

Spring storm closes Interstate 70, strands motorists

Trucks wait out storm

STORM, from Page 1

night's rest before taking off again in the morning.

He was also running behind, as his truck broke down in Oklahoma City and he was there for two days.

All three drivers said they wouldn't leave Wednesday night if I-70 opened up, but would take off again sometime Thursday morning.

It was Dalton's first time to drive on I-70 and Grubba had only been on the highway for the first time last week when he took a load from Little Rock, Ark., to California.

Truck drivers weren't the only ones who were stranded in Goodland. Two busloads of orchestra students and their chaperones from Bartlesville, Okla., who were on their way to Winter Park, Colo., were stopped by the closed road on Wednesday afternoon.

Nearly 60 students from Bartlesville High School, the school's principal, orchestra director and assistant orchestra director, and two chaperones spent the evening at the Max Jones

Fieldhouse. They ordered in pizza and the orchestra even got a chance to practice.

Principal Debi Boyles, said she called Goodland High School Principal Harvey Swager, who said it was OK for the group to stay at the fieldhouse. Boyles said Swager and Rick Schlosser, night custodian at the fieldhouse, were very helpful.

"You couldn't ask for anybody more accommodating or kind," she said.

The group were going to Winter Park to compete in a music contest there and planned to go skiing also.

Motels in Goodland were nearly filled up Wednesday afternoon. Motel 6 filled up at about 2:45 p.m., Best Western Buffalo Inn around 3:30 p.m., Howard Johnson by 4 p.m. and the Comfort Inn by 6:30 p.m.

Both the Kansas Highway Patrol and the Sherman County Sheriff's Department said there were no accidents reported in the county Wednesday, despite winds gusting to more than 60 miles an hour at the tail-end of a strong low-pressure system.



This was just one of the rows of trucks lined up at New Trail Travel Center on Wednesday afternoon after I-70 was closed because of a blizzard in Colorado.

Photo by Janet Craft/The Goodland Daily News

Public schools shut down

COLORADO, from Page 1

ment offices were shut down.

All Denver public schools were closed for the first time in more than six years. Nearly 50,000 customers lost power in Colorado.

We're treating this like a military operation," Xcel Energy spokesman Steve Roalstad said.

Denver International Airport was shut down for seven hours to avoid the chaos that struck during a 1997 blizzard when thousands of passengers were stranded overnight, spokesman Chuck Cannon said.

The blowing snow closed hundreds of miles of Interstate 25 in Colorado, I-70 across eastern Colorado, and I-80 from Wyoming into the Nebraska Panhandle. Hundreds of people were stranded in cars near Colorado Springs, where the airport also was closed.

Truckers sought refuge at the Little America Hotel and Resort in Cheyenne, Wyo., after I-80 was closed. Cashier Ahna Roberts said: "I just came in this morning — barely."

The snowstorm came on the back

side of a weather system that also sent a line of severe thunderstorms across the eastern Plains, with tornadoes, hail and high wind causing damage from Texas to Nebraska.

"I haven't been out to check all the damage since my car is stuck in the garage," said Diane Stone, who lives outside Endicott, Neb.

A twister near Coalgate, Okla., killed a man and seriously injured his son. In Agency, Iowa, the tornado that hit the food pantry also injured four people, one critically.

A tornado that hit Plainville, Kan., caused major damage to 25 homes, said Joy Moser, a spokeswoman for the state adjutant general's office. No injuries were reported.

In Colby, high winds downed a canopy at the Love's convenience store, scaring (but not harming) two women nearby.

Strong Kansas winds peeled the roofs off school buildings, overturned semitrailers, uprooted trees and knocked over power lines. Winds of 60 mph or more were reported in many areas of the state.

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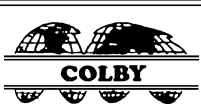
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