

ON THE MONEY

Options limited to avoid 737 jet

By DAVID KOENIG
Associated Press Writer

At some point early next year, air travelers will need to decide if they're willing to take a flight on a Boeing 737 Max.

If they're not, they'll need to find out what their travel options are.

There will be no government-ordered compensation in North America or Europe for travelers who are afraid to get on the plane that has crashed twice, killing 346 people. Not after aviation regulators deem the Max safe.

However, airlines are likely to be more flexible in letting passengers change their schedules to avoid flying on a Max, at least for a while.

"We will take care of customers who are not comfortable flying on the Max. We will rebook them," said American Airlines spokesman Ross Feinstein. The airline won't charge those passengers the standard \$200 fee for changing a ticket, he said.

It's unclear how long that flexibility will last. Airlines are likely to gauge media coverage and passenger sentiment about the Max. Once the plane recedes from the news and customer confidence grows, airlines could go back to their regular policies around canceling and changing flights.

Also, while they will be willing to rebook passengers free of charge for a while, that doesn't mean that American, Southwest Airlines and United Airlines — the three U.S. carriers that fly the Max — can get you on the next flight. They are under no obligation to find a seat for you on another carrier, or to pay for a hotel room if they don't have an available seat until the next day.

American, Southwest and United Airlines, the three U.S. carriers that own Max jets, display the type of plane for every flight on their online schedules.

However, airlines routinely swap planes when there is a mechanical issue with one, or when an incoming plane is arriving too late. That means travelers who carefully checked the airline website to make sure they weren't buying a ticket on a Max could wind up on one anyway, with no advance warning.

If that happens, consumer advocates say passengers should talk to the gate agent immediately.

"You should indicate that you're fearful of this plane and it would be better for everybody if they allow you to take another flight or give you a credit or a refund," said Paul Hudson, the president of FlyersRights.org, an advocacy group that sprung from protests over long ground delays during which passengers were trapped on planes. "You don't want a flyer who is panicked and causing problems on the flight."

Aware of this situation, American and United say they will not use the Max as a last-minute substitute for other planes, although it's not clear how long they will stick to that policy.

Of course, there is one fail-safe strategy for travelers who are determined to avoid the Boeing plane: "If you really want to be absolutely sure, you can fly on an airline that doesn't have any MAXes," said Hudson, the passenger advocate.

Delta Air Lines is the largest U.S. carrier that has never used the Max, and its CEO said last week Delta benefited over the summer from the thousands of Max-related cancellations at Southwest, American and United.

Three locations eyed for project

By HAYLEY ZAVISLAK
Press Enterprise Writer

BLOOMSBURG — Three locations in Columbia County could be beneficiaries of a new community investment project created by a recent federal tax bill.

Swaths of western, central and northern Bloomsburg; central Berwick; and Danville were named as three of the 300 opportunity zones in Pennsylvania.

Opportunity Zones are made up of low-income census tracts, which have not experienced an economic boom. The program was created by the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017.

Essentially, investors who put money into projects in the zones can defer or reduce the capital gains taxes they must pay on investments.

In Erie, a grouping of eight opportunity zones is trying to lure investors to develop the central business district and its bayfront, among other spots.

Recently, state Senator John Gordner brought Timothy S. Wachter of Knox

Law in Erie to Bloomsburg to brief potential investors and state politicians on the zones and tax laws.

Gordner said that a few projects already may be on the horizon for residents of our region, and U.S. Rep. Dan Meuser is very interested in the prospect.

It could help in Bloomsburg, where so much of the property belongs to tax-exempt entities, Gordner said.

While any corporation or individual with capital gains can invest in an opportunity zone, the residents who live there also benefit, Gordner said.

Projects in the zone could range from new businesses to real-estate development.

And in areas suffering from flooding or blight, properties could be demolished and rebuilt.

More information, including maps of the local opportunity zones are available at <https://opportunityzones.hud.gov/>.

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Press Enterprise/Keith Haupt

MEDICAL MARIJUANA STORE OPENS

Nature's Medicines regional manager Daniel McNulty, left, and Buckhorn store general manager Justin Minnich stand outside the medical marijuana dispensary near the Columbia Mall. The pharmaceutical business deals with cannabis-based products ranging from vaping oils to pills under a permit issued by the state Department of Health. Hours at the facility are 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. seven days a week. Nature's Medicines is at 261 Columbia Mall Drive in Buckhorn.

UPMC lauded for organ donations

WILLIAMSPORT — UPMC Susquehanna was recently recognized by the Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania, the Center for Organ Recovery & Education, Gift of Life Donor Program, and the Pennsylvania Department of Health with the Titanium Health System designation in the 2019 HAP Donate Life Pennsylvania Hospital Challenge, according to a press release.

UPMC, UPMC Pinnacle, UPMC Presbyterian, and UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh were also recognized as top performers.

The annual HAP Donate Life Pennsylvania Hospital Challenge encourages Pennsylvania hospitals to increase organ donation awareness and designations within their hospital and community. The 2019 challenge began during January and ended during April, which is National Donate Life Month. During the challenge Pennsylvania's hospitals dedicate significant effort to drawing attention to the need for organ and tissue donors and encouraging new donor registrations.

"Becoming an organ donor is a simple action, taking only a few minutes to sign up, but the impact can be life-changing," said Alysse Williams,

RN, BSN, Donate Life chairperson for UPMC Susquehanna. "UPMC Susquehanna's designation is recognition of the efforts our providers and staff are making every day in our commitment to supporting organ donation as a viable life-saving option."

UPMC Susquehanna facilities promoted organ donation through various educational events throughout the region, including special flag-raising ceremonies highlighting the kickoff of National Donate Life Month. The system also provided education and encouragement to consider organ donation through social media and system marketing.

Participating hospitals' awareness and designation activities are captured on a scorecard and assigned titanium, platinum, gold, silver and bronze level recognitions. One-hundred and thirteen hospitals and 24 health systems across the state participated in the challenge.

"Losing a loved one can mean unspeakable sadness, but we know that there are ways that we can help honor the lives of those we have lost and continue their legacies through the most selfless gift of all, life anew," said Andy Carter, President and CEO of HAP.

BIDA promotes woman

BERWICK — Berwick Industrial Development Association recently promoted Stacy Whitmire to the role of finance director, according to a press release.

In that position, Whitmire will ensure the efficient operation of B.I.D.A.'s business functions such as human resources, fi-



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nance and accounting. She has worked with BIDA for more than seven years and her knowledge of the organization will be an asset to its continued development and achievements, according to the press release.

Whitmire can be reached at 570-752-3612 or by email at swhitmire@bida.com.



Press Enterprise/Jimmy May

W&L PURCHASES NISSAN DEALERSHIP

The owners of W&L Subaru have purchased the Northwoods Nissan and have changed the name to W&L Nissan. Posing, from left, are Silvia Long, Noah Long, 5, and Andrew Long in its current showroom. The dealership has also purchased the former Kmart store and will be moving to a temporary site at that location in Shamokin Dam before starting construction on its new showroom.

Community Options appoints new leader

BLOOMSBURG — A non-profit that supports people with disabilities by offering housing and employment has appointed Lacie Parker as its state director, according to a press release.

Parker will lead all operations in Pennsylvania, working with housing and local directors throughout the state to help parents find their



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children jobs and places to live as they approach adulthood.

"Lacie has been working with Community Options for several years and this promotion is well deserved. She is an advocate and has great ideas on how to work with Governor Wolf and his team to ensure that the lives of persons with disabilities are enriched and fulfilled,"

said President and CEO Robert Stack in a press release.

Parker has 10 years' experience in the nonprofit sector developing employment and housing for persons with disabilities. She joined Community Options in 2012.

Parker, who is finishing her master's degree from Pennsylvania State University this year, is assembling a strategic planning committee and seeking strong board support.

Giant to test checkout that uses smartphones

CARLISLE — Giant Food Stores will install a checkout process at five stores in the Harrisburg area that would allow customers to gather their groceries and pay with their smartphones without having to stop at a register, according to a press release.

The store is calling the new technology "frictionless checkout," and plans to install it at stores in Camp Hill, Harrisburg, Lancaster, Mid-

dletown and Willow Grove by the end of the year.

In those stores, customers would have the option of using the Giant app on their smartphone or a handheld device to scan in each of the items they were purchasing. They would then walk through the grocery store equivalent of an E-Z Pass lane with their cart and phone, where a "payment approved" message would be

displayed and they could take their groceries directly to their vehicles.

"We are continuously looking at how, when and where our customers want to shop and introducing frictionless checkout brings convenience and technology together to meet the needs of our busy customers," said John Ponnett, senior vice president of retail operations, GIANT Food Stores.



Press Enterprise/Keith Haupt

NEW ATTORNEY JOINS BAR ASSOCIATION

Judge Thomas A. James Jr., right, swears in Rebeka Buczeskie to the Columbia-Montour Bar Association in his chamber at the Columbia County Courthouse. With James and Buczeskie is Attorney Barry Lewis with the firm of Hummel, Lewis and Smith.

State plans new overtime rules

HARRISBURG (AP) — Gov. Tom Wolf is scaling back a proposal to extend overtime pay eligibility to thousands of workers in Pennsylvania, and his administration on Thursday put it on a path to a vote within weeks over the protests of business groups.

Wolf's administration submitted its proposed regulation to the agenda for a state rule-making board's Nov. 21 meeting. The five-member Independent Regulatory Review Commission has a 3-2 majority of Democratic appointees.

Wolf, a Democrat, first unveiled the proposal last year, saying it would extend overtime eligibility to up to 460,000 workers in four years.

The administration said the revised rule unveiled Thursday would expand overtime pay eligibility to 82,000 work-

ers who earn above a new federal threshold that's rising to almost \$36,000 on Jan. 1. Pennsylvania's total non-farm payrolls are just above 6 million.

It would phase in the increase over three years and require in 2022 that salaried workers earning up to \$45,500 a year get time-and-a-half pay for any time they work over 40 hours in a week, a slightly lower figure than Wolf's administration initially sought.

Pennsylvania's current threshold is set at the federal baseline of \$23,660, although the administration said the rising federal threshold will make 61,000 workers in the state newly eligible for overtime pay.

The current threshold took effect in 2004. Wolf's administration said as many as 251,000 other workers may have a job whose duties qualify for overtime

pay, but they aren't getting the benefit because they don't realize that qualify for it.

Wolf has pursued the new regulation after spending five years fruitlessly asking the Republican-controlled Legislature to increase Pennsylvania's minimum wage, which is set at the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour. Most states have increased their minimum wage, including every neighboring state.

Wolf does not need legislative approval for the regulatory change.

Gordon Denlinger, executive director of the Pennsylvania chapter of the National Federation of Independent Business, said business owners will have a compliance nightmare on their hands and be unable to afford to promote younger workers into management roles.