



COLBY FREE PRESS

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At least nine dead in tornadoes

BRANSON, Mo. (AP) — A powerful storm system that produced multiple reports of tornadoes lashed the Midwest early today, roughing up the country music resort city of Branson and laying waste to small towns in Illinois and Kansas. At least nine people were killed.

An apparent twister rolled through Branson just before 1 a.m. and seemed to hopscotch up the city's main roadway, ripping roofs off hotels and damaging some of the city's famed music theaters dangerously close to the start of the heavy tourism season. More than 30 people were reported hurt, mostly with cuts and bruises.

"If it was a week later, it'd be a different story," said Bill Tirone,

assistant general manager for the 530-room Hiltons of Branson and the Branson Convention Center, where windows were shattered and some rooms had furniture sucked away by high winds. Hotel workers were able to get all guests to safety as the storm raged.

John Moore, owner of the damaged Cakes-n-Creams '50s Diner, said the tornado seemed to target the city's main strip, moving down the entertainment district, right through the convention center, across a lake and into a housing division. He said the tornado appeared to "jump side to side."

"The theater next to me kind of exploded. It went everywhere. The hotels on the two sides of me lost their roofs. Power lines are

down. Windows are blown out," Moore said. "There's major, major destruction. There has to be millions dollars of damage all down the strip."

At least 10 people were killed in the southern Illinois town of Harrisburg after a storm leveled much of the community of 9,000 people.

In Missouri, one person was killed in a trailer park in the town of Buffalo. Two more fatalities were reported in the Cassville and Puxico areas.

At least three people were critically injured in the small eastern Kansas town of Harveyville, much of which lay in rubble.

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11 hurt by twister in Kansas

By John Hanna

The Associated Press

HARVEYVILLE — The small eastern Kansas town of Harveyville took a direct hit from an apparent tornado late Tuesday, injuring 11 people and reducing much of the town to ruins.

Kansas Highway Patrol trooper Mark Engholm said there were no reports of fatalities, and all of the town's residents had been accounted for.

Three of the victims suffered critical injuries, said Sharon Watson a spokeswoman for the Kansas Adjutant General's office. Eight others had minor injuries, and many of the victims were taken to a Topeka hospital, Watson said.

Much of the town appeared to be heavily damaged. Numerous homes were reduced to rubble, trees and power lines were down and gas service was out across the city.

Gov. Sam Brownback has declared a state of emergency for the town.

Among the buildings destroyed was the Harveyville United Methodist Church, which has been at the same site since 1885.

The building was little more than a mound of debris and rubble Wednesday morning, its organ heaved by the storm into a shattered heap across the street.

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Republicans to vote here on candidates

Thomas County Republicans will gather Saturday, March 10, at the Cultural Arts Center at Colby Community College to hear about and vote on the party's candidates for president.

County Chairman Josh Faber said the county caucus will begin at 10 a.m., with "credentialing" of voters — checking photo identification and registration lists — to begin at 9 a.m.

All Kansas GOP caucuses, including those in the Mountain time zone, convene at 10 a.m. Central Time and conclude at 1 p.m. The party expects to have all results by 5 p.m., but says it will

report results as they are received from the caucus sites.

Kansas Republicans will caucus at 99 locations in 93 counties. Johnson County has seven locations that will report a cumulative total. Twelve counties will caucus with other counties — Anderson, Bourbon, Chautauqua, Cherokee, Cowley, Doniphan, Elk, Harper, Jackson, Kingman, Scott and Wilson. The Associated Press says it is working with the state party to obtain results from each county, as well as by congressional district in the four counties split between districts, Douglas, Geary, Greenwood and Nemaha.

Pink Zone effort will help patients

Colby Community College and Colby High School women's basketball teams joined this month to promote breast cancer awareness by participating in the annual Women's Basketball Coaches Association Pink Zone.

Stacy Lee, Colby recreation director, said she and the college women's basketball team began the Colby Pink Zone in 2010. Colby High School joined the effort in 2011. And this year, Lee said, the Pink Zone on Feb. 15 and 17 was better than ever.

The Community Building was plastered in pink with posters, streamers, ribbons and banners.

Both schools modeled pink warm-up shirts, and some of the athletes sported pink shoelaces, sweat bands and head bands.

Lee, Pink Zone chairman, coordinated two fund-raising events, a dessert raffle during the college game and a pink silent auction during the Colby High game.

"Once again, I was overwhelmed with the support and generosity of this community with the donated baked goods, auction items and ultimately, the money raised from the fund raisers," Lee said.

Although the Pink Zone is a

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Legislators coming here

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer of Grinnell and state Reps. Rick Billinger of Goodland and Dan Collins of Plainville will be in Colby from 1:45 to 2:45 p.m. Saturday for a "town hall" meeting at the college Student Union.

The legislators say they'll be looking for ideas on issues being addressed in this year's session in

Topeka. They'll talk about issues being considered and their impact on this area. Everyone is invited to come ask questions.

The men, all Republicans, also have meetings scheduled in Plainville Hill City and Hoxie in the morning, and after the session here, at 3:30 (Central Time) at On the Bricks in Goodland.

Railroad meet put off

A public meeting with representatives from Ag Valley Co-op of Norton and Kyle Railroad from Phillipsburg originally scheduled for 1 to 5 p.m. today at the Thomas County Office Complex in Colby has been postponed.

The co-op plans to load about two grain trains a month, which could change to Union Pacific

tracks in Colby. The mile-long trains would block streets for up to 30 minutes at a time.

One of the representatives who planned to come to the meeting is ill, the city manager's office said. As of this morning, no new date had been set.

For information, call City Manager Carolyn Armstrong at 460-4410.



Babies thrill children

April Swartz (above) was enchanted as she met a blue heeler puppy at a petting zoo Friday at the Colby Middle School playground held during FFA Week. Meanwhile, Maya Rodriguez (right) was petting a calf as she explained to Xavier Jackson, "My cousin said that brown cows make chocolate milk." Hmmm.

KATHRYN BALLARD
Colby Free Press



Koreans suspend nuke work in food deal

WASHINGTON (AP) — North Korea has agreed to suspend uranium enrichment and place a moratorium on nuclear and long-range missile tests in a breakthrough in negotiations with the United States.

The joint announcement today by the two nations comes little more than two months after the death of longtime ruler Kim Jong Il, and suggests North Korea has met the key U.S. preconditions for restarting multi-nation disarmament-for-aid talks that the North withdrew from in 2009.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton called North Korea action a "modest first step" but also "a reminder that the world is trans-

forming around us."

She told a Senate hearing that the North has agreed to a moratorium on nuclear activities at Yongbyon, including uranium enrichment activities, and will allow International Atomic Energy inspectors to verify and monitor it, and to confirm disablement of its nuclear reactor and associate facilities.

Since 2006 North Korea has tested missiles, staged two nuclear tests and unveiled a uranium enrichment program that could give it a second route to manufacture nuclear weapons, in addition to its existing plutonium-based program. At low levels, uranium can be used in power reactors, but at higher levels it can be used in nuclear bombs.

Clinton said the United States will meet with North Korea to finalize details for a proposed

package of 240,000 metric tons of food aid, referring to it as "nutritional assistance." She said intensive monitoring of the aid would be required.

North Korea, which appealed for the aid a year ago to alleviate chronic shortages, issued a similar, although differently worded statement released simultaneously in Pyongyang.

An unidentified spokesman from North Korea's Foreign Ministry said in its statement carried by the state-run news agency that the North agreed to the nuclear moratoriums and the allowance of U.N. inspectors "with a view to maintaining positive atmosphere" for the U.S.-North Korea talks.

The U.S. still has nearly 30,000 troops based in South Korea, a legacy of the 1950-53 Korean War.

