



Kentucky Hospital Research & Education Foundation Emergency Preparedness Update for January 3, 2020

Iran's retaliation could be hacking, not bombs

(Politico) Iranian hackers in recent years have wiped the computer servers of Saudi Arabia's state-owned oil company, crippled a Las Vegas casino, breached the networks of dozens of U.S. banks and been accused of trying to meddle in the 2020 presidential election.

Now Iran's history of aggressive cyberattacks offers Tehran one potential avenue for striking back at the West for the U.S. killing of Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, whose death prompted Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to vow "harsh retaliation."

A series of escalating digital salvos between the U.S. and Iran could inflict damage on a range of third parties, including American allies such as Saudi Arabia and critical resources such as the electric grid, cyber researchers said Friday. One of its specialties is so-called wiper attacks, in which malicious software erases the hard drives of infected computers.

"Given the gravity of the operation last evening we are anticipating an elevated threat from Iranian cyber actors," John Hultquist, director of intelligence analysis at the security firm FireEye, said in a statement.

Industry and federal security leaders were urging power companies on Friday to practice heightened vigilance about potential cyber vulnerabilities, including remote-access tools that "could already be compromised." Full Politico story: <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/01/03/iran-retaliation-qassem-soleimani-093608>

Related: US cities ramp up security in wake of killing of Iran's top general

Read more: <https://abcn.ws/36qOi8E>

Homeland Security Sees 'No Specific, Credible Threat' From Iran, but Warns of Cyberattacks

Read more: <https://news360.com/article/516949179>

US on track for one of the worst flu seasons in decade

(CNN) This flu season is shaping up to be one of the worst in decades, according to the United States' top infectious disease doctor. Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergies and Infectious Diseases, said while it's impossible to predict how the flu will play out, the season so far is on track to be as severe as the 2017-2018 flu season, which was the [deadliest](#) in more than four decades, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"The initial indicators indicate this is not going to be a good season -- this is going to be a bad season," Fauci said.

So far this flu season, at least 2,900 people in the US are estimated to have died of the flu, according to data released Friday by the CDC. That's 800 more deaths than estimated the previous week.

Full story: <https://www.cnn.com/2020/01/03/health/flu-week-52/index.html>

Related: Early flu season prompts hospitals to take extra precautions

(CBS) At Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis, [fighting flu](#) begins at the front door. The hospital has created influenza checkpoints, where security keeps a list of approved visitors, mostly parents.

"Even when they visit and they're on the list, they're screened for illness, so fever, cough, runny nose, body aches," said Dr. Elaine Cox, an infectious disease specialist. The goal is to create a ring of protection around vulnerable kids.

The CDC reported Friday there have been more than 55,000 hospitalizations this flu season.

Story link: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/flu-season-prompts-hospitals-to-take-extra-precautions-2020-01-03/>

**Mysterious drones are flying over rural parts of Colorado and Nebraska at night
Officials don't know who is orchestrating the nightly appearances.**

(Star-Tribune) The drones appear after dark, flying in formation over swaths of land in rural Colorado and Nebraska. For weeks, they have dominated headlines in local newspapers, fueled intense speculation on social media and unsettled residents, who have flooded law enforcement with calls. So far, the aircraft remain a mystery. Officials in several counties say they have not been able to determine who is flying them or why. The Federal Aviation Administration is now investigating, an agency spokesman said Thursday.

The drones, described by the Denver Post as having 6-foot wingspans and numbering at least 17, showed up in mid-December in northeastern Colorado. They emerge nightly around 7 p.m., flying in squares of about 25 miles and staying about 200 feet in the air, the newspaper reported. By about 10 p.m., they're gone.

Local authorities say the mysterious visitors do not appear to be malicious and may not be breaking any laws. Combs noted in his post that they are operating in airspace controlled by the federal government and, as far as he could tell, abiding by federal regulations.

Read full story: <http://www.startribune.com/mysterious-drones-are-flying-over-rural-parts-of-colorado-and-nebraska-at-night/566659511/>

**The FAA wants to track all drones flying in the US
A new proposed rule could lead to the widespread adoption of commercial drones.**

(engadget) The Federal Aviation Administration wants to implement new rules that would enable the remote identification and tracking of unmanned aerial vehicles or drones. Under its proposal -- available for viewing on [Federal Register's website](#) -- UAVs will be required to broadcast their location and identification info directly from the unmanned aircraft *and* to transmit the same information to the FAA's location tracking system via internet connection. UAVs only flying within 400 feet of their operators don't have to broadcast that information but will still have to transmit it to the system via the internet. Full story: <https://www.engadget.com/2019/12/27/faa-drones-tracking-system/>

Gun homicides of teens rise after 'Stand Your Ground' self-defense law

Florida's "Stand Your Ground" self-defense law has been associated with a surge in teen deaths by homicide with a firearm, a new study suggests. The 2005 law, making it legal to respond to a perceived threat with lethal force even when it might be possible to safely flee, has previously been linked to a 32% increase in firearm homicides of adults in Florida, researchers report in Injury Prevention. The current study suggests that gun homicides among adolescents also surged 45% after the law took effect.

Full story: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-guns-florida-teens/gun-homicides-of-teens-rise-after-stand-your-ground-self-defense-law-idUSKBN1Z1114>

**Authorities warn that abbreviating "2020" on documents
could leave you vulnerable to fraud**

(CBS) Authorities warn that abbreviating "2020" on documents could leave you vulnerable to fraud. The new year has just begun, providing a new opportunity for scam artists to forge documents. Authorities are warning that shortening "2020" to just "20" could leave you vulnerable to fraud.

If you wrote a signed check dated "1/3/20," for example, a scammer could easily change the date to read "2019," "2000," or any other year from this century. The scammers could use this change to try and cash an old check or forge an unpaid debt. The solution? Write out the full date.

See and read more: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/2020-abbreviation-could-leave-you-vulnerable-to-fraud-scammers-forge-date/>

**Potent Fentanyl Analog Carfentanil Is 10,000x Stronger Than Morphine,
100x Stronger Than Fentanyl**

Full story: <https://news360.com/article/516507102>

Deal will let more companies make an overdose antidote spray

(AP) — More companies could begin making an easy-to-use version of an opioid overdose antidote under a deal announced Thursday by New York's attorney general.

Under the agreement, Emergent BioSolutions will no longer enforce a contract that had allowed it to be the only company to develop a nasal spray version of the drug nalmeferene for use as an antidote in a nasal spray.

The agreement with James's office does not affect Narcan, a spray version of the drug naloxone now sold by Emergent. That from is popular for police, firefighters and others to use to try to revive people who are overdosing. It is not subject to an exclusivity agreement on the spray technology. Narcan retails for about \$140 for two doses, but the company sells that amount to first responders for \$75.

More than 400,000 deaths in the U.S. since 2000 have been linked to opioids, a class of drugs that includes heroin, fentanyl, and prescription painkillers such as Vicodin and OxyContin.

Companies would still need Food and Drug Administration approval before their products could be on the market. Read full AP story: <https://apnews.com/7de9eab75f8a65c123bbe70593c2b72b>

Effort To Control Opioids In An ER Leaves Some Sickle Cell Patients In Pain

Read story: <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/01/02/782654754/effort-to-control-opioids-in-an-er-leaves-some-sickle-cell-patients-in-pain>

Automotive plant closures may be linked with a rise in opioid overdose deaths

(CNN) An automotive assembly plant closing in a US county has been associated with 85% higher opioid overdose death rates among working-age adults in that county after five years, according to a study [published in the medical journal JAMA Internal Medicine](#) on Monday.

"Relative to the trends in manufacturing counties where an automotive plant did not close, having a plant closure meant that your opioid overdose death rate was 85% higher after five years than it otherwise would have been -- and that was a large number to us," said Dr. Atheendar Venkataramani, [assistant professor at the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine](#), who was first author of the study.

After comparing data, the researchers found that countywide opioid overdose deaths increased in each of the first five years after a plant had closed in a county, and plateaued thereafter.

The data suggested that five years after a plant closure, opioid overdose death rates increased by 8.6 deaths per 100,000 people in a county, representing an 85% increase relative to counties that did not experience closures, according to the study's findings.

Read more: <https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/30/health/opioid-overdose-deaths-automotive-plant-closures-study/index.html>

Your TV, Smartphone Screens May Send Toxins Into Your Home

(HealthDay News) -- Your smartphone, television and computer screens may be contaminating your home with potentially toxic chemicals, a new study suggests.

An international team of researchers found the chemicals -- called liquid crystal monomers -- in nearly half of dozens of samples of household dust they collected. The scientists analyzed 362 commonly used liquid crystal monomers and found that nearly 100 could be toxic. They also assessed the toxicity of monomers commonly found in six widely used smartphone models.

Learn more: <https://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=226980>

The KHEREF Emergency Preparedness Update is assembled several times a week. When events make it necessary, the Update may be sent out several times a day to keep our hospital and the healthcare community advised on preparedness news and information. Most of this information is compiled from open sources, and where possible reference links will be provided. There is an archive of [Emergency Preparedness Updates available here](#). If you would like to add or delete, or have something you would like to contribute to a future edition of the Emergency Preparedness Update, please contact rbartlett@kyha.com (include your current email address). The preparedness program for the Kentucky Hospital Association (KHA) and KHEREF are supported by US DHHS ASPR HPP funds through a contract with Kentucky Public Health.