



# COLBY FREE PRESS

## In Colby area

# Snow, dirt driven by wind gusts up to 60 mph

By PATTY DECKER

Colby Free Press

Strong, sustaining winds of 40 mph with peak gusts to 60 mph on Saturday created blizzard conditions for travelers and residents alike in the Colby area with road closings and stranded motorists looking for shelter as motels filled to capacity and power outages kept crews busy throughout the day. The snow was also accompanied by dirt, but despite it all, the Northwest Research-Extension Center was able to report only a trace of precipitation.

"From 10:40 a.m. on Saturday until midnight, the winds stayed at over 40 mph and we

showed a peak gust of 60 mph at 7:40 p.m. on Saturday night," said Wayne Wiens, Colby High School technology director and overseer of the school's weather station.

As for the roads, the first closing came at 10:15 a.m. for travelers westbound from Goodland to the Colorado line, according to the Kansas Highway Patrol in Norton. Within 30 minutes, Interstate 70 at Colby westbound to Goodland closed and by 11:10 a.m., U.S. Highway 24 westbound from Colby closed. By 5 p.m., a patrol spokesperson said, both lanes of U.S. 24 were shut down and I-70 from Hays to Denver closed. All roads reopened by 3 a.m.,

Once the road closings started, the Thomas County Chapter of the American Red Cross was activated.

"With the motels full, the National Guard Armory was opened to provide shelter and food for those needing assistance," said Donna Finley, director. As of this morning, totals from weekend visitors was unavailable, but Finley noted that more than 30 people had arrived for help Saturday evening.

In addition, the city's public power and public works department considered Saturday's winds to be among the strongest they had worked in for quite some time. For example,

Rick Carter, public power employee, said today that a tree falling on an electrical line in the E. 6th area resulted in many being without power from about two hours Saturday afternoon.

Another concern was the wind whipping against three electrical lines near the law enforcement center prompting outages there twice in the evening and leaving the police department without power for nearly 90 minutes total.

"Overall, we were pretty fortunate that we didn't see more damage than we did," Carter said.

Gerry Bieker, public works director, said he and three of his crew went out Saturday morning around 9:30 a.m. and worked for the next five hours dealing with the drifting issues. On Sunday, crews went out again for a couple of hours to put salt down in areas needing attention caused by the snow drifting on the roads.

"This wind had an awful looking effect on the city," Bieker said today.

The snow was accompanied by dirt, resulting in a bonanza for the city's car washes, which were about as busy as they've been for months.

The storm prompted cancellations of some events and activities.

## State leaders move toward tax increases

TOPEKA (AP) — Agreement appears to be growing among legislative leaders that both cuts in some government programs and significant tax increases are necessary to balance the state budget.

The state's financial problems are that big.

"We don't have any good alternatives," said House Appropriations Committee Chairman Kenny Wilk, R-Lansing. "This year is a selection among bad alternatives."

Legislators began the session facing a projected \$426 million gap between expected revenues and spending commitments for the state's 2003 fiscal year, which begins July 1.

And that gap is likely to grow, say legislative leaders and members of the House and Senate budget committees.

Still to be factored in is \$25 million the state owes Panhandle Eastern Pipe Line Co. in tax refunds and interest following a Kansas Supreme Court decision late last month.

Moreover, the court rejected a rule the Department of Revenue used in determining Panhandle's taxes. Legislators don't know how many times the department applied the same rule in the same way for other companies in simi-

lar situations.

"The real problem is, are there any others out there?" said Senate Minority Leader Anthony Hensley, D-Topeka.

The \$426 million projection also ignores a shortfall in revenue collections. From July 1, when the current fiscal year started, through Jan. 31, collections were nearly \$98 million short of expectations.

State officials and economists plan to meet March 8 to revise revenue estimates used in budgeting. Many legislators expect them to slash estimates.

"There seems to be a consensus that we're dealing with declining revenues," said Sen. Jim Barone, D-Frontenac, a member of the Senate Ways and Means Committee.

Senate President Dave Kerr, R-Hutchinson, believes the state will be lucky if estimators subtract \$100 million from their revenue forecast for fiscal 2003. Others see a \$150 million subtraction as more likely.

If the gloomier prediction is borne out, the budget gap could reach \$600 million, or 12.5 percent of the \$4.8 billion that current federal and Kansas laws would require the state to spend in fiscal 2003.

## Telemarketing battle coming to Legislature

By JOHN HANNA

Associated Press Writer

TOPEKA (AP) — A legislative battle looms over telemarketing.

The AARP, which represents more than 350,000 Kansans age 50 or older, wants to create a state "no call" list, upon which consumers could place their names free of charge. The group has the support of Attorney General Carla Stovall and a majority of senators, sponsoring its proposal.

But telecommunications companies and an association that represents marketing companies have their own proposal, one they see as effective for consumers but far less burdensome for businesses. The AARP's proposal is before the Senate Commerce Committee. The industry's bill is before the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Both could gain their committee's approval. Judiciary Chairman John Vratil, R-Leawood, is a sponsor of the plan backed by the AARP but supports the industry bill at the same time.

"We need to do something," Vratil said. "My objective is to enact legislation that will be minimally intrusive,

cost the least amount and accomplish the objective."

Legislators believe many constituents want them to do something about unwanted telemarketing calls.

A 2000 law ordered the Kansas Corporation Commission to issue rules requiring telemarketing companies to inform consumers about how they could notify marketers that they did not want to be called.

But the AARP doesn't view that law as strong enough and sees telemarketing calls as more than a nuisance. The group worries that some seniors have a hard time resisting solicitations and that con artists use telemarketing to swindle them.

"Realistically, the telemarketing business is here to stay," said Barbara Withee, a Manhattan resident who is the AARP's legislative chairwoman.

Telemarketers and telecommunications companies like AT&T, Sprint, MCI Worldcom and Southwestern Bell say they're sympathetic to complaints. Those companies use telemarketing themselves, as well as deliver telemarketers' calls.



JAY KELLEY/Colby Free Press

Thomas County Emergency Medical Services assistant director Martin Rinehart checked out a portable blood pressure machine on the

service's latest vehicle, a 2001 Med-Tech ambulance. The unit is stationed in Colby.

## Volunteers key to ambulance service

By MAXINE NELSON

Colby Free Press

Thomas County Emergency Medical Services has a new ambulance, giving the county four — two in Colby, one in Brewster, and one in Rexford, said Martin Rinehart, assistant director. The department also has a Suburban which will be used by the first responder, a new service expected to decrease response time to calls.

The new ambulance, a 2001 Medtech Apollo, purchased from Midwest Vehicle Professionals of Wichita, is housed in Colby, and one of the Colby ambulances was transferred to Rexford, Rinehart said. The Rexford ambulance, which was the oldest in the fleet, was retired.

Thomas County EMS averages 600 calls per year with Colby responding to 95 percent of those calls, said Josh Buffington, EMS director.

EMS has been serving the citizens of Thomas County for over 20 years as the primary ambulance service in the community, said Buffington. It offers full-time service, 24 hours/seven days a week. The department is initiating a new program, the first responder program, which will enable rapid medical response to the scene of injury or illness, he said.

Currently, all volunteers report to the ambulance barn and ride together to the scene. Under the new program, an EMT will proceed directly to the scene to give medical treatment per protocols prior to the arrival of the ambulance, decreasing the amount of time it takes to respond and the amount of time the ambulance is 'on scene.' With response times, from page to 'on scene,' averaging 10 minutes, it was necessary to find a better solution for rapid medical response, he said.

"Throughout the years there have been many technological advances and Thomas County EMS has always been at the head of the pack in northwest Kansas when it comes to the best training and equipment. We pride ourselves on being the forerunners of our area in EMS," Buffington said.

"But Thomas County EMS wouldn't exist without our volunteers. All of the ambulance runs use a volunteer from the community. Thomas County EMS does not have any full-time employees that are paid to respond on the ambulance," he said.

He said Thomas County EMS has over 30 volunteers to cover call shifts for the ambulances, located throughout the county. The county also employs a director and assistant director to oversee the day-to-day activities, paperwork, and training for the EMS.

"But it is in the volunteers that make this service run," Buffington said. "These people respond by a paging system after a call is made through 911. They respond from their homes, jobs, and even school, to the ambulance garage, leaving whatever they are doing (including eating supper) to respond in another's time of need."

Buffington said, "We must have a legal crew of two certified technicians on the ambulance before it can roll and on average we have three. Our usual response time is three to five minutes from the ambulance barn, depending on weather and traffic. Our technicians do not have red lights or sirens in their vehicles and must respond to the ambulance garage without speeding or running stop signs. But they make every effort to get there as expeditiously as possible while driving safely."

Currently, Thomas County EMS relies mainly on Emergency Medical Technicians to respond on the ambulance calls. The system is set up to allow one certified first responder and one EMT to be a legal crew, but Thomas County EMS utilizes at least two EMTs to ensure continuity of patient care, Buffington said.

In order to become an EMT, you must be at least 18 years of age and attend a Kansas approved EMT-Basic program and test, according to Buffington. Anyone wanting to learn more about becoming an EMT, call 785-462-4585, or e-mail tcemsdirector@hotmail.com.

## Briefly

### Weather: Cooler, warmer

Cooler temperatures early in the week will give way to warmer conditions late in the week for the Colby region, reports the National Weather Service. Tonight, cloudy, lows in the upper teens and north winds 15-25 mph with gusts up to around 35. Tuesday, partly sunny, highs in the middle 40s and north winds 10-15 mph. Tuesday night, clear, lows in the middle teens. Wednesday, partly sunny, highs in the middle 50s and Thursday partly cloudy with lows in the 20s and highs in the 50s. Colby's high Sunday was 43 and the overnight low this morning was 15. Precipitation remains at 0.19 inches for the month and snowfall at 2.5 inches. Saturday's blowing snow was listed as only a trace. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is averaging 32 degrees. Today's high was expected to top out somewhere between 60 and 65 degrees. The records for Feb. 11: 76 in 1951 and

—24 in 1899. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

### Flea market slated for April

The Thomas County Alcohol Drug Abuse Council is seeking donations for its flea market scheduled for Saturday, April 13, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. All donations to the council are tax-deductible and for those needing to make arrangements to have items picked up, call 462-6111.

### Library auction scheduled

There will be an arts and crafts auction at Pioneer Memorial Library, 375 W. 4th St., Colby, on Saturday, March 2, beginning at 9 a.m. The event is sponsored by Friends of the Library, a group of people supporting the institution,

said JoAnne Sunderman, librarian. The silent auction runs from Saturday, Feb. 23 to the day of the auction and people can visit the items selected during regular hours. Donations are also accepted until Thursday, Feb. 21. For questions, call 462-4470.

### Singing Valentines offered

The Colby Community College Sunflower Singers will deliver a singing Valentine to your sweetheart for \$15 for a rose and a song. Call Dr. Philip Shuman at 462-3984, ext. 311, by Feb. 12.

### Rotary putting the soup on

The Colby Rotary Club is sponsoring a soup supper from 5 to 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, Feb. 12, at the Colby Community Building. The supper is in conjunction with the Colby-

Goodland basketball game and for many years has been one of the club's larger fund-raising events. The cost for adults is \$4, children (12 and under) \$2.

### Massage clinic continues Tuesday

The Physical Therapy department at Colby Community College is sponsoring a massage clinic on Tuesday from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. Those wanting a massage can call for an appointment, 462-4797, and walk-ins are welcome. The cost of the massage is \$10 for 30 minutes and all proceeds will go to help the physical therapist students.

### Recycling center takes phone books

The Thomas County Recycling Center is taking old telephone books at its collection site, 720 E. College Dr. in Colby.

