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CORRIDOR

CEDAR RAPIDS

Murder suspect's trial postponed until March

The murder trial of Brian Zirtzman, 39, of Cedar Rapids, who is accused of setting a house fire in which two neighbors died, has been rescheduled to March 8.

Zirtzman's trial had been slated to begin Dec. 8, but last week the court granted a defense motion to reschedule.

The court also ordered that a vial of Zirtzman's blood be drawn and turned over to his attorneys for DNA testing at an alternative facility.

Zirtzman is in the Linn County Jail facing two counts of first-degree murder for setting the April 6 fire at 3755 H Ave. NE that killed Jay Grahman, 38, and his 6-year-old daughter, Jaymie. Four other family members escaped the fire.

Prosecutors allege Zirtzman set the fire so he could save the family, whom he visited frequently. That plan went awry when the flames spread too quickly.

Gas leak prompts officials to block street

First Avenue East was blocked off for about 10 minutes Monday because of a gas leak.

Firefighters were called to 1537 First Ave. E just after 3 p.m. for a report of a natural gas leak in a business, department spokesman Dave Koch said.

Remodeling work being done inside City Consignment resulted in the natural gas leak when a gas line thought to be shut down was disconnected, Koch said. Firefighters shut off the gas and ventilated the building.

No injuries were reported.

EASTERN IOWA

We want to hear about your Thanksgiving plans

Is this Thanksgiving a special one for your family? Will it be more than turkey and football?

The holiday comes while thousands of Americans are in war zones. Many people are out of work or worried about the future of their jobs. Many others are prosperous, secure and content.

We'd like to have reporters spend this national day of thanksgiving with some Eastern Iowa families and report on what people are talking about.

Please e-mail Iowa Editor Mary Sharp by Friday (Mary.Sharp@gazettecommunications.com) and tell her a little about your family and why this holiday is a special one for your family. If you don't have e-mail, call her at (319) 398-8254 or 1-(800) 397-8212.

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