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COLBY FREE PRESS

75¢

Wednesday

April 14, 2010
Volume 121, Number 58
Serving Thomas County since 1888

Wind helping, hurting spring wheat

By Vera Sloan

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When the wind is strong enough to blow vehicles off the Interstate, you can imagine how hard it is for farmers to find a day nice enough to finish up their chemical "top dressing" on the 2010 wheat crop.

With most of the spraying winding down now, however, one advantage of the wind is that it has dried out the top couple of inches of ground, making it easier to apply nitrogen before taking the corn planter to the field.

There's been some winter kill in a few areas of late-planted wheat," said Brian Olson, crop specialist at the Kansas State Research Center in Colby, "but as a general rule, it's sparse and only in late-planted fields.

The general rule is that the wheat should all be jointed by April 20, he said, so from here on out until harvest, the work is over and farmers will have to wait and see what happens at harvest. Their attention now turns to corn, milo, soybeans and sunflowers.

"We could use a little rain for the top couple of inches in some places," Olson said. "We have

good subsoil moisture, and there's good moisture in wheat stubble ground. Farmers are just now being able to get into the fields to apply fertilizer for summer crops."

On Tuesday, the ground temperature at four inches was standing in the low 50-degree range, Olson said, not yet to the ideal of 55 degrees recommended for planting corn.

Olson said he thought the relatively wet winter didn't leave much concern for mites in wheat, but wire worms on corn ground could be a concern.

Farm prices aren't as good as last years. On Tuesday, wheat was \$3.90, up eight cents from the day before, but well below the 2009 cash price of \$5.09.

Cash corn on Tuesday was \$2.97, up four cents over Monday, but a dollar below the \$3.57 last year.

Last year's milo price was \$5.35 per hundred weight, 52 cents higher than Tuesday's price of \$4.83.

Farmers are hoping for fewer hail storms and other weather catastrophes this year, and pray the area will escape a late freeze. There should be plenty of moisture and enough warm days to harvest the wheat and help the corn to grow.



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

Although it was tough to tell in Tuesday's high winds, the wheat in this field in south Colby is about 6-10 inches high. The wind and cold weather have done some damage to crops, but the rains predicted every day this week should prove beneficial.



ANDY HEINTZ/Colby Free Press

Rather than break off or take the truck with it, this fifth-wheel trailer simply tore a gash in the side of the truck's bed as it blew over in Tuesday's high winds. The driver was not injured in the wreck, which took place near mile post 59 on I-70.

High winds cause truck accident

By Kevin Bottrell

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Thomas County spent all day Tuesday huddled against 50 to 60 mph winds blowing in from the west, winds that caused blowing dust, minor damage to trees and an accident on I-70.

David Floyd, warning coordination meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Goodland, said the high wind came from a pressure change. A cold front that extended from the Dakotas to New Mexico was moving east, pushing high winds in front of it.

The high wind was responsible for overturning a fifth-wheel trailer on I-70 east of Colby at 11:30 a.m. The trailer blew over on its side, tearing the side of the pickup truck's bed, but leaving the truck upright.

Thomas County Sheriff's Office and Emergency Medical Services, as well as the Kansas Highway Patrol, responded to the ac-

cident. The driver was not injured and the vehicle was towed to town.

The service reported wind speeds of 37 mph with gusts up to 47 at the time of the accident.

Floyd said they recorded high wind speeds of 60 mph in Goodland, 62 in Bird City and 65 in Selden. The highest wind speed the office recorded was 68 mph in Yuma, Colo. A small tornado formed southwest of Bethune, Colo., west of Burlington, Colo. on I-70, at 8 p.m. Floyd said the area is pretty desolate; there was no damage or injuries reported from the tornado, which was likely very small and brief.

The service issued a high wind warning for eastern Colorado, Sherman County and Cheyenne County Tuesday morning and extended it to the other northwest Kansas counties in the afternoon. The warning predicted winds speeds of 30 to 45 mph with gusts up to 60. It also predicted blowing dust that would hamper visibility.

Floyd said only minor damage was reported, including a few tree limbs broken off and an awning blown off a building in Goodland. According to the Beaufort Scale, a wind speed and damage guideline for weather spotters, winds of 55 to 63 miles per hour are enough to cause damage to chimneys and television antennae and to push over shallow rooted trees.

The front also brought some thunderstorms. One such storm moved northeast through eastern Colorado in the afternoon and then continued into Nebraska. Floyd said the service had some reports of quarter-size hail with that storm. A storm hit Colby briefly about 11 p.m. Observers from the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network recorded .66 to .75 inches of rain around Colby.

The service predicting breezy conditions the rest of the week, but no further severe wind.

U.S. 83 to get school zone around Rexford

The Kansas Department of Transportation is installing flashers and school-zone signs along U.S. 83 near Rexford as part of its Rural School Zone Toolbox program.

The program provides advance school zone signs, pavement markings and flashers for rural schools along or close to state highways. The department conducted an engineering review and analysis for Golden Plains Middle and High Schools, which share a building in Rexford not far from U.S. 83, and designed a sign system.

Kristen Brands, northwest Kan-

sas public affairs manager for the department, said the installation should be completed by Friday, April 23. It includes not just the signs, but a lower speed limit during critical times and a no-passing zone.

Golden Plains is one of 40 Kansas schools that have been selected for the program, the department said.

"Beginning in 2006, a statewide list of rural schools was developed that would benefit from the signing program," said Traffic Engi-

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Court employees to get financial help

TOPEKA (AP) — Kansas court workers who are being forced to take four unpaid days off in April and May will get some financial help from the state's unemployment insurance trust fund, the state Department of Labor said.

In mid-March, the state Supreme Court announced that 1,490 full-time court employees would be furloughed for four Fridays in April and May. That has shut down county district courts and appellate courts, saving the state about \$220,000 each Friday.

The Labor Department has not calculated how much in unemployment benefits the workers will be paid, department spokeswoman Kathy Toelkes said Tuesday.

The unemployment insurance trust fund, which is financed by payments from employers, not the state's general fund, is depleted

and Kansas is borrowing money to replenish it from the federal government, Toelkes said.

The first furlough was on Friday, and the remaining furloughs are scheduled for April 16, April 23 and May 7. The furloughs do not apply to judges, whose pay was cut 5 percent.

The payments are to help defray the financial impact of the furloughs, said Ron Keefover, a spokesman for the state Supreme Court.

"We think every little bit will help," he said.

Based on a formula used to calculate unemployment benefits for the furloughed workers, a clerk who normally earns \$13 an hour would receive \$57.46 for each Friday, the Topeka Capital-Journal

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Briefly

Transit van to take Tax Day off

The Thomas County transportation van will not run Thursday because the driver will be attending a meeting in Hays. For information, call the county clerk's office at 460-4500.

Low-income tax help at library

Thursday will be the last day for tax-help by the American Association of Retired Persons from 1:30 to 4 p.m. at the Pioneer Memorial Library. The service is designed for low- and middle-income people with special emphasis on those 60 or older. For information, call Alvin Volk at (785) 460-2645.

Get paperwork help at hospital

For National Health Care Decisions Day, Citizens Medical Center has set aside time to help citizens fill out advanced directives paperwork and have them notarized for free from 1 to 3 p.m. Friday at the hos-

pital. Advance directive allow people to document exactly how they want to be treated if they are no longer able to speak for themselves. For information, call Kelly Kriegshauser or Cassandra Britt at (785) 460-4858.

Youth group to wash cars

The Colby United Methodist Youth Fellowship middle school group will be washing and cleaning cars inside and out at from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday at Kansas Quick Lube. They will also be selling hot dogs, chips and soda throughout the day. The proceeds will go to the youth fellowship and the United Methodist Mission and Ministry Fund. For information, call the church at 460-2761.

Poker to benefit violence agency

Northwest Kansas Domestic and Sexual Violence Services plans the "Aces Against Assault" poker

tournament at 1 p.m. Saturday at Twisters Bar and Grill. Registration will be from noon to 1 p.m.; buy in is \$30. There will be prizes for the winners and all proceeds go to the group. For information, call Tracy Ellegood at (785) 672-5033.

Museum selling more bricks

The Prairie Museum of Art and History is selling more decorative bricks for their front walkway. Individuals and organizations can get their names on bricks in a variety of sizes. The deadline is Friday and the museum will install this batch in June. Proceeds go to the museum. For information, call the museum at 460-4590.

College offers two concerts

The Spring Vocal Music Concert will begin at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, April 29, in the Frahm Theatre of the Cultural Arts Center at Colby Community College,

featuring the Sunflower Singers and Concert Choir. The Spring Band Concert, with the Concert and Jazz bands, will be Tuesday, May 4, same time and place. Admission is free.

Orchestra to finish its season

The Pride of the Prairie Orchestra is tuning up for its last concert of the season, "A Musical Trip Across the Atlantic, from America to Europe to Russia and Back," at 3:30 p.m. Sunday, May 2, at the Frahm Theater at Colby Community College. Stacey Williams will conduct. Buy tickets at the door for \$7 for adults and \$3 for children and seniors. For information, call Carol McGuire at (785) 672-2380.



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