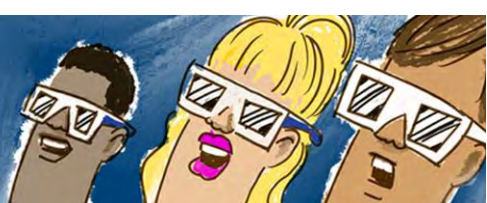


SOLAR POWER
READERS SHARE THEIR ECLIPSE PLANS
& WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU LOOK RIGHT AT IT
GOODNESS, F-1; HEALTH & WELLNESS, H-1



FAB 5 THE BEST BOYS AND GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL PLAYERS
SPORTS, B-10 & B-11

SHOPPING SAVINGS INSIDE

Dumpling delights
Introducing the Pittsburgh Dumpling Project: Upcoming series highlights stuffed delicacies. **Local, C-1**

Sunday

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'FISCAL CLIFF' THREATENS CITY

PG INVESTIGATION
Internal documents show shrinking tax revenues could drain city's bank accounts in just a few years

By Neena Hagen and Mike Wereschagin
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Just six years after emerging from state receivership, Pittsburgh again is barreling toward a "fiscal cliff" that could drain its bank accounts in only a few years, according to inter-

nal city documents obtained by the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.

Key sources of tax revenue have been beset by a series of unprecedented challenges that are likely to cause them to shrink significantly or dry up altogether in coming years, imperiling cash flows that pay for critical services and support

quality-of-life programs relied upon by the city's 300,000 residents.

The new tax revenue projections, detailed in a series of internal documents prepared by the city Controller's Office, are starkly at odds with the public

SEE **CITY**, PAGE A-7

WITH EVERY BREATH

After tumultuous recall, breathing machine maker must launch new safeguards

Philips and DOJ reach deal on CPAPs

By Michael Korsh and Evan Robinson-Johnson
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Philips Respironics must hire an independent safety monitor, undergo regular facility inspections for at least five years and pay part of its revenue to the federal government under an agreement with prosecutors filed in federal court in Pittsburgh on Thursday that caps one of the most catastrophic medical device recalls in decades.

The company also will have to undergo a review of its testing on the millions of replacement sleep apnea machines it sent to customers after the old ones were recalled in 2021.

The consent decree with the Justice Department comes nearly three years after Philips acknowledged that an industrial foam fitted inside its widely used sleep apnea machines and ventilators to reduce noise could degrade and release toxic particles and fumes into masks worn by patients.

A Pittsburgh Post-Gazette and ProPublica investigation last year found the medical device giant had withheld thousands of complaints about the degrading foam for more than a decade before warning its customers — including medically vulnerable patients, such as infants and the elderly — about the dangers.

The news organizations also revealed that a new, silicone-based foam that the company used in the replacement machines was also found to emit dangerous chemicals, including formaldehyde, a known carcinogen.

Though Philips maintained that the new foam was safe, scientists involved in the testing raised alarms, and the Food and

SEE **PHILIPS**, PAGE A-8



BEAVER COUNTY

Lucy Schaly/Post-Gazette

Toni Swick and her husband, Tom, put their home in North Sewickley, Beaver County, on stilts but that did not save their garage from the rising water of Connoquenessing Creek last week.



WHEELING, W.VA.

Sebastian Foltz/Post-Gazette

A hillside in West Virginia washed away at the Wheeling Mt. Zion Cemetery last week, plowing over dozens of headstones, some more than 100 years old. Grave vaults were believed to be secure.

A MESS LEFT BEHIND

Now, the real work has begun. After one of the worst weeks of flooding in two decades, residents of the Pittsburgh region are cleaning up the dirty and sometimes dangerous mess. Some areas along the region's rivers and creeks were hit harder than others. On the bright side, most major roadways have reopened, but some secondary routes are still blocked.

Stories, Pages A-4 & A-5



PITTSBURGH

Sebastian Foltz/Post-Gazette

Mike McKinnis, 32, and Nikki Smith, 39, of Meadville, watch their step as they take a stroll Saturday along the mud-caked walkway encircling Point State Park. Water there had receded to below flood stage.

It's eclipse mania as big crowds flock to Erie

By Neena Hagen and Jacob Geanou
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

ERIE, Pa. — Two days before the long-awaited total solar eclipse — likely the largest tourism event in Erie's history — the city was already seeing a deluge of visitors.

Long lines outside hotels. Restaurants teeming. Parking lots full of cars from all over the country.

"The most people we've ever had at an event in Erie," Mayor Joe Schember said



Saturday.

On April 8 at 3:16 p.m. the moon will cover the sun completely for 3 minutes, 41 seconds, marking the first total solar eclipse in Erie in more than 50 years, with another one not expected until

2144. Tens of thousands of people have begun to inundate Erie for the literal once-in-a-lifetime event.

Early Saturday, a section of Downtown Erie was blocked off for a street fair for local vendors and business owners, who said the eclipse has brought with it an influx of interest in all things Erie.

Tony DiPasqua, the 36-year-old owner of Lake Erie Variety, which has been selling eclipse-themed clothing among other

SEE **ECLIPSE**, PAGE A-6



Benjamin B. Braun/Post-Gazette

Copper Carriage Spring Market in Erie was crowded on Saturday with people visiting the city ahead of Monday's total solar eclipse.

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Weather
Daytime high, 58;
Tonight's low, 42.
Page A-20

Almanac A-2
Books D-5
Bridge G-8
Business E-1
Crosswords G-8

Editorials D-2
Goodness F-1
Health H-1
Horoscope G-6
Insight D-1

Jobs E-4
Lottery A-14
Mortgages G-6
Obituaries C-6
Real Estate G-4

Sports B-1
State & Region C-1
Sunday Magazine G-1
Television G-3
Traffic Watch C-2



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National / International

Yellen: Talks with China to address top U.S. issue

By Fatima Hussein and Ken Moritsugu
Associated Press

GUANGZHOU, China — Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Saturday that upcoming U.S.-China talks will tackle a top Biden administration complaint that Beijing's economic model and trade practices put American companies and workers at an unfair competitive disadvantage.

"I think the Chinese realize how concerned we are about the implications of their industrial strategy for the United States, for the potential to flood our markets with exports that make it difficult for American firms to compete," Ms. Yellen told reporters after the announcement during her trip to China.

"It's not going to be solved in an afternoon or a month, but I think they have heard that this is an important issue to us," she said.

The two sides will hold "intensive exchanges" on more balanced economic growth, according to a U.S. statement issued after Ms. Yellen and Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng held extended meetings over two days in the southern city of Guangzhou. They also agreed to start exchanges on combating money laundering. It was not immediately clear when and where the talks would take place.

Ms. Yellen, who arrived later in Beijing after starting her five-day visit in one of China's major industrial and export hubs, said the talks would create a structure to hear each other's views and try to address American concerns about manufacturing overcapacity in China.

China's official Xinhua News Agency said the two sides had agreed to discuss a range of issues including balanced growth of the

United States, China and the global economy as well as financial stability, sustainable finance and cooperation in countering money laundering.

Xinhua said China had responded fully on the issue of production capacity, but the report did not provide details. China also expressed grave concern over American trade and economic measures that restrict China, according to the agency.

Chinese government subsidies and other policy support have encouraged solar panel and EV makers in China to invest in factories, building far more production capacity than the domestic market can absorb.

The massive scale of production has driven down costs and ignited price wars for green technologies, a boon for consumers and efforts to reduce global dependence on fossil fuels. But Western governments fear that that capacity will flood their markets with low-priced exports, threatening American and European jobs.

"It's going to be critical to our bilateral relationship going forward and to China's relationship with other countries that are important, and this provides a structured way in which we can continue to listen to one another and see if we can find a way forward that will avoid conflict," Ms. Yellen told reporters.

The exchanges on balanced growth and money laundering will be held under the framework of existing economic and financial working groups that were set up after Ms. Yellen met Mr. He in July.

Ms. Yellen struck a positive note on joint efforts to address U.S. concerns about Chinese companies selling goods to Russia following its invasion of

Ukraine.

"We think there's more to do, but I do see it as an area where we've agreed to cooperate and we've already seen some meaningful progress," she said.

Earlier state media coverage of her trip had characterized U.S. concerns about overcapacity as a possible pretext for tariffs. In a commentary published Friday night, Xinhua wrote that while Ms. Yellen's trip is a good sign that the world's two largest economies are maintaining communication, "talking up 'Chinese overcapacity' in the clean energy sector also smacks of creating a pretext for rolling out more protectionist policies to shield U.S. companies."

Ms. Yellen told reporters during an Alaska refueling stop en route to China that the U.S. "won't rule out" tariffs to respond to China's heavily subsidized manufacturing of green energy products.

The U.S. has made efforts through legislation and executive orders to wean itself off certain Chinese technologies in order to build out its domestic manufacturing capabilities. Many members of the White House and Congress view the actions as important to maintaining national security.

The \$280 billion CHIPS and Science Act passed in 2022 aims to boost the semiconductor industry and scientific research in a bid to create more high-tech jobs in the United States and help it better compete with China. Additionally, last August, President Joe Biden signed an executive order to block and regulate high-tech U.S.-based investments going toward China.

Ms. Yellen will hold meetings in Beijing with more senior officials and economists on Sunday and Monday.



Matt Rourke/Associated Press

Cones cordon off fallen debris from the historic Taylor's Mill on Friday in Lebanon, N.J.

New York skyscrapers are built to withstand most earthquakes

By Philip Marcelo
Associated Press

NEW YORK — The ground rumbled Friday beneath New York City, home to famous skyscrapers like the Empire State Building and One World Trade Center. Though buildings that can reach above 100 stories might seem especially vulnerable to earthquakes, engineering experts say skyscrapers are built with enough flexibility to withstand moderate shaking.

The 4.8 magnitude quake on Friday morning was centered about 45 miles west of the city in New Jersey. New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said Saturday there had since been at least 25 aftershocks, some of which were felt in New York City. But no major damage had been reported to the city's roads, mass transit system or its 1.1 million buildings.

Operators of the iconic 103-floor Empire State Building posted "I AM FINE" on Friday on the building's X account.

New York's skyscrapers have been generally built to withstand winds and other impacts far greater than the earthquakes generally seen on the East Coast, said Elisabeth Malsch, a managing principal at Thornton Tomasetti, a New York engineering firm that has done major work on the Empire State Building, Chrysler Building and the Brooklyn Bridge, among other major city landmarks.

"The earthquake that we design for is one that's unlikely to happen. It's a thousand-year event," she explained. "So we don't expect it to happen more than once in a thousand years."

Skyscrapers, by design, are less susceptible to the ground-shaking action of earthquakes than shorter



Mark Lennihan/Associated Press

The ground rumbled Friday beneath New York City, home to famous skyscrapers like the Empire State Building, pictured, and One World Trade Center. Though buildings that can reach above 100 stories might seem especially vulnerable to earthquakes, engineering experts say they're built with enough flexibility to withstand them.

structures because they're made to sway ever so slowly and slightly to protect themselves against powerful, hurricane force winds, Ms. Malsch said.

"Taller buildings just are more flexible because they're designed for the push and pull from the wind, which has a bigger effect on tall buildings than the push and pull of an earthquake does," she explained. "So regardless of when it was designed, the wind continually tests them. It's a double check that they're strong enough and flexible enough to handle earthquakes."

Even the oldest skyscrapers are, by necessity, made of high-strength concrete and steel to withstand the gravitational load on the massive structures, added Ahmad Rahimian, an executive vice president at the engineering firm WSP Global who was involved in the construction of One World Trade Center, this hemisphere's tallest

building, and The Shard in London, which is Europe's tallest building.

"High-rise buildings can be one of the safest places you can be in an earthquake," he said.

The skyscrapers of New York City are generally built to withstand an earthquake of 6.5 magnitude and larger, Mr. Rahimian said.

More modern high-rises also have dampers located on their roofs that can balance the sway and help absorb any shock from extreme events, said Borys Hayda, a managing principal at DeSimone Consulting Engineering, a New York firm that has been involved in renovating some of Manhattan's major hotels, theaters and other landmark buildings.

"Even though there is only a small possibility for earthquakes here in New York, we as engineers have to design for all types of potential risk," he said.



Andy Wong/Associated Press

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, center, attends a bilateral meeting Saturday with Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng at the Guangdong Zhudao Guest House in southern China's Guangdong province.

After a tumultuous recall of CPAPs, Philips must launch new safeguards

PHILIPS, FROM A-1

Drug Administration said more tests were needed before determining if the devices pose "risks to patients."

The consent decree requires Philips to carry out additional tests to ensure the silicone foam "addresses all other risks" if the expert brought on by the company determines that prior testing was inadequate.

The agreement also prohibits Philips from selling all sleep apnea devices and other respiratory machines in the United States. In January, Philips disclosed that it would no longer distribute the machines in the country as part of the negotiations with the Justice Department — a major shift for a company that long dominated the industry.

Philips, which manufac-

tures the devices at two plants outside Pittsburgh, is still able to export devices to other countries under the agreement. The company can also sell a select group of machines deemed "medically necessary" by the FDA inside the United States, including some ventilators, but must turn over up to 25% of the revenue to the government.

The payments "are an equitable remedy and not punitive," according to the agreement.

In the consent decree, the Justice Department argued that the company had violated federal law by selling "adulterated" machines that did not comply with manufacturing requirements. The agreement was signed by Roy Jakobs, chief executive officer of Philips' parent company, Royal Philips, headquartered in Amster-

dam. The company did not admit fault.

If Philips fails to abide by the agreement, it could be forced to pay up to \$20 million a year.

Philips did not respond to questions about the consent decree, which still has to be approved by a judge.

The company has previously said that tests on the original foam caused no "appreciable harm" to patients. And in an online video about the settlement, chief patient safety and quality officer Steve C de Baca said the silicone-based foam in the replacement machines was safe.

Philips "[has] not identified any safety issues" with the replacement machines, and "their use is not impacted" by the consent decree, he said.

On an informational page for customers, Philips said

the settlement with U.S. authorities will help it "restore the business." The company also said it has launched multiple safety reforms.

The FDA said it would not comment until the settlement has been approved by the court. A Justice Department spokesperson declined to comment.

Federal investigators are also conducting a criminal inquiry. Documents related to the company's testing have been turned over to investigators, who have subpoenaed former employees and contractors, according to sources familiar with the probe.

Patient safety advocates say it will take years to assess the impact of devices on patient health. At the time of the recall, both Philips and the FDA described potential health risks including respiratory tract illnesses, head-



Benjamin B. Braun/Post-Gazette

The sprawling Respironics manufacturing center located at 312 Alvin Drive in New Kensington — one of the largest makers of sleep apnea machines in the world — was purchased by Royal Philips in 2008.

aches, nausea, and toxic and carcinogenic effects.

The FDA has reported receiving 561 reports of deaths associated with the machines since 2021. The Post-Gazette and ProPublica previously identified reports that described nearly 2,000 cases of cancer, 600 liver and kidney illnesses, and 17,000 respiratory ailments.

Though the company says the foam in the recalled devices does not lead to long-term harm, the material has

repeatedly tested positive for genotoxicity, the ability of a chemical to cause cells to mutate, a process that can lead to cancer.

Michael Twery, former director of sleep disorders research at the National Institutes of Health, said it could be difficult for Philips to earn back the trust of its customers.

"If a manufacturer misleads [the] FDA, how do they re-establish integrity?" he said.