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FRIDAY, APRIL 13, 2007

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### NORTH COUNTY



**One dead, 10 hurt after tractor-trailer hits farmworkers' van**

TRIBUNE MAP

## Hwy. 46 collision kills one, injures 10

In early morning crash, tractor-trailer rear-ends van taking farmworkers to a field near Shandon

By P. KIM BUI  
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A farmworker was killed and 10 others injured in a traffic collision on Highway 46 East near Shandon early Thursday morning, according to the CHP.

About 6:40 a.m., just west of McMillan Canyon Road, a Dodge van carrying 15 people slowed to make a left turn into a driveway. The driver of the car behind the van applied the brakes and moved to the right side of the highway, according to the CHP. Behind that car, Francisco Pacheco, 63, of El Centro did not see the van and rear-ended it with his tractor-trailer. The van eventually stopped on the south shoulder of the road.

Pacheco has told the CHP that he applied the brakes, but so far there is no evidence of that, the CHP said.

Pacheco was working for

SLIDESHOW ONLINE

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# Sewer mess snares politicians

FIRST PERSON: SEEING OUR LEGISLATORS SLOG THROUGH SLUDGE

Rep. Lois Capps had a rubber boot stolen by a sinkhole while on a tour of Estero Bay with Indiana Rep. Pete Visclosky, state Assemblyman Sam Blakeslee and members of the regional water board. The group braved the mud and the wind to collect water samples.

TRIBUNE PHOTO BY JOE JOHNSTON



Lawmakers get a slimy reminder that politics is indeed a dirty business — especially in Los Osos

My boots were a couple of sizes too big, and I wasn't the only one who had to fight to keep from getting footwear stuck in the muck.

The walk out was a breeze compared to the trip back. The wind was merciless, and we began to lose our balance. Arms flailed, but for some it was no use.

Capps hit a sinkhole, and her left foot came up sans

boot. She tried to stand on one foot. But the fight was futile, and her stocking foot sunk in to her pant cuff.

One of the group members reached out to keep the congresswoman from pitching forward. Still, Capps planted a hand into the glop — then absently swiped a muddy finger across her brow.

Seconds later, Blakeslee's

balance failed, and he too pitched forward, saving himself from a full-on fall by placing both hands in the mud.

Righting himself, Blakeslee asked me forcefully for a few pages from my notebook to clean his soiled hands. They didn't do much good.

My socks stayed dry, though I ended up with a few spots on my pants.

And Visclosky ... well, he said he'll never forget his visit to Los Osos.

— Sonja Patel

The Los Osos sewer story seeps all the way to Washington, luring a spending committee chairman to get a firsthand look

By SONJA PATEL  
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An Indiana congressman with heavy sway on whether the Los Osos sewer project gets federal funding this year took a tour Thursday through the coastal community.

After an hour-long drive through town with Los Osos' congresswoman, Rep. Lois Capps, D-Santa Barbara, Rep. Pete Visclosky said he had gained understanding of the town's plight.

"At this point I can't promise anything," he said, referring to how much funding Los Osos might receive. "But there is clearly a need here."

Visclosky's visit was part of Capps' effort to secure millions of dollars for a sewer system in Los Osos.

The Democratic congressman serves as chairman of the Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development — one of 12 subcommittees that together control 40 percent of federal spending each fiscal year.

His subcommittee allocates money through the Water Resources Develop-

— Sonja Patel Please see LOS OSOS, A7



Rep. Pete Visclosky

**'At this point I can't promise anything.  
But there is clearly a need here.'**

*Rep. Pete Visclosky, D-Ind.*

## Los Osos

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ment Act, which authorizes funding for river and harbor improvement projects throughout the nation.

Capps is asking for \$35 million to go toward the Los Osos sewer in 2008. That includes \$5 million the county says it needs to help design the project.

Los Osos has no sewer system now. The town, which has more than 14,000 residents, operates on septic systems.

State water quality regulators want a sewer built in hopes of halting groundwater pollution — the suspected cause of which is those septic systems.

The Los Osos Community Services District had been pursuing a sewer project, which broke ground in 2005 and was expected to cost more than \$100 million.

The project was scrapped, though, after a recall replaced the majority of the district's board of directors in September 2005.

Under a plan by Assemblyman Sam Blakeslee, R-San Luis Obispo, that was approved last year by the state Legislature, the county is now charged with designing and



TRIBUNE PHOTO BY JOE JOHNSTON

**Rep. Pete Visclosky's visit to the Central Coast was part of an effort to secure funding for a sewer system in Los Osos.**

building a sewer.

The services district qualified for funding through the water resources bill in 2000 after Capps made a request for \$7.8 million for the now-scrapped project the district was pursuing. Congress allocated \$200,000, which the district put toward design of that project.

Allocations are made each year, said Visclosky's press secretary, and Los Osos will be eligible for more funding in coming years.

Second District Supervisor Bruce Gibson said the county

will likely ask for more funding if it proceeds with construction.

Gibson, Blakeslee and other local dignitaries joined the tour Thursday for a walk into the Morro Bay National Estuary, where state water officials helped Capps and Visclosky take a water sample and explained Los Osos' pollution problems to the congressman.

An environmental scientist with the state water board said the results of the sample will be sent to Visclosky's office.