



People collect food at a temporary shelter for those displaced by wildfires in Bordeaux, France, Tuesday, July 28, 2026.

WILDFIRE

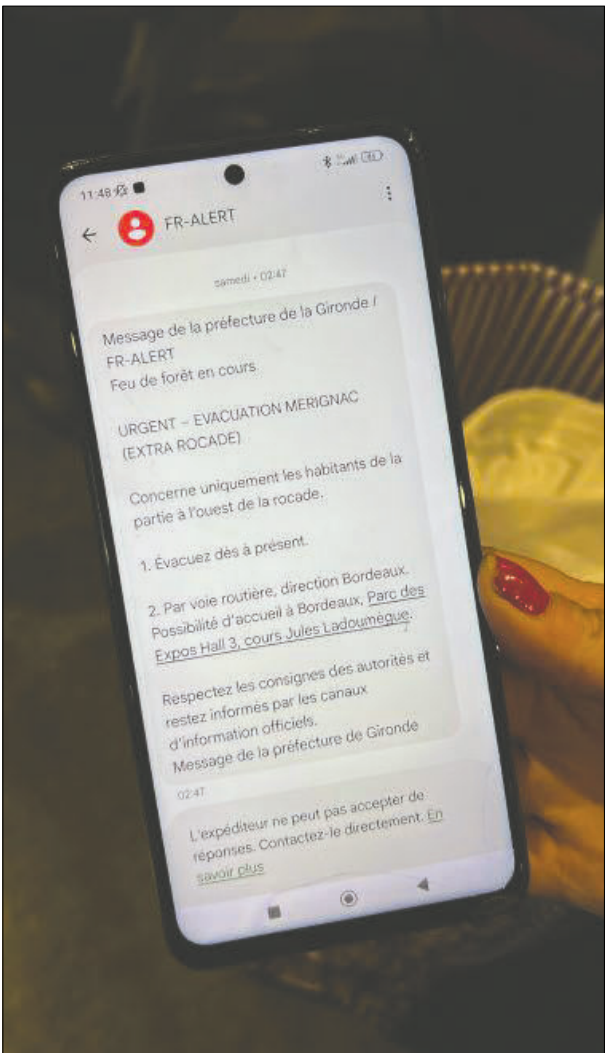
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although on Tuesday they gave the go-ahead for returns to three suburbs of Bordeaux that haven’t had fires. It’s unknown when others might be allowed home. Fire trucks are still racing from one flare-up to the next, as aircraft drop water and retardant. Smoke clouds could be seen from kilometers away Tuesday.

Even when this inferno is beaten, the next one may not be far behind. Successive heat waves this year have turned European forests tinder-dry. They have also served as sobering reminders that human-caused climate change makes such extreme events increasingly likely.

“What really drives me crazy is that it makes me very worried about the future, because year after year it’s getting worse,” Bonichot said.

“It’s going to be a catastrophe.”



Evacuee Morgane Bonichot, 40, sheltering in an evacuation center in Bordeaux, France, on Tuesday, July 28, 2026, shows an evacuation message she received on her mobile phone on Saturday, July 25, ordering her to flee wildfires in southwest France's Gironde region.

OPTIMIST

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were then planted by machines, then watered by automated irrigation systems.

Whereupon, self-propelled farming equipment harvested each pineapple, placing them into cargo trucks. Next, pineapples were dumped onto conveyor systems where automated circular saws sliced off their leaves. Fruit then passed into industrial baths of high-pressure water jets which scrubbed away soil, debris, pesticides, and mammalian excreta.

“GROSS! YOU SAID MAMMALIAN EXCRETA!”

Next, high-speed digital cameras inspected each pineapple, calculating diameter, then routed each pineapple to its correct processing area.

Then, the fruit was ushered into the “Henry Ginaca machine.” The Henry Ginaca machine was invented during the Technological Revolution, in 1911, by a guy whose name was... Well, I can’t remember.

In one lightning-fast swipe, the Henry Ginaca machine topped, tailed, and punched out a perfect pineapple core, while simultaneously carving away the tough outer rind.

“PLEASE STOP TELLING ME ABOUT PINEAPPLES.”

Afterward, the fruit was dropped onto rotary blades that chopped it into uniform slices. While this

was happening, a depalletizer was pushing empty tins off pallets with robotic arms, flipping them upside down, and blasting them with steam.

Pineapple slices were then stacked into cans and sent to an automatic “syrup injector.” Then came the automated vacuum sealer. Then the lid crimper. Then the quality-control machine, then...

“I’M BEGGING YOU.”

Sealed cans then traveled through a massive, multi-story intelligent pressure cooker to heat them, cooking pineapple inside the tins, which destroyed dangerous microorganisms. Hot cans then passed under a machine, spraying them with cold water to stop the cooking process and prevent fruit from becoming mush.

Then rapid-fire rollers labeled each can. Then, cans were robotically packed. A mechanical palletizer then wrapped the shipment in plastic. Then came a forklift and...

“FOR THE LOVE OF GOD! I GET IT! MAYBE MACHINES AREN’T SO BAD. BUT I STILL THINK THIS WORLD STINKS.”

Wrong again. Before the late 19th century, nearly all cities featured open street gutters overflowing with raw sewage, rotting animal carcasses, and mountains of mammalian excreta. Whereas thanks to modern sewers, daily bathing, and municipal trash collection, our lives are less stinky than ever

before in the history of civilization.

“OH MY GOD.”

I know this is hard for you.

“WHAT ABOUT KIDS? THEY’RE LAZY! THEY DON’T WORK AS HARD AS MY GENERATION DID!”

Well, I hate to be the proverbial mammalian excreta in the punchbowl. Even though today’s young workers might not be driving steel or traversing the Oregon Trail, studies show they might be working harder than any generation before them. This is because they carry their workplace in their pockets.

Smartphones, emails, text messages, and project management apps have made the cognitive burden heavier than ever. The unspoken expectation to respond to quick questions, late-night texts, or over-the-weekend emails breeds a state of chronic, low-grade alertness. Today’s workers no longer operate in shifts. They are on the clock indefinitely.

“BUT WHAT ABOUT THE FAMILY UNIT? WE’RE SEEING THE DECLINE OF THE AMERICAN FAMILY!”

Are we? According to studies compiled by organizations like the World Economic Forum and the University of California, Irvine, parent-child time has skyrocketed since the mid-20th century.

American children now receive an average of four

WAY BACK WHEN

Kentucky museum unveils Duncan Hines exhibit

On August 3, 2006, The Kentucky Museum announced the installation of an exhibit honoring author, businessman, and local legend Duncan Hines: “Recommended by Duncan Hines.” This homage to Hines’ signature signs - displayed at restaurants and hotels he deemed worthy of the title - debuted in August 2007 and remains an active attraction to this day.

The exhibit features Hines’ own ice bucket and hot dog cooker, a Duncan Hines kitchen, and a 3-D image of Hines himself. Additionally, the museum disclosed plans for a four-year project that would lead to additions and modifications to numerous other aspects of the space.

– “Way Back When in Warren County” is compiled by researchers at the Warren County Public Library and appears weekly in the Bowling Green Daily News. For more information about the library visit warrenpl.org.

New York school pauses plan to deploy humanlike AI robot teacher

By PHILIP MARCELO
Associated Press

NEW YORK — A school district in a rural corner of upstate New York is hitting pause on plans to deploy an AI-powered, humanoid robot in the classroom after state education officials, teachers and local residents raised concerns, including the maker’s ties to a company that produces hyper realistic sex bots.

The Salamanca City Central School District’s board approved the nearly \$60,000 purchase from Realbotix with visions that “Sally,” as the stationary robot with long dark hair has already been nicknamed, would enhance the education of high school students studying robotics and technology fields.

“Having a difficult time programming an Arduino board? Don’t even know what an Arduino board is? Ask Sally and she can explain it,” Superintendent Mark Beehler, said Tuesday. “The robot also provides opportunities for students to

learn how the robot is maintained, how it is updated with new approved content, and how to troubleshoot issues.”

But as news spread in the small community located on the Seneca Nation of Indians reservation, parents and teachers worried about how students’ personal information would be used. Unionized teachers took aim at Realbotix’s sex doll sister company, even as district officials and the company itself stressed the two manufacturers operate independently.

“A robot built by a company associated with sex dolls has no business in our classrooms,” said Melinda Person, president of the labor union New York State United Teachers.

For now, the robot pilot remains on hold as the district works through “enhanced student data privacy agreements” with the state education officials and continues outreach to the community, according to a statement the district posted Friday on its Face-

book page.

State officials and teacher voice concerns

State Education Commissioner Betty Rosa said she remained concerned about the robot’s role in the classroom even after her staff met with district officials.

“Although you confirmed that the robot would not have any role delivering classroom instruction, a recent presentation to the board characterized the robot as a ‘tutoring platform,’” Rosa wrote in a letter to the district Friday.

She also echoed residents’ concerns about what data privacy and security protections would be in place.

Unionized teachers, meanwhile, suggested the effort was a first step toward replacing, flesh-and-bone educators. “Sally” will be able to move her arms and hands but have nonworking legs.

“Our students don’t need robots,” Person said. “They need real relationships with caring adults.”

hours of daily face time with parents. This might not sound impressive, but only 50 years ago, the same child would have gotten 17 minutes.

“REALLY?”

Really. During the Industrial Age, for example, kids could expect an average of two minutes of face time. Likewise, only 50 years ago an average mother would spend 40 to 56 weekly hours on housework. Today, the American mother spends 18 hours.

“OKAY, MISTER SMARTY-STATS. IF THINGS ARE SO GREAT, WHY ARE AMERICAN DIVORCES HIGHER THAN EVER?”

Well, that’s the thing. They aren’t. In 1980, U.S. divorce rates peaked at 22.6 divorces per 1,000 married women. That number has dropped and is currently hovering around 8. This means—and believe me, I know this is difficult to hear—Baby Boomers have 40 percent more divorces than Generation Xers, Millennials, and Gen-Zers combined.

“BUT WHAT ABOUT CRIME? WE HAVE MORE WEIRDOS OUT THERE. CRIME IS WORSE! THIS WORLD IS MORE DANGEROUS!”

Nope. You might be confusing this era with the 14th century, when annual homicide rates in cities like, for instance, London, were around 110 deaths per 100,000 people. Today, the average homicide rate in Europe is around one

per 100,000.

On a global scale, however, things have changed more dramatically. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) found that worldwide homicide rates—even in just the last 30 years—have dropped sharply. In the United States alone, violent crime fell by more than 50 percent since 1993.

You might want to read that last sentence again.

“I STILL DON’T BELIEVE YOU. YOU’RE SMOKING CRACK.”

Of course you don’t believe me. This is because whenever a crime is committed, anywhere on Earth, the crime is immediately displayed on your phone screen before the crime is, technically,

even finished.

In turn, your brain—which is still wired with prehistoric wiring—interprets this hi-def video as a threat existing in your own yard. Which causes you to exhibit physiological symptoms of fear. Symptoms such as stress, anxiety, elevated heart rate, shallow breathing, sudden interest in reality television, etc.

“GIMME A BREAK! THIS WORLD IS A SICK PLACE. YOU CAN’T CONVINCE ME OTHERWISE!”

I will agree with you there. Because negativity is definitely a disease.

– Sean Dietrich is a columnist, and novelist, known for his commentary on life in the American South.



I love this town.

Thank you, Bowling Green.

I love being here to help life go right™ in a community where people are making a difference every day. Thank you for all you do.

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