

It is tornado season, shouldn't we be prepared?

Oftimes, we forget the lessons of the past. Not in Andover, the burgeoning Butler County suburb, where 23 years ago, one of the biggest tornadoes ever to hit Kansas marched through a trailer park and killed 13 people.

Rescue crews in Andover were practicing Saturday, marking the anniversary by searching a mock trailer park for two missing victims. No one who was in Andover that night – as many of the fire fighters and other rescue workers were – is likely to forget what happened then.

The next night, other rescue workers were digging through rubble and downed trees in Baxter Springs, in far southeast Kansas, searching for survivors of a storm that injured 25.

Scientists, especially the meteorologists at the National Weather Service, have learned a lot about tornadoes in the years since Andover. Some of those lessons are comforting, and some are not.

And society has taken some to heart, ignoring others. Tornadoes in Oklahoma City suburbs the last couple of years, for instance, showed us that many schools lack safe space during a tornado. Only great tragedy showed us that truth, however.

The result has been a push to build strong rooms and other storm shelters capable of housing all the kids and teachers. Some districts have passed multi-million-dollar bond issues to pay for these and other improvements, but it's a price people have said they are willing to pay. Many schools still lack proper tornado shelters, sending kids out into hallways that may or may not protect them. Norton schools currently have no adequate storm shelters within the schools and with the failed school bond it doesn't look like they will get one anytime soon.

Some communities now require trailer parks, apartment complexes and other places where lots of people live without basements or other shelters to build them, but thousands still live in places where there is no shelter, including homes with no below-ground space.

That's another thing meteorologists have learned by studying the massive Joplin tornado of a couple of years ago, which swept away blocks of the Missouri town and killed 158.

Sometimes the safest place in the house isn't very safe. For years, the weather service told people to go a protected room in the center of the ground floor if they had no basement. In Joplin, the storm swept whole houses away, leaving bare floors.

Anyone hiding in the "most protected place" had no protection at all from a storm that size.

And even with more than half an hour of warning, dozens died, many of whom might have been saved by real shelters.

Of course, in the Midwest, many of us view tornado sirens as a call to go see what's happening. That's fine, we guess, but there are days when a good basement shelter is the only place you want to be when a tornado is bearing down. Think of Greensburg, Andover, Topeka, Udall, Oberlin in 1942, a dozen other deadly storms.

We know it will happen again. Shouldn't we be ready, all of us?
— Steve Haynes



Things change and people say goodbye

As far as funerals go, my brother, Bob's, was a good one. It was what he would have wanted it to be – more of a celebration. More than 20 years ago, on the occasion of his retirement from flying for United Airlines, he wrote a poem. He read it at his retirement party and it was entirely appropriate for it to be read as his eulogy. The minister incorporated it and its theme, "Things Change," into his message to the friends and family gathered to remember Bob.

Our family gathered from Illinois and Wisconsin to Texas, Florida, Arizona and all parts of Kansas. Bob's kids sorted through family pictures and we all had some good laughs over photos of themselves sporting midi-shirts and mullets. I expect to see a few pop up on Facebook.

Cousins who perhaps had never met, got acquainted and discovered they liked each other. So much so, that many are planning to come for the second annual Kelley Cousins reunion held during our local county fair.

So, stealing from the final line of my brother's poem – did we have fun at his

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



funeral? You bet your (amen) we did.

-ob-

Perhaps I bragged on our "new" van a little too soon. My sister, Kathryn, Jim and I drove it to the funeral. Just to be safe we kept our top speed to 60 miles per hour. Since Kathryn and I were staying an extra night and riding home with our brother, Dick, and his wife, Donna, Jim drove back alone.

At least he drove most of the way home. About 70 miles away he called to say the van was making strange noises and he was only going about 35 miles per hour. Later he called again to say he was "dead in the water" and son, James was on the way with our pickup and trailer to retrieve him.

The good news is that the part we

had been waiting on to repair our primary van was waiting on the front porch. With morning light the next day, Jim was able to install the part and now I have my old reliable set of wheels under me.

The other good news is that repairs to the new van will be simple and we'll still have a decent third vehicle to pass on to someone else.

-ob-

Timing couldn't be better because I need to drive my sister to the airport this week to catch her flight back to Florida. My sister-in-law, Donna, was on stand-by to take us if need be, but I think we're OK now. Maybe she can go along as a passenger to keep us company.

It's been fun having Kathryn here. Like the rest of the Kelley clan, she knows no stranger and has met people all over the territory during her visit. After three weeks and many thrift stores later, she is taking home way more than she brought. All that remains before she leaves is trying to find boxes to ship it all home in.

EPA rule could shut down agriculture

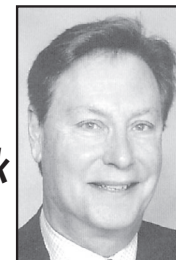
A proposed rule that would expand the regulatory authority of the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers could bring farming and ranching to a halt. Ordinary field work and everyday chores like moving cattle across a wet pasture, planting crops and even harvest may one day require a federal permit.

EPA published its new proposal in the Federal Register March 25. The Environmental Protection Agency contends its new rule clarifies the scope of the Clean Water Act. In reality it provides more confusion and less clarity for farm and ranch families and could classify most water and some dry land as waters of the United States.

Clean water is important to all of us, but this issue is not about water quality – it's about federal agencies attempting to gain regulatory control over land use by using the claim of clean water.

Throughout this republic's history, Congress, not federal agencies, has written the laws of the land. Two Supreme Court rulings have affirmed the federal government is limited to regu-

Insight John Schlageck



lating navigable waters. EPA's recent proposal sends conflicting messages and would extend the agency's reach.

Farmers and ranchers are straightforward people who believe words mean something. Agricultural producers believe the authors (Congress) of the Clean Water Act included the term navigable for a reason.

Is a small ditch navigable?
Is a stock pond navigable?
Ever see any maritime barges trying to navigate a southwestern Kansas gully during a toad strangler?

Because a farmer's field, a homeowner's lawn or a playground collects water after a rain does not mean they should be regulated under waters of the United States. The new regulatory pro-

posals could do exactly that.

What about the EPA claims that agricultural exemptions currently provided under the federal Clean Water Act should relieve farmer and ranchers of any need to worry about the proposed rule?

Exemptions provided in the act are mostly limited to plowing and earth moving activities. They do not apply to farm and ranch tasks like building a fence across a ditch, applying fertilizers or other forms of pest and weed control.

If EPA's proposed rule becomes law, many farming practices would require government approval through a complex process of federal permitting.

EPA's so-called exemptions will not protect farmers and ranchers from the proposed waters rule. If farmlands are regulated as waters, farming and ranching will be difficult, if not impossible.

Contact the EPA and Corps before July 21 and let them know your opinion on this critical issue. Go to <http://www.kfb.org>www.kfb.org for additional information.

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Thumbs up to the Norton County Council on Alcohol and Other Drugs for the youth forum they hosted last week. It is nice to know that our children have you supporting them and their good decisions and providing them needed information. Called in.

Remember there is no charge for rendering a Thumbs Up. Thumbs Up are meant to give recognition for a positive person or event in the community. Also remember all Letters to the Editor must be signed.