



10 pages

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KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

This storm, seen here in a composite panoramic photo made as County on Monday. The hail was sporadic, hitting some areas acres of wheat and corn in a wide swath east of town. east of Colby, dumped hail up to baseball size in parts of Thom- harder than others. Farmers reported damage to about 35,000

Baseball-ball sized hail pounds crops

By Vera Sloan

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Freaky weather Monday evening that dropped rain and hail on the east side of Colby, but only a slight shower on the west side, shredded wheat waiting to be harvested and corn ranging from knee high to nearing the tassel stage.

Ross Sloan, county executive director for the U.S. Farm Service Agency, said the storm hit around 35,000 acres affected in Thomas County.

"About half is a total loss, with the other half being anywhere from 10 percent on up," Sloan said. "The storm was basically four miles wide and 14 miles long, starting about six miles north of U.S. 24 at Colby, to county road K, which is the Mingo Road."

The National Weather Service in Goodland reported hail around Monument, Colby, Norton, Alma, Herndon, Oberlin, Mingo, Norcat and areas in between.

The hail ranged from pea size to the largest reported by the public as 4.25 inches in Colby. Trained spotters measured hail as large as 2.75 inches. Most ranged from

one to two inches, described as hen's egg to baseball size. Reports of the hail lasting for as long as 10 minutes were not uncommon.

Thomas County Emergency Management Director Susan McMahan said she had spoken to insurance agents, who had many reports of damage to car mirrors and side windows. People are also reporting cracked windshields and some damage to roofs, she said. The weather service had not reported any significant building damage in the region.

"Crop loss covered much of the same area that was hit about this same time last year," said Stan Edmundson, crop insurance agent for the Insurance Store, on Range Avenue. "Fields of standing wheat ready for the combine were a total loss from wind-driven hail. And when there's wind, it doesn't take long to destroy it."

He said that he measured hail three to four inches at his home in Colby.

Edmundson said his office had insured about 3,000 acres of corn hit by the storm, but had no idea how much the other agencies had covered. He said he saw corn with the tops knocked off, taking the tassel, and that when the tassel is gone, there can be

no pollination to make the ear.

"I saw stalk damage, and depending on what leaf stage the corn was in, we'll know more in about seven days," Edmundson said. "In places, there's just three-foot stubs left standing."

Dave Brown with the Farm Bureau insurance office said he'd been busy Tuesday morning with all kinds of hail-damage claims.

"We've had multiple damage reports of cars, houses and farm machinery, where tractor cabs have been smashed by the hail," he said, "and with some of the crops, there will be severe damage to total loss. I haven't heard about any of the acreage we have insured in Rawlins County yet, but the storm covered a lot of area."

Many reports came in of broken windshields, front and back and vehicles dented by the huge hail. In Colby, the hail covered an area mostly east of Franklin Avenue from the ball fields on the north to the museum on the south.

Practically the entire area west of Franklin Avenue reported only a small shower with no hail, however, a vehicle at the Colby Free Press, a half block west of the main street, lost a windshield.



CHASE HARTWELL/Colby K-18 Baseball

Colby K-18 player Andrew Taylor held up a hail stone he found Monday alongside a baseball for comparison. The team had a game scheduled against Oakley for Monday but it was cancelled because of the storm.

Stranded travelers enjoy stay

By Vera Sloan

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What do you do in Colby for six days when your house breaks down?

Sally and Larry Glen of Bend, Ore., got to find out. Not only did their house on wheels, a home the size of a Greyhound bus, break down, they said, but the diagnosis wasn't good as far as getting the parts for a permanent fix.

The couple made the best of the six days they were stranded at the Thomas County Fairgrounds camper park while waiting on parts to get them back to Oregon. The farthest parts of the town were accessible in the pickup they were pulling, so when they weren't walking, they were driving here and there. And, they said, they watched a lot of television while they waited.

"We've been enjoying the harvest crews, and they make nice



Sally Glen and Holly

neighbors," Sally said. "I think one harvester from Iowa took off for home, because he said the ground (there) had dried up

and they could plant something, but most of them are sitting and waiting to get to the fields. These are all such nice people."

An avid walker, Sally said she and her golden retriever had seen practically every corner of the town. She noted that she was especially impressed with the visitors' center at Willow and Range. She described the grain-bin-based center as "amazing," a word "home towners" like to hear from out-of-towners.

Sally said they didn't know what was wrong with the bus, but hoped they would get it running enough to get back on the road. She added that the people at Foley Equipment were great in figuring out what it would take to get the bus fixed enough that it would at least get them back to Oregon.

Sally said Colby was a "darling" town with great people and she thought the "way-finding"

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Two paving projects planned for Thomas County highways

By Kevin Bottrell

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Two sections of highway in Thomas County will be getting new pavement soon, but the exact timing is still up in the air.

Nine miles of U.S. 24 from the east city limits of Colby to the Nine-Mile Corner and about 11 miles of U.S. 83 from the corner north and east to the Sheridan County line at Rexford are slated for resurfacing, but the start date isn't set.

Kristin Brands, district public affairs manager for the Kansas Department of Transportation in Norton, said the contractor, APAC-Kansas Inc., Shears Division, out of Hutchinson, is still working on the shoulders on a stretch of Interstate 70 in Gove County. Once done with that, it will take a while for the firm to move its equipment and asphalt

production to the Thomas County projects, she said.

Brands said the contractor will mill off one inch of pavement on U.S. 24 and lay down a 1 1/2-inch asphalt overlay. On U.S. 83, the firm will use a process called heater scarification to heat up the pavement, apply some chemicals to make it bind together tighter and then recompact the material. Then the road will be covered with 1 1/2 inches of new asphalt. The contractor will restripe the roads and install rumble strips on the center line of U.S. 83.

District Engineer Jeff Stewart said the difference in processes planned for U.S. 83 and 24 come out of the surveys done before the project. Department workers checked the roads, counting cracks, taking core samples and counting traffic, to decide what each stretch needed. Stewart said the number of commercial trucks is higher on U.S. 83 than on U. S.

24: about 600 per day compared to about 300 per day.

"There's about double the trucks on 83 than on 24," he said.

The material on the surface of U.S. 83 is still good, Stewart said, even though it has seen more wear, which is why the contractor will recycle that material and just add some new asphalt.

During the project, Shears will also resurface the pavement around the Country Club Drive interchange on I-70, including all four ramps. Brands said that department crews have worked on two of the ramps over the past year, but those were "band-aid" measures until a contractor could come in and do the whole interchange. Stewart said the interchange was not built with the original freeway and wasn't intended to handle the kind of truck traffic it sees today.

See "PAVING," Page 3

Briefly

Volunteers needed for carnival

The Thomas County Amusement Association is looking for volunteers for the home-owned carnival at the Thomas County Free Fair from Tuesday to Saturday, July 13 to July 17. Shifts are from 6:45 to 9 p.m. and 9 to 11 p.m. Volunteers are needed for the prize booth, ring toss, baseball throw and ball of chance. For information or to volunteer, call Holly Whitaker at the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce at 460-3401 or Angie Gaede at 443-3853.

Family to talk about Africa trips

The First Presbyterian Church in Colby plans a potluck reception and presentation by Tim, Rebekah, Andrew and Lydia Peterson about their trip to Tanzania at 4 p.m. Sunday at the church. The Petersons also will talk about the history of Christian missions in Tanzania. The potluck reception will follow. For information, call the Rev. George T. Rahn at (785) 443-2632.

Commodities available Monday

U.S. Department of Agriculture commodities will be distributed from 1 to 2 p.m. Monday at the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program office in the Senior Progress Center. Anyone who's eligible may come and get commodities first-come, first-served. Commodities include instant milk, apricots, beans, apple juice, potato flakes, beef stew, cream of mushroom soup and carrots. For information, call the volunteer program office at 462-6744.

Hospital plan diabetes class

Citizens Medical Center will hold a free "Journey for Control" class for people with diabetes from 7 to 8 p.m. Tuesday at the hospital. The class will use a "conversation map" to encourage people to be engaged in managing diabetes. Class size is limited,

so register now. For information or to register, call Jeanene Brown in the education department at (785) 460-4850.

Picnic, music again Wednesday

Colby's Picnic in the Park lunch-and-concert series continues at noon Wednesday at Fike Park with entertainment by Lucas Baumfalk and friends. For information, call the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce at 460-3401 or the Colby Convention and Visitors Bureau at 460-7643.

Sign up for soccer this month

The American Youth Soccer Organization fall season will start in September. The organization will have early registration from 5 to 7:30 p.m. Thursday, July 22, at the Pioneer Memorial Library. Registration is \$45 until Saturday, July 31, and \$50 after. For information or to set up an alternate time to register,

call Emily Griffin at 460-0647.

Leadership group class open

Applications are available for the Leadership Thomas County program, set for four Wednesdays in September and October. Participants will learn 21st century leadership skills and an increased awareness of the county and state, with an opportunity to attend the Kansas Leadership Center in Wichita. The application deadline is Friday, July 23. For information or an application, come to the Colby Chamber of Commerce office or call Leilani Thomas at 460-7643.



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