

Tuesday night winds wreck storage shed

By **PATTY DECKER**
Free Press Editor

Mother Nature was pretty tough on the southwest part of Colby, and also flexed her muscles north of town during Tuesday night's performance.

The worst damage from the storm was to a storage facility owned by Charles and Debbie Schwanke behind Quality Inn off Range Avenue.

Of the two storage buildings, the south structure, which houses 38 separate units, was completely destroyed, Charles Schwanke said today.

The city also reported the entire roof on one of its wellhouses north and east of the cellular tower on the north side of Detroit Diesel was blown off, leaving the equipment open to the elements.

The wellhouse is a closed system, said Mike Albers, technology director with the city, which means that no contamination will occur, but city crews need to repair the roof damage so that the equipment that powers the well isn't damaged.

While Colby residents escaped the brunt of the storm, some in the county weren't so lucky.

Albers reported that seven miles north of Colby, power poles were snapped leaving many in the country without electricity.

He said he was out during the height of the storm, adding that winds north of the city had peak gusts of more than 80 mph at 9:51 p.m. and gusts closer to town went as high as 58 mph.

Damage to the storage shelter probably happened when a microburst, which is associated

with a heavy down draft, slammed the building on the south side.

Albers described that type of down draft as one where the winds hit the ground and in an upside down mushroom effect cause the lifting phenomenon that the facility experienced.

Schwanke said the building broke loose from the wind lifting it up and then carrying it off over the second structure and dumping walls, doors and the roof to the other side.

Damage estimates are still unavailable since renters were still removing personal items from the units.

Schwanke said he got a call about 11:30 p.m. (Tuesday night) from a couple of high school students who told him the roof had come off one of the buildings.

At first he said he couldn't believe it since the storm appeared to be not that bad in town. Still, he said he went out to check.

"I was sick when I saw the damage," he said.

The majority of Schwanke's customers are homeowners, but he does have some businesses using the facility.

"We notified everyone in town about what happened, but some people are from Oregon and elsewhere," he said.

Schwanke said he will be moving items himself for those people who cannot be reached.

For now, he has rented the Johnson Truck Line building located further south in that area. Woofter Construction is also helping to remove the debris so that no one is injured while relocating their personal property, he added.



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

ABOVE: A woman moved her belongings from one of two storage buildings owned by Charles and Deb Schwanke this morning, which was destroyed by strong winds Tuesday night. Many people lost belongings ranging from boxes of photos to antique furniture and household items. **RIGHT:** Debris from the doors, walls and roof of the destroyed storage facility were thrown over the second building during the storm.



Winds between 60-90 mph strike area

By **TISHA COX**

Colby Free Press

Colby and most of northwest Kansas was pounded by heavy rain and strong winds during storms Tuesday night.

Patrick Burke, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service in Goodland, said they issued watches or warnings for 17 of 19 counties.

"I was actually here last night during the storm," he said, adding most of the bulletins were issued for

counties along the Interstate-70 corridor.

Burke said .52 inches of rain was reported in Colby but he said some parts of the community received up to an inch.

Goodland received 1.1 inches of rain during the storm.

The storm, he said, was unusual because of its severity and scope.

"This was pretty widespread," Burke said.

He said the area usually only gets

such storms a few times a year but conditions right now are ideal for such a system to form.

Burke said the storm system also spawned high-speed winds and the strongest winds recorded was an 86 mph blast 12 miles southwest of Goodland.

The Colby area's strongest reported wind was a 80 mph gust four miles northwest of town reported by an amateur radio storm spotter.

"The wind speeds were between

60-90 miles per hour," Burke said.

He attributed the storm to instability in the atmosphere caused by a cold front that's stalled in northwest Kansas.

He said it's trapping tropical moisture from eastern Kansas, causing atmospheric instability

He explained more humidity than normal causes storms to build and also a stronger downdraft in the clouds, which can create straight line winds like in Tuesday's storm.

Burke said such winds can affect an entire region.

Tornadoes, he said, affect only a limited area but the wind can be even more damaging.

"That makes them much more dangerous at times," Burke said.

He also said area residents should brace for more storms through the weekend. Burke said there will be more opportunity for storms to develop in the early evening to night-fall through Saturday.

Colby's utilities director takes similar job at Paola

By **TISHA COX**

Colby Free Press

Colby's public utilities director Gerry Bieker is leaving for a similar job in Paola. A farewell party will be held from 4:30 to 6 p.m. Thursday at the city shop, 195 N. Sterling Ave.

Bieker said he's lived in and around Colby all of his life, grow-

ing up in Gem. He said he's spent the last 13 years working for the city of Colby.

"I started in 1991 as the equipment maintenance foreman," he said, adding he became public works director in 1995 and has spent the last year as the public utilities director. "I've enjoyed it. It encompassed everything."

He said the job in Paola will be a little different because it doesn't have a sanitation department or deal with electrical transmission. There also is a 750-acre lake the city of Paola maintains, which Bieker said will be a different element to manage.

Bieker said he will miss Colby and the people he's worked with

here, but he is eager to meet the challenge of a new job in a new community.

"That's what's making me look forward to it," he said, adding he has enjoyed Colby and wishes the community and its residents the best of luck. City manager Carolyn Armstrong said Bieker will be missed when he leaves on June 17.

"I have had the pleasure of working with Gerry since I arrived in Colby and watched him progress into an excellent department head in the city staff," Armstrong said. "Gerry has been an integral part of many improvements and changes in the area of public works and his shoes will be difficult to fill. We all wish him success in his new job."

Briefly

Wheat harvest office open

The Colby wheat harvest office is open for the 2004 season. Roger Hale, who runs the office, said they are at a new location and have a new phone number this year. The office is at the east end of the Oasis Travel Center this year. For information, call the new number at 460-0800.

Bowhunters hosting shoot

Northwest Kansas Bowhunters will host a 3D fun shoot Sunday, June 20 at the archery range, which is 1/4 mile north of Colby on Franklin. Starting time is 1 p.m. Cost is \$8 for adults, \$5 for children. Call Gordon Rasmussen at (785) 462-6524 for more information.

Benefit garage sale

There will be a benefit garage and bake sale from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday at 1280 W. Sixth. Proceeds will benefit Kristi Pollonais, the daughter of Rich and Judy Epp. Kristi has been hospitalized and undergone surgery for a staph infection in

her knee. Proceeds will help Kristi with medical bills and other expenses. If you would like to donate an item, please contact Mike and Jeanette Fortkamp at 460-0352 or Karen Merryman at 460-9077.

Donations sought for fireworks

The Colby Kiwanis Club is reminding all businesses that it's once again looking for "shell" sponsors to defray costs on this year's fireworks display.

All \$20 shell donations will go toward the celebration. If interested, call the Thomas County/Colby Chamber of Commerce at 460-3401.

Water garden tour planned

The Northwest Kansas Transition Council will have a water garden tour in the Colby area on July 10. Tickets will be available June 23 with purchase locations announced later. The event will raise funds for projects for the 2004-2005 school year. The projects will assist at-risk students and dis-

abled northwest Kansas students in preparing for post-secondary training, employment and independent living.

Change in billing software

The City of Colby has switched utility billing software. The bills were mailed out earlier this week, and are now in letter form, not on postcards. Carolyn Armstrong, city manager, asks that residents look carefully over the bills and call 462-4410 with any questions.

Quilters Guild opens meeting to all

Dr. Bryan Grove, art instructor at Emporia State University, will be speaking at the Colby Community Building (basement) starting at 7:30 p.m., Monday, June 21. The program is one of the regular monthly meetings of the Kansas Prairie Quilters Guild. Grove will talk on the subject of "Kansas Landscape and Design," said Kathy Cayton, one of the coordinators. The public is invited and there will be an administrative charge. For questions, call 460-2161.



70s and 50s

Colby-Oakley-Hoxie

Tonight...Cloudy. 40 percent chance for thunderstorms. Lows in the 50s. Northeast winds 10-15 mph. **Thursday...**Partly cloudy. Highs in the 70s. Northeast winds 10-15 mph. **Thursday night...**Partly cloudy. 30 percent chance for thunderstorms. Lows in the 50s. East winds 10-15 mph. **Friday...**Partly cloudy. 20 percent chance for thunderstorms. Highs in the 70s. Southeast winds 10-20 mph. **Friday night...**Partly cloudy. 40 percent chance for thunderstorms. Lows in the 50s.

The numbers: Tuesday's high, 87; Low this morning, 55; Records for June 16, 107 in 1946 and 40 in 1981; Year ago today, 88 and 55; Precipitation June 14-15, 0.95; Precipitation June 15-16, 0.52; June total, 2.15; Soil temperature, 75

The sources:

The forecast is from the National Weather Service, and other numbers are from the Northwest Research-Extension Center, Colby. A recorded forecast updated throughout the day is available by calling (785) 899-7119. Current temperatures are available by calling 460-TEMP.

Water use

- June 11 through June 13 = 3,324 mil. gal. (average)
- June 14 = 3,220 mil. gal.
- June 15 = 1,326 mil. gal.

Water advisories

- Water **Watch** is 3.5 million gallons for 3 consecutive days.
- Water **Warning** is 4.0 million gallons for 3 consecutive days.
- Water **Emergency** is 4.5 million gallons for 3 consecutive days.

