

Journalism, Truth and Healthy Communities

Healthy people, healthy businesses, healthy governments — healthy communities — are all best informed and engaged by independent community journalists who examine school budgets, expose scandals, question practices and politics, scrutinize environmental practices, who champion good and who dare to challenge fear and falsehoods.



The work we do in our newsrooms enhances community life, it exposes mental and social health care problems and brings solutions forward, it relentlessly exposes overspending in our governments, and highlights the great people who live and work all around us. Communities are healthier, more engaged, more resilient and better able to thrive when informed by truth.

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KENNEBEC JOURNAL | *Morning Sentinel*

Sun Journal



The Portland Press Herald
EST. 1862
Maine Sunday Telegram

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Fiddlehead Focus • Penobscot Bay Pilot • Pine Tree Watch

A year ago, Carlene Gray suffered a stroke and now every time the 82-year-old tries to climb down the five steps to her yard, it's a harrowing experience.

The boards wobble beneath her. She clutches the railing in fear and hangs on to whomever is there to help.

“Somebody has to be with her,” said Hope Priola, Gray’s granddaughter. “Getting her down the steps takes two or three people.”

Enter Lily Thibeault, Gray’s great-granddaughter. Lily is 12 and has been saving her allowance — every penny of it — because she knows her great-grandmother needs a ramp and she knows that ramps cost money.



One week later ...



Harry Walker stopped on Route 4 in Auburn to make a left turn onto Lake Shore Drive, bringing home a quart of milk.

The next thing he knew, he was waking up in the hospital with a concussion, eight broken ribs, a broken vertebra, a broken arm, a collapsed lung and bleeding on the brain.

He was 84. Doctors didn't think he'd survive.

"(From behind, the car) hit me and drove me into oncoming traffic, but I don't remember anything," he said.

Amy Liberman stopped on Route 4 to make a left turn onto Lake Shore Drive while driving with her mother, her 5-year-old daughter, Danika DeMayo, and her eldest daughter's boyfriend. They had time before meeting family for dinner, so Liberman decided to drive around Lake Auburn. Danika loved the water.



Harry Walker, 85, of Lake Shore Drive in Auburn, (pictured below) survived this Route 4 crash last year.

SUN JOURNAL FILE PHOTO

SEEKING A SAFER WAY

Route 4 drivers say deaths, injuries prove changes to roadway needed

By LINDSAY TICE
STAFF WRITER

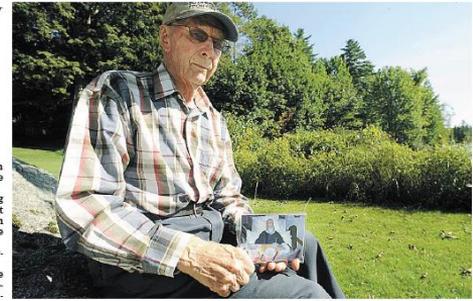
AUBURN — Harry Walker stopped on Route 4 to make a left turn onto Lake Shore Drive, bringing home a quart of milk. The next thing he knew, he was waking up in the hospital with a concussion, eight broken ribs, a broken vertebra, a broken arm, a collapsed lung and bleeding on the brain.

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But before Liberman could make the turn, a pickup truck plowed into the back of her car, propelling her vehicle into the car in front of her — a car that was also trying to turn onto Lake Shore Drive. When Liberman looked back, she found her daughter slumped and dangling from her booster seat with a severe head injury.



Harry Walker shows a picture of himself in the hospital after being rear-ended at the intersection of Lake Shore Drive and Route 4 in Auburn last December while he was waiting to make the left turn onto Lake Shore Drive, where he lives. "The car hit me and drove me into oncoming traffic, but I don't remember anything," Walker said.

AMBER WATERMAN/SUN JOURNAL PHOTOS



Crosses along Route 4 bear witness to some of the loved ones who have died in crashes along the stretch that runs from outer Center Street through Turner.



Brooke Bilodeau, a nurse, holds Danika DeMayo, 5, of Woodstock. Danika's mother, Amy Liberman, credits Bilodeau with saving Danika's life when the little girl was seriously injured in an Aug. 6 accident on Route 4 near Lake Shore Drive in Auburn.

A month later, Danika has trouble with memory, swallowing and strength on her right side. Her long-term prognosis is unclear.

"This could affect her for the rest of her life or it could completely clear up," Liberman said. "We won't know for years." Tammie Willoughby considers herself lucky; she's only had close calls. Whenever she has to turn onto Lake Shore

Crashes on Route 4 from the Auburn Shaw's Plaza to the Turner town line

January 2003 through September 2012, by the numbers:

- 5 fatalities, 32 incapacitating injuries, 637 crashes.
- The most common causes of crashes were failure to yield the right of way (29 percent) and following too closely (26 percent). Driving too fast accounted for 14 percent of crashes.
- 73 percent of crashes occurred during the day, the majority of those in the afternoon.
- Less than 6 percent of drivers were impaired or affected (operating under the influence, sleepy, sick).
- Total crashes for this stretch were down 43 percent in 2011 from the year before. But 2012 has already exceeded 2011 and is on pace to see more crashes than in the past three years.



GOOGLEMAPS

After decades of silence, the women of St. Joseph's Orphanage in Lewiston talked about the physical abuse and emotional trauma inflicted in the 1960s, and about finding peace.

Each of the women we talked with had endured a lifetime of fear in silence, and the details of their years at the orphanage were so brutal we published an editor's note at the top of the story warning our readers the story contained descriptions of disturbing events.

In the end, we heard from people that it helped them to know they were not alone.



When the Portland Press Herald recognized the number of complaints about inaccurate Central Maine Power bills was escalating, two reporters were assigned to investigate, and started by assembling a database of complaints culled from the Public Utilities Commission and the Public Advocate's offices. They also scraped LinkedIn, Facebook, Google, internal CMP newsletters and news reports on promotions, new hires, retirements, etc. about former CMP employees.

From that research emerged a picture of a company in the throes of chaos and disarray. The documents showed that CMP had cut corners on testing and training of its new billing system, that it misled the public in downplaying the severity and scale of the billing errors, and dodged responsibility.

Through the complaints lodged with public agencies and a Facebook group of angry at CMP customers, reporters reached dozens of people whose compelling and sometimes tragic stories gave the story its human face and heart.

Several state investigations continue today.

In Maine/N.E.
Motorcyclists mourn the deaths of seven killed in NH, crash / BT

Maine Sunday Telegram

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SPECIAL REPORT

ELECTRIC SHOCK

How Central Maine Power misled the public and mismanaged the rollout of its new billing system

A Portland Press Herald/Maine Sunday Telegram investigation reveals that layers of the electric utility's management misjudged the enormity of the changeover, leaving thousands of angry and frustrated customers.

By PAUL ELBERT

Just outside nearly 2,000 utility industry professionals from 100 companies descended on the Grand Hyatt hotel in San Antonio, Texas, for a three-day software conference.

Donna McNally, a veteran information technology director for Central Maine Power Co., was there to test her company's new customer billing system. In a presentation, she told the audience how CMP's new software, launched exactly one year earlier, increased billing accuracy and reduced customer complaints.

What she didn't tell them was that 2.6 million smart meters in Maine, more than 100,000 customers had been receiving inaccurate bills, for many customers separately separate power bills. Or that many residential and commercial shakers, customers never received any bills at all — until they were caught off guard and alerted by shutoff notices. Central CMP was now the recipient of multiple state investigations, plus a litigious lawsuit alleging the company mismanaged the bungled billing system.

"The Texas presentation was not the first time, nor was it the last, that CMP management mismanaged customer service disaster that shattered the reputation of Maine's largest, in late March of this year, CMP's chief executive told the Maine Public Utilities Commission that the billing problems were largely solved. But even now, customers continue to complain to the agency about unexplained bills and their ongoing frustration with trying to get answers from CMP."

A Portland Press Herald Maine Sunday Telegram investigation has found that officials at Central Maine Power and its parent company cut corners, installed less-robust hardware and failed to adequately test a new smart meter billing system launched in the fall of 2017.

"The roll-out of the new utility billing system, poorly designed and implemented, resulted in a pattern of customer mismanagement and unresolved customer problems, ignoring much of this decade."



Michael Harvey, who has received monthly electric bills as high as \$1,600 for his 1,000-square-foot Westbrook home, checks upcoming dates for negotiating his energy-related to the bungled rollout of CMP's new billing system.

The newspaper's examination of documents, interviews, analysis and other sources revealed that managers slipped critical tests and rushed through others that would have alerted officials that the system was not ready to launch.

The origins of the billing bills date back to 2011, when the company installed a legacy and employee-disputed smart meter system that provided customer savings that rose year after year. The most significant savings have only benefited the company after it had off its meter readers.

A priority listed corporate strategy focused on reduction of customer service positions left CMP understaffed at critical times.



The Donna in Westbrook — checked from top left, Shannon, April, Joslin, Sara and Peter — say they're excited to electric meters — lose flushing allowances at the local Boys & Girls Club — when CMP bills grew cost-prohibitive.

FRUSTRATED CUSTOMERS ON THE FRONT LINES
More than 100,000 customers — like the Donnas, at left — have become embroiled in Central Maine Power's billing system fiasco, some of them resorting to desperate measures to cope with inexplicably high bills. We've compiled a dozen of their troubling stories inside. **Page A-10**

'UNFULFILLED PROMISES' OF THE SMART METER UPGRADE
Learn why a shift to real-time pricing for home customers — and \$130 million in potential savings — never materialized. **Page A-10**

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU HAVE BILLING DISPUTES?
Twelve months after CMP mismanaged the switch to its new billing system, here's what you need to know if you've been affected. **Page A-11**

Isaiah Washington is an entrepreneurial teen who built a forge in his backyard and started crafting custom knives.

On the day that story ran in the Sun Journal, the city of Auburn shut him down because his home wasn't zoned for blacksmithing.

Two months later, he was back in business after people in the community helped him find a new location.





BIDDEFORD, Maine — The mayor worries for his city because the local newspaper, the Journal Tribune, ended its 135-year run Saturday. The superintendent of the schools isn't sure how he will tell the community what's happening inside its classrooms. The head of the local food pantry is in mourning; he turned to the paper when his organization was about to be kicked out of its building.

The three city leaders are distressed. That said, none of them was subscribing to the paper when it published its last issue.



**Journalism is the
window to the
soul of the
citizenry.**

**— Eric Stout, Records Officer and Freedom of Access Act Support
Maine Department of Administrative and Financial Services Office of Information Technology**