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Today's News...This Morning

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Tuesday, March 18, 2025

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Athens, Tennessee

Monroe Co. Sheriff confirms Two Dead in Sweetwater House Fire



A devastating house fire on Hawkins Road in Sweetwater late Saturday night, March 15, claimed the lives of two individuals, according to the Monroe County Sheriff's Office.

Emergency crews responded to the scene just before 11 p.m., where they found the structure fully engulfed in flames. Family members reported that two individuals were trapped inside, and after the fire was extinguished, human remains were recovered and transported to the Regional Forensic Center for identification.

Multiple fire departments battled the blaze throughout the night, and Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI) agents are assisting in the investigation.

Sheriff Tommy Jones expressed gratitude for the first responders' efforts and asked the community to pray for the victims' families. The names of the deceased have not been released as the investigation continues.

Source: [Monroe County Sheriff Tommy Jones - Facebook](#)

Community News You Can Use

- [Cleveland State Community College](#) will host a **Mass Casualty Simulation on Thursday, March 20, at 10 a.m.** in the **Health & Science Center**. The drill will simulate the aftermath of a tornado and involve students from multiple disciplines, working alongside local emergency services. A debrief will follow in room N125. The Health & Science Center parking lot will be closed for the event.
- **TDOT** has announced that they **will resurface Madison Ave. from Cook Dr. to Green St. and Washington Ave. from Madison Ave. to Green St.** beginning around March 27, 2025. This road work will occur during night hours between 9:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. with minimal daytime lane closures, if any (and to be done outside of peak hours). This project is scheduled **to be completed no later than July 31, 2025**. The cost of this road project is \$1.99M and funded by TDOT.
- The City of Athens Public Works Department announces the following street closure: The area to be affected is **COLLEGE STREET** from Jackson Street to Long Street. This closure will be on Thursday, March 20, 2025 from 8:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. The purpose of this closing is for Tennessee Wesleyan University's Blood Donation event.

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Tuesday, March 18, 2025

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Athens, Tennessee

Obituaries

Todd Garrison Hancock, 50 of Athens, passed away on Thursday, March 13. He was a standout football player for McMinn Central High School. Visitation will be held at Ziegler Funeral Home from 5:00 until 7:00 PM on Thursday, April 24 with a Celebration of Life to follow. Ziegler Funeral Home has been entrusted with serving the family of Todd Garrison Hancock.

Daily Willard "Jack" Grubb, 94 of Athens, passed away on Sunday, March 16 at his residence. He was a 1948 Graduate of McMinn County High School. He served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. Jack was a member Clearwater Baptist Church. He retired from Mayfield Dairy Farm after 60 plus years of service. He was former President of Athens Optimist Club. Funeral services will be 2:00 P.M. Thursday, March 20 in the Chapel of Laycock-Hobbs Funeral Home. Interment will follow in Clearwater Cemetery. The family will receive friends prior to the service from 12:00-2:00 P.M. Thursday in the funeral home. Arrangements by Laycock-Hobbs Funeral Home.

Dr. Janice S. Hardaway, passed Thursday, March 13, 2025 at her home in Athens, TN, surrounded by her family. Home going services will be held Saturday, March 29th, 2025 at 12:00 noon at Light of Life Faith Ministries International, 1112 Congress Parkway North, Athens. Visitation will be Friday, March 28, 2025 from 1:00 p.m – 6:00 p.m in the chapel of M.D. Dotson and Sons Funeral Home in Athens and also on Saturday, March 29th, 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. Interment will follow the service on Saturday at Cedar Grove Cemetery.

McMinn County Students Attend 78th Tennessee 4-H Congress



Three McMinn County high school students recently attended the **78th Annual Tennessee State 4-H Congress** in Nashville, a program dedicated to fostering responsible citizenship and understanding the legislative process. **Kaylen Leekley, Arianna Dawson, and Ellie Burns**, accompanied by adult volunteer **Brooke Leekley**, participated in a **three-day symposium**, engaging with state representatives, touring the Capitol, and enjoying a General Jackson Riverboat ride.

As part of the event, the students took part in a **service project** benefiting *The Store*, a nonprofit founded by **Brad and Kim Paisley**, which provides free groceries to those in need. Their participation was made possible through generous local donations. *Source: Ginger Robinson, Executive Director, McMinn County Education Foundation*

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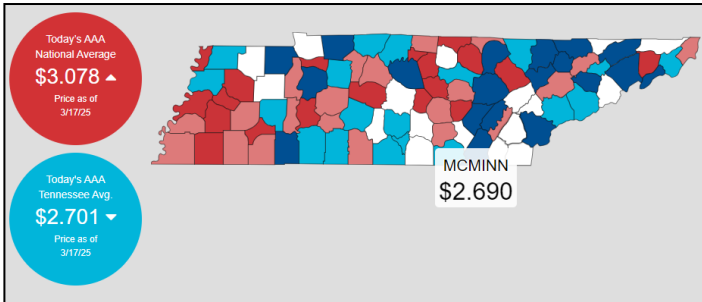
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Tuesday, March 18, 2025 Morning Fax[®]...Today's News This Morning Page 3 **Athens, Tennessee**

Gas Prices Drop in Tennessee, McMinn County Below State Average

Monroe County Authorities Arrest Fugitive for Stolen Motorcycle



The Monroe County Sheriff's Office arrested Charles "CJ" Ballard III late Friday evening after he allegedly stole a motorcycle during a test drive. Deputies located Ballard on County

Gas prices continue to fall across Tennessee, with the state's average dropping to **\$2.70 per gallon**, placing it among the **10 cheapest states for fuel**, according to AAA. **McMinn County drivers are seeing even lower prices, with the local average at \$2.69 per gallon as of March 17.**

Road 340 in McMinn County, where he was taken into custody.

Despite an increase in gasoline demand, national prices also declined, with the average falling to **\$3.07 per gallon**, about **8 cents lower than last month** and **31 cents less than a year ago**. Fuel supply slightly decreased, but production remains steady, helping to keep prices stable. With spring break travel ramping up, Tennessee drivers will benefit from **some of the lowest gas prices in the country.**

In addition to the theft charge, Ballard faces felony failure to appear charges in Bradley County and a probation violation in Sullivan County. Monroe County Sheriff Tommy Jones credited the McMinn County Sheriff's Office and Sweetwater Police Department for assisting in the arrest.

Source: AAAgasprices.com

Source: [Sheriff Tommy Jones - Facebook](#)

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