated number of customer accounts affected is approximately 3 percent of our total customer base," Benavente said, adding affected customers can call the customer service department at 647-5787 for more information.

For his part, GPA spokesman Art Perez said the changes in residential bills are due to how much power is used in a home.

"All those are in line with the rate that was approved," he said, adding not all customer bills are the same.

"This Thursday, we'll have more in-depth detail on what appropriate solutions we can offer for the customers," Perez said.

"The governor and I are concerned. We're hoping GPA can sort out these increases with the public before disconnections happen," Tenorio said. "Prices are going up too quickly on Guam for our people to catch a break. Everyone is drowning in debt and bills. I think these increases may have risen to a point where this whole government needs to sit down together and sort this out. At the very least, we need to communicate what's happening and clear up any miscommunications or misconceptions," he added.

GPA side

Meanwhile, GPA has released a statement from John Benavente, Consolidated Utility Services



Department of Integrated Services for Individuals with Disabilities
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Guam State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) will hold a **Quarterly Membership Meeting** on Thursday, June 21, 2012 at 9:00 a.m. at the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's Conference Room, 6th floor, DNA Bldg., Hagatna. Agendas will be available.

We comply with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Individuals who require an auxiliary aid or service (i.e. qualified sign language interpreters, documents in Braille, large print, etc.) for effective communication, or a modification of policies or procedures to participate in a program, service, or activity of the Guam State Rehabilitation Council, should contact Frank Pangelinan at 475-5748 as soon as possible but no later than 72 hours before the schedule event.

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