



Free Press
Viewpoint

Seasons incidental
when tornado
comes to town

The February tornado outbreak points up a flaw in emergency planning for many Kansas counties: no one pays any attention to the sirens and other parts of the emergency warning system from November through February.

Most cities and counties wait until “tornado season” approaches in March before they test the sirens and put the system through its paces. That works fine. Most years.

And while it’s true that the tiny Kansas town of Harveyville got no warning before it was hit because the tornado there literally dropped out of the sky, it requires a bunch of what-ifs to say that we don’t need to worry about tornadoes in winter.

Nature, it seems, does not know about the “season” dates for her little productions. She sends out tornadoes when she darn well feels like it.

A huge tornado came over Colorado’s Wolf Creek Pass a few years ago, laying waste to timber for miles and scaring the bejeebers out of some Texas elk hunters, who knew a twister when they saw one.

“Everyone” knew that none of that could happen: no tornadoes on the Continental Divide, no tornadoes in late October, no tornadoes in the Colorado high country. If it weren’t for all those broken trees, people might have thought those hunters were imagining things.

Then a few years ago, a tornado west of Hays damaged houses in November, barely a week before Thanksgiving.

It’s common to have tornadoes in the South in winter months. Storms that bring blizzards to the plains and ski weather to the mountains generate thunderstorms in warmer states.

But in Kansas?

So here’s the deal. Why not just test the tornado warning system the first Monday of every month?

The first test of March, just before Severe Weather Week, usually turns up a few sirens that stopped working over the winter. Why wait? Tornadoes don’t know about Severe Weather Week.

There’s no harm in cranking up the publicity in March, but weird as our weather can be, why take chances with the sirens? Why not be ready? – *Steve Haynes*

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Handy helper hampers household tasks

It’s so nice to have help making the bed. Now, I don’t mean just throwing the covers back over things in the morning. I mean putting the mattress pad, fitted sheet, top sheet, two blankets and the comforter on after they’ve been washed each week.

And every week, I have help.

Not Steve. He’s almost always able to find some job somewhere else. He hates to make the bed.

But April Alice is always there for me, lying in the middle of the mattress and just daring me to cover her up with the pad. Then she wiggles out while I’m securing the corners and gets ready for the fitted sheet.

By the time I’m up to the blankets, she’s in full killer mode – biting and scratching at each layer as it covers her then slipping out and getting ready for the next.

April is the helpful cat in the family. She’s also always ready to help with any work we do at the dining room table.

Sit down at your portable computer and be-



Cynthia Haynes

- Open Season

fore too long, she will be hopping up on the table – a total no-no, and she knows it – and sneaking up to try to get as close to the action as possible.

Believe me, it’s really hard to type with a cat’s head between your hands and the keys.

Sneaking is a specialty of our cats.

I love to read, and when I have the opportunity, I get comfortable in my recliner and dive into my latest mystery novel.

Many times as I start my book, a cat will crawl into my lap and start to purr up a storm. It’s comforting, warm and relaxing. However, it’s also a little unsettling when I come up for

air after a chapter or two to find a different cat in my lap and realize I didn’t even know I had been switched out.

While April is the helpful cat, her son Frank is the lazy one.

He loves the bed. He thinks it’s bedtime long before the sun goes down in the winter. Any time either of us goes upstairs to do anything, Frank is ready for bed.

He runs ahead and jumps in the middle with that expectant air of a cat ready for a nice nap.

If you walk off, he sulks. If you lie down, he curls up right next to you.

By morning, there usually are more cats than people in our bed.

I guess I shouldn’t complain. We could raise St. Bernards.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor’West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes @ nwkansas.com

Protection of rights applies to everyone

When President Barack Obama took the oath of office three years ago, he swore to defend the constitutionally guaranteed rights of all Americans.

There were no asterisks denoting exceptions for health-care providers, religious employers, service members or military chaplains. More than three years later, his inaugural words fail to match his actions and those of his administration.

President Obama gave America a preview of his warpath against organized religion and people of faith when he undid parts of an executive order by President George W. Bush protecting health-care providers from being required to perform, participate in or provide a medical procedure with which they had religious or moral objection.

But in the past month alone the Obama Administration has gone guns-a-blazing, full-force against both religion and the Constitution.

First, President Obama and his “Catholic” secretary of health and human services, Kathleen Sebelius, finalized a rule that will require Catholic employers to cover and pay for contraception – including abortion drugs – and sterilization. The fact that the Catholic teaching excludes artificial contraception or abortion matters not a single bit to President Obama.

The Department of Health and Human Services argued that a one-year exemption is all religious organizations need in order to comply with this law. What President Obama and Secretary Sebelius do not get is that religious



U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp

- Capitol Notes

organizations and people of faith do not need time to renounce their faith; they need their views to be protected by the First Amendment.

Second, President Obama’s Secretary of the Army – a political appointee – silenced Catholic chaplains from speaking out against this rule attacking religious freedom. If you are Catholic, you heard in your Sunday Mass a message from your bishop that “We cannot – we will not – comply with this unjust law.” But not if you were serving in the military, defending the freedoms of other Americans.

Instead, the Army’s Office of the Chief of Chaplains attempted to censor the reading of the letter from Archbishop of Military Services Timothy Broglio. After a conversation between Archbishop Broglio and Army Secretary John McHugh, it was decided that line would be eliminated.

Non-Catholics, those not in the military, and even those who support the use of abortion drugs and contraception should take offense at and be outraged by the actions of the Obama Administration. It could just as easily be something other than sterilization or abortion drugs next time. This rule requiring reli-

gious entities to act against their teachings is a clear violation of their rights to exercise freely their religious beliefs. The gag order on Catholic chaplains amounts to an obvious violation of free speech. Who or what is next?

The administration tried to backtrack, but the “compromise” is merely the “Obama-Sebelius” fig leaf. The widely reported press conference “accommodation” does nothing to respect the religious liberties of employers.

After proclaiming an economic fallacy – that the costs would be magically paid by someone else other than the employer – Sebelius and Obama finalized the rule without any actual changes. More empty rhetorical gestures – more attacks on religious liberty.

President Obama and Secretary Sebelius are receiving the backlash they are due for this reckless, errant and unconstitutional requirement being forced upon the country. The administration is paying only lip service to the First Amendment concerns of many Americans. To finalize the rule without protecting people of faith shows just how out of touch they are with the American people. But, perhaps more concerning is that their rule shows how selective they are with protecting the rights of Americans.

And, for that, the Obama Administration is an abomination.

Congressman Tim Huelskamp of Fowler represents the First District of Kansas. He serves on the Veterans’ Affairs, Budget, and Agriculture Committees.

Mallard
Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

