

A BUMP ON THE ROAD

Rockets fall in Portland, fail to close out series. **PAGE C1**

BERKMAN BLOG

The Astros star takes his turn in a new blog by some of Houston's biggest names. chron.com/thelist



Are you ready for today? **PARTLY CLOUDY, HIGH 84, LOW 72 / PAGE B10** **ASTROS POUND REDS / PAGE C1**

HOUSTON CHRONICLE

chron.com

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 2009

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VOL. 108 • NO. 198 • \$1.00



PHOTOS COURTESY OF KHOU-TV (CHANNEL 11)

RESCUE NEAR GALLERIA: Two passers-by saved a driver who underestimated the depth of the water where the West Loop meets the Southwest Freeway on Tuesday. Abdi Sharif and Abel Reynoso called 911, then swam to help Laura Hamid after she escaped from her submerged car. They clung to a freeway wall until the Fire Department arrived. All three were safe.

SWINE FLU OUTBREAK

Mexican town near pig farm may be source

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

DEATHS

■ 152, all in Mexico, 26 confirmed as swine flu and the rest suspected

SICKENED

■ 2,498 confirmed cases of swine flu in Mexico; 68 confirmed in U.S.; 13 confirmed in Canada; two confirmed in Scotland; 11 confirmed in New Zealand; two confirmed in Spain; and two confirmed in Israel

CONFIRMED U.S. CASES, BY STATE

■ 45 in New York, 13 in California, six in Texas, two in Kansas and one each in Indiana and Ohio, according to CDC and states.

■ Oaxaca and San Diego seen as possibilities, too

By **DUDLEY ALTHAUS** and **LISE OLSEN**
HOUSTON CHRONICLE

MEXICO CITY — A village near a massive corporate hog farm partially owned by the largest U.S. pork producer is one of three possible sources of Mexico's swine flu outbreak, the Mexican government's top epidemiologist confirmed Tuesday.

A 4-year-old boy who fell ill April 2 in the village of La Gloria, in the mountains some 200 miles east of the Mexican capital, tested positive for the new flu strain, said Miguel Angel Lezana, chief of the government's national epidemiology center said.

The boy, Edgar Hernandez, recovered. And tests in U.S. and Canadian government labs of samples taken from other La Gloria residents — a third of the villagers were stricken — showed the others were hit by a human flu

Please see **MEXICO**, Page A6

■ **Houston:** Health officials plan for worst: **PAGE B1**

■ **Business:** Pork industry objects to name: **PAGE D3**

GOP dealt blow as Specter joins Dems

■ Move pushes Senate a step closer to being filibuster-proof

By **CARL HULSE** and **ADAM NAGOURNEY**
NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON — In a stunning turnabout in political loyalties, Sen. Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania announced on Tuesday that he was leaving the Republican Party to become a Democrat, bolstering President Barack Obama at a pivotal moment for his policy agenda and further marginalizing Republicans on Capitol Hill.

Specter acknowledged that the surprise decision was driven by his intense desire to win a sixth term next year. It came after he and his political advisers concluded over the weekend that he could not win a Republican primary against a conservative challenger.

Please see **SPECTER**, Page A7

Houstonian counting the hours till first free breath in 22 years

■ Gary Richard is hoping forensics will prove he was wrongly convicted

By **ROMA KHANNA**
HOUSTON CHRONICLE

HUNTSVILLE — In the 22 years that Gary Alvin Richard sat in prison for a rape that forensic tests now suggest he did not commit, his son grew from a boy of 9 to a man of 32, with two young children of his own.

Richard's mother died, as did his father and brother.

And Richard himself, liv-



JOHNNY HANSON: CHRONICLE

TREPIDATION NEAR BELTWAY: Rescue workers search a drainage tunnel near the Katy Freeway/Beltway 8 interchange on Tuesday. A witness reported an SUV and its driver were swept off the feeder road. The search will continue today.



MICHAEL PAULSEN: CHRONICLE

NOT ANGRY: Gary Alvin Richard, now 53, says he's made peace with his prison ordeal.

ing under the weight of a life sentence in a 1987 Houston rape, became resigned to dying alone behind bars.

"I told myself I was not going to have a life for living — that I was not going to have any family left — if they ever let me out," Richard, 53, told the Houston Chronicle during an interview Tuesday at the Texas Department of Criminal Justice's Huntsville Unit on what may have been his final day locked up in a Texas prison.

Richard, soft-spoken and barely audible over the prison din, wiped tears from behind the black-framed bifocals that dominated his face beneath a receding and graying hairline. He spoke about time he has lost, the faith he has found

Please see **RICHARD**, Page A10

By **CAROLYN FEIBEL**, **DALE LEZON** and **JAMES PINKERTON**
HOUSTON CHRONICLE

Houston's turbulent spring continued with a series of pre-dawn storms that wreaked havoc on roads, flooded hundreds of homes and sent rescuers on a fruitless daylong hunt Tuesday for a vehicle with a female driver that witnesses said was swept into a storm drain that runs beneath the Katy Freeway.

The line of severe thunderstorms swept into the area early in the morning. The west and northwest portions of Harris County were hit the hardest, with nearly a foot of water falling in some places onto ground saturated by previous rains.

The morning commute was a nightmare even with the storm largely gone. Rising water left motorists stranded

INSIDE

■ **What happened?:** Local forecasters caught by surprise. **PAGE B1**

NOTE TO READERS

■ Because of inclement weather, the Chronicle had late deliveries Tuesday and could have some this morning. We apologize for the inconvenience.

GET THE LATEST

■ For weather and traffic updates, see chron.com

and required more than a dozen rescues. Hundreds of thousands of schoolchildren got an unexpected day off — and a respite from the important TAKS test — because of the difficulty reaching their

Please see **FLOODS**, Page A6



WE RECYCLE

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STAR

Idol countdown

Remaining five singers to be whittled to four tonight. **PAGE E1**



Obama's first 100 days put into historical perspective

Washington bureau chief Rick Dunham poses 20 questions (with answers). chron.com/txpotomac