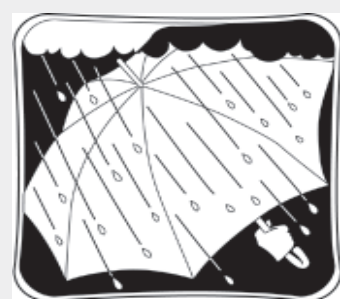


Weather Corner



The forecast

Tonight — A slight chance of rain showers before midnight, then periods of snow. Low around 26. North wind around 15 mph. Chance of precipitation is 80 percent. New snow accumulation of around an inch possible. **Friday** — Periods of rain, snow and freezing rain. High near 32. Breezy, with a north wind between 15 and 25 mph, with gusts as high as 35 mph. Chance of precipitation is 100 percent. Little or no ice accumulation expected. New snow accumulation of 1 to 3 inches. **Friday night** — Periods of snow with areas of blowing snow. Low around 24. Blustery with a north wind around 25 mph, with gusts as high as 35 mph. Chance of precipitation is 100 percent. **Saturday** — Snow likely with areas of blowing snow. Cloudy with a high near 29. Blustery with a north wind around 25 mph, gusts as high as 40 mph. Chance of precipitation is 70 percent. **Saturday night** — A 50 percent chance of snow. Cloudy and blustery with a low around 15. **Sunday** — A 40 percent chance of snow. Mostly cloudy with a high near 32.

Briefly

City will not pick up dead tree limbs

Ice from last week's storm damaged many trees in Colby leaving dead branches that will need to be picked up.

City officials have been receiving many calls about the dead limbs and remind everyone that will not be picking up those fallen tree branches, but instead are urging residents to either call businesses that can do so or take care of the matter themselves.

In addition, the city will not be picking up real Christmas trees.

Real Christmas trees can be left in the determined location at Midwest Energy's parking lot.

Babysitting fundraiser planned

The Colby Sweet Thunder 14 and Under softball team is sponsoring a New Year's Eve babysitting event to help raise money for travel expenses, uniforms and other

items during summer games.

The babysitters will provide food, fun, and games for children from 6 p.m. to 2 a.m. at the Ascension-on-the-Prairie Episcopal Church, 1170 Wheatridge Dr.

To make reservations, call Evelyn or Sara Martin, 462-3041; Buzzy and Bailey Koerperich, 460-8261; or Karen and Tera Raymond, 460-3694.

Colby College plans auditions

Auditions for the Colby Community College spring play will be held from 7 to 9 p.m., Wednesday and Thursday, Jan 17-18 in the Frahm Theatre in the Northwest Kansas Cultural Arts Center. No experience or advance preparation is required, said Deb Bickner, theater department director.

"Those who audition will be reading from the comedy fantasy Card Play, which is a family play suitable for all ages," she said. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to audition.

The play performances will be March 2-4.

Former mayor recovering

Former Colby Mayor Warren Hixson, now living in Hutchinson, underwent open heart surgery last week to by-pass five arteries. He is now recovering at home.

For those who would like to send him a card, his address is: 129 West 23rd, Hutchinson, KS 67502.

County announces closings

All county offices at the Thomas County Courthouse and Thomas County Health Department in the office complex will be closed Monday, Jan. 1, 2007. The county landfill will also be closed those dates.

District court to close early

The Thomas County Clerk of the District Court will close at noon, Friday for its end-of-the-year accounting. The office will reopen at 8 a.m., Tuesday. For questions, call 460-4540.

Lawrence weighs steps to quell violence

LAWRENCE (AP) — A spate of late-night fights and gun incidents in downtown Lawrence has prompted the City Commission to take a fresh look at potential safety measures, possibly including stricter rules for bars.

The commission discussed possible regulations earlier this year, prompted partly by a fatal shooting outside the Granada nightclub and gunfire that sent 200 people fleeing another club, Last Call.

But commissioners never acted on the matter, and police have responded in recent weeks to more incidents.

"I think we've dropped the ball on this issue," City Commissioner Sue Hack said at a meeting Tuesday. "We needed to send a stronger message from City Hall. We have to say, 'We're not going to have this in

downtown Lawrence.'"

On Dec. 15, police recovered what they called two "very, very dangerous" assault weapons from a vehicle downtown.

The guns turned up during increased patrols that followed a tip of a possible threat from people attending a concert at Last Call. Two Kansas City, Mo., men were arrested on weapons charges.

Last Call was also the scene of six arrests in three separate incidents early Sunday, including a 3 a.m. street fight that involved a half-dozen people. All of those arrested were from the Kansas City area.

The City Commission on Tuesday placed the issue on its agenda for Jan. 2.

No specific proposals have been mentioned, but commissioners have previously discussed creating

an "entertainment club licensing" system.

City staff members have said a new licensing system could be useful because the city has no legal authority to revoke a bar's state-issued liquor license. The city is asked to sign off on the state license, but ultimately only the Kansas Department of Revenue can pull it.

The city could revoke an entertainment club license — eliminating the ability to host large crowds — if a business were found to be a place of frequent criminal activity or did not meet security requirements.

Phil Bradley, executive director of the Kansas Licensed Beverage Association, said he would be happy to discuss the issue with the city. But he's not sure more regulation is needed.



At any time the city can walk into an establishment and close it for safety reasons if they have just cause."

Phil Bradley, Kansas Licensed Beverage Association

"The city already has a huge toolbox of things they can do with codes, zoning, occupancy standards, fire standards, safety standards," Bradley said. "At any time the city can walk into an establishment and close it for safety reasons if they have just cause."

"It would seem they could use those things to address their concerns. How much more of a lever do they need?"

Other measures the city has researched include letting bars join forces to ban certain people from their premises, creating a city-run program to train nightclub security workers, and setting staggered bar-closing times to control the size of crowds pouring into the street at a given moment.

Risk of dying in fire rises with age

WICHITA (AP) — With age comes wisdom, but also a rising risk of dying in a fire, statistics show.

A fresh reminder of the danger came with the death Nov. 11 of a 75-year-old woman at her rural Sedgwick County home.

While authorities say they will never know for sure how the fire started that claimed the life of Barbara Chambers, they have called it a textbook example of how fires are especially dangerous for the elderly.

Studies have shown that people age 65 through 74 are nearly twice as likely to die in a fire. Those 75 through 84 are nearly four times as likely to die in a fire, and those age 85 and older are more than five times as likely.

"They aren't able to move as quickly as they once did, or they're not able to process a situation as quickly as they once were able to," said Capt. Brad Crisp, an investigator for the Wichita Fire Department.

Investigators said Chambers had used her fireplace to warm the house outside Clonmel, southwest of Wichita, on a cold, windy night. Her 45-year-old nephew, Terry Bergen, was badly burned trying to pull Chambers from the flames and remains in critical condition at a Wichita hospital.

Crisp said the main causes of fires for senior citizens involve forgetfulness in the kitchen and with candles, space heaters and floor furnaces.

"We've had incidents where people have been doing something on their stove, they fell asleep, and 'boom,' they have a cooking fire," he said.

On pace for record

TOPEKA (AP) — With tens of millions of dollars of unclaimed property still waiting for its rightful owner, the treasurer's office is on pace for a record year of claims.

About \$6 million has been returned to owners so far in 2006.

State Treasurer Lynn Jenkins said the state has about \$178 million in unclaimed property and people can check to see if any of it is theirs by going online at <http://www.kansascash.com>.

"It's really easy," she said. "If they have a driver's license or something, they can claim their property online. If it's a little more complicated, like their address has changed, they can print the forms from the Web site and mail or bring them into the office."

from certain medications, which can also produce a sleep so deep that someone might not hear the alarm from a smoke detector or not notice blankets have been accidentally moved onto a space heater.

Other perils include forgetting about a lit candle or wearing cloth-

ing with long, loose sleeves that ignite after touching a hot burner in the kitchen.

One step toward reducing the risk of dying in a fire is to install smoke detectors that come with an emergency light, "so they can see to navigate through their house," Crisp

said.

"Another good idea is a little, portable fire extinguisher," he said. "If you have a small fire, say, a small cooking fire, you can knock it down quickly if it's accessible and you know how to use it."

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