



COLBY FREE PRESS

Storms roll through area Tornadoes, hail reported

By DARREL PATTILLO

Colby Free Press

Meteorologists and weather spotters were busy throughout northwest Kansas Wednesday evening as a weak cold front collided with hot and humid conditions causing severe thunderstorms and subsequent weather warnings, including tornado.

Damage reports are not known at this time, although Gary Shull at the Colby Police Department said they had received a report of damage to a rural sprinkler system.

Randy Coleman, meteorologist at the National Weather Service forecast center at Goodland said the front became stationary from Tribune through Sherman and Thomas counties, into Rawlins and continued into Nebraska near McCook.

Coleman said the severe weather began around 5 p.m. in Greeley, Wichita and Logan counties, with those areas reporting wind gusts up to 60 mph, and hail 3/4 to an inch in diameter. At 5:45, the weather service received reports of a thunderstorm in McCook with 2-inch hail.

Starting at 6:10, and continuing for around 15 minutes, the weather service received reports of several funnel clouds touching down between Herndon, in Rawlins County, and Oberlin. There was also 3/4 to an inch sized hail reported west of Oberlin at 6:15.

At 6:45, Coleman said, a tornado was reported 8 miles west of Atwood. At 6:50, wind gusts of 70 mph were reported 8 miles south of Oberlin, and at 6:55, law enforcement officials near Herndon reported a funnel cloud touching down several times, along with hail 1 3/4 inches in diameter.

"At around 7 p.m.," Coleman said, "the thunderstorm activity began to expand back southwest into Sherman and Thomas counties."

At 7:07, ham radio operators reported a tornado 9 miles north of Levant, and 15 minutes later the tor-

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Randy Coleman,
meteorologist

nado was reported 12 miles northwest of Levant. At 7:45, a tornado was spotted 6 miles north of Edson, in Sherman County.

"The severe weather began to lessen at that point," said Coleman. "But there were reports as late as midnight of hail 3/4 of an inch in diameter near McCook."

Coleman also said that no official reports of damage were available, but the weather service was conducting its investigation (today) to see how much damage there was.

"I'd also like to take this opportunity," he said, "to thank all of the ham radio operators and trained weather spotters who provided valuable information to us. Their efforts are always greatly appreciated."

Ironically, a government group from the National Severe Storms Laboratory, based in Norman, Okla., had approximately 40 people in Thomas County Wednesday afternoon as the weather activity began. The International H₂O Project, or I-hop — as project members refer to it — was west of Colby tracking conditions that lead to the beginning of precipitation in storms.

Several mobile units, with weather-data gathering instruments, were taking measurements of the building thunderstorms. "Our job though," said Jim Bishop, one of the team members operating a camera car, "is basically over once the thunderstorms actually start."



DARREL PATTILLO/Colby Free Press

ABOVE: This tornado was reported to the National Weather Service Wednesday evening at 7:07 p.m., nine miles north of Levant in Thomas County. It was one of several tornadoes associated with the line of thunderstorms that stretched from Greeley County north into Nebraska. **BELOW RIGHT:** Christina Hannon and Jim Bishop were part of the International H₂O Project that was in Thomas County Wednesday afternoon taking measurements of the thunderstorms as they began. Their job involves operating a video camera that takes a picture of a storm every thirty seconds. "It provides a time-lapse picture of the storm developing," Hannon said. Hannon and Bishop are both meteorological students at Oklahoma University, where the project is based. **BELOW LEFT:** Hannon operated the videocamera.



Law enforcement experiences one of the most unusual nights ever

By MICHELLE L. HAWKINS

Colby Free Press

Tornadoes weren't the only thing attracting attention in Thomas County Wednesday night. Law enforcement officers were running from crime scene to crime scene.

Colby dispatch received a call at 6:34 p.m. reporting an assault and battery case at the Free Breakfast Inn just off of I-70 near Oakley, said Thomas County Sheriff Tom Jones. Deputies who were near the area responded, but were informed the alleged suspect had fled in a blue Neon heading west towards Colby on I-70.

Deputies were able to pull over Robert Dale Mathis, five miles east of Colby, noting he was

intoxicated, according to Sheiff Jones. The 27-year-old from Mayflower, Ark. was arrested for driving under the influence.

No sooner had Mathis been arrested, deputies responded to report of an armed robbery in progress at the Ampride gas station near Mingo, leaving Colby Police to escort Mathis back to the county jail.

Thomas County Deputy Rod Taylor said he arrived on the scene and noticed a semi truck leaving the station. He took note of the name written on the side of the semi trailer and proceeded to evaluate the scene. Although no victim or evidence was immediately found on site, a roadblock was set up from Oakley to Colby

to look for anything suspicious.

Sheriff Jones arrived in Mingo and found a pair of jean shorts and women's underwear near the interchange. "This caused great concern at the time, but turned out to not be related to the case," said Sheriff Jones.

Oakley law enforcement assisted by looking for the semi at the Oakley truck stops. It was found at Mitten's where they made contact with William Henry Randall, 26, of Kansas City, Mo.

Thomas County Deputies arrived to question Randall and observed that he was under the influence of an illegal substance other than alcohol. He was arrested for falsely reporting a

crime and Motor Vehicle Carrier Inspection was called to investigate the possibility of driving under the influence.

Randall was booked into the Thomas County Jail pending a formal filing of charges.

As the evening continued, a member of the Kansas Highway Patrol stopped a car on the west side of Brewster. The car turned out to be stolen and the subject fled on foot. He approached a farm house and received a ride from the farmer into Edson. He was arrested and turned over to the Sherman County Sheriff's Office.

Meanwhile, Colby officers responded to an intrusion alarm which turned out to be storm-

related. Ten later, officers pulled over Anthony M. Blankenship, 21, of Colorado Springs, Colo. after noticing he had an expired license plate. He was arrested after officers found a small amount of marijuana and drug paraphernalia in his vehicle. He was booked into the Thomas County Jail pending formal charges.

In addition, law enforcement officers aided a suicidal man at the Blakesly Inn, talked with juveniles throwing rocks at houses, and visited the scene of a hit and run accident in Friendly Acres.

"It was a very unusual night and things started to slow down by 9 p.m.," said Gary Shull, Colby Police Department investigator.

Wheat harvest outlook is gloomy for producers in southwest Kansas

HUGOTON (AP) — After already losing 80 percent of his wheat crop to drought and wind, Darwin Casebeer had just finished cutting his first 35 acres of wheat when his combine broke down.

As he tore apart the machine to find the problem, a seemingly incessant wind rippled Wednesday across his remaining crop — a thin, stunted stand

just 6 inches tall. His best wheat is no taller than 18 inches.

It is so hard to harvest he runs his header just barely above the ground, sometimes even scooping up dirt with the wheat.

"Hope that dirt weighs good on the wheat," he said wryly.

Much of his land hasn't gotten a good rain since last September.

"It is rough here," he said. "I've been farming 45 years and this is the driest I've ever seen it."

Casebeer has been lucky to get yields of 15 bushels an acre on his dryland wheat. He is hoping his irrigated wheat makes 30 bushels an acre. In a normal year, he would get nearly 40 bushels an acre on dryland, and 80 bushels on his irrigated crop.

"It has just been a disaster on wheat," he said.

So he pins his hopes on the corn he planted this spring under irrigation. If the corn fails, he will dip into his retirement savings at the bank.

And the insurance on the abandoned wheat acres will also help this farm family survive.

"It is terrible when you have to plan

on insurance to make a living," he said. "I'd just as soon raise a good crop and sell it for what it is worth — make my money that way."

The farther west, the worse the condition of the Kansas wheat crop. It is so bad in southwest Kansas, only a handful of farmers have any wheat left to harvest — and insurance claims are just coming in, even on some irrigated

fields. But head east, and the wheat gets progressively better.

At the Minneola Co-Op, general manager Joe Strecker said the quality of the wheat he is seeing is good, but the yields have been as low as 10 bushels an acre up to 40 bushels an acre. However, most farmers are averaging just 25 bushels per acre on dryland wheat.

Briefly

Another 103-degree day

For the second day in a row, the temperature climbed to 103 degrees in Colby, but did not set a record. Wednesday's 103 came within 2 degrees of matching the record high of 105 set on June 19, 1988. And the heat will continue, the National Weather Service says. Tonight, mostly cloudy, a 30 percent chance for thunderstorms, lows in the upper 60s and south winds up to 20 mph.

Friday, partly sunny, very windy, a 20 percent chance for thunderstorms, highs in the lower 90s and south winds 15-25 mph with gusts to 35. Friday night, partly cloudy, a 20 percent chance for thunderstorms, lows in the mid 60s and continued breezy. Saturday's highs should be in the lower 90s, Sunday's in the mid 90s and Monday's in the upper

90s. This morning's low was 64. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is now averaging 82 degrees. The records for June 20: 106 in 1988 and 42 in 1946. (The temperatures and precipitation are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

Rexford ready for July event

Rexford PRIDE will be holding its Farmers/Flea Market on Saturday July 6. The annual citywide garage sale will also be held at the same time. Lunch will be available. The Farmers/Flea Markets are held on the first Saturday of each month. June's was termed a success by organizers with nine vendors present.

Anyone interested in participating as a vendor should

contact Peg Greenwood at (785) 687-3925.

Vets Commission meets Friday

The Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs will meet at 1 p.m. Friday, at the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post, 220 North Lake (1 block west of the courthouse) in Colby. The Commission affords veterans, their relatives and dependents information, advice, direction and assistance through the coordination of programs and services in the fields of education, health, vocational guidance and placement, mental care and economic security and to manage, operate and control the Kansas Soldiers Home, to Kansas Veterans Home, and the Veteran Cemetery Program, said Jana Bowers, Secretary, Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs

Topeka. All veterans and persons that could be eligible for benefits are encouraged to attend.

'Ham' field day is Saturday

Members of the area's Trojan Amateur Radio Club will be participating in the annual Field Day Emergency Preparedness exercise starting at 1 p.m., Saturday, June 22. The event runs 24 hours and local hams will set up Friday at the Colby municipal airport, said Bruce Frahm, president and board member of the National Association for Amateur Radio today. "This year special attention is naturally drawn to preparing for disasters other than the natural events such as tornadoes that we normally think of around here," Frahm said. For information, call Frahm at 462-7388.

