

Weather service offers room for emergency center

By Tom Betz
The Goodland Star-News

The National Weather Service is offering Sherman County room for an emergency operations center, commissioners heard Tuesday, whether the next emergency is a blizzard like the one last Thanksgiving or something else.

Gary Rogers, regional emergency management director; Crissy Conger, Sherman County central dispatch director and emergency management assistant; and emergency management assistant Judy McKee were at the meeting to discuss the weather service offer for an emergency operations center.

The emergency operations center would be a place the county commissioners could use as a command center during an emergency. It would be better equipped than the commissioners' room at the courthouse, which they use now, Rogers said.

Conger said David Floyd, warning coordinating meteorologist, and Al Pietrycha, science and operations officer, at the weather station here offered the room at a Local Emergency Planning Committee

Emergency office looking for new quarters

By Tom Betz
The Goodland Star-News

The Sherman County commissioners heard Tuesday that the Emergency Management office is short on space and electrical power.

Commissioner Chuck Thomas asked Gary Rogers, regional emergency management director, if the facilities upstairs in the courthouse were adequate.

Rogers said he would like the county to consider finding another location, saying the space in the law library on the third floor of the courthouse is getting a bit cramped. He said they need another computer and filing cabinet.

The commissioners suggested setting up the office in the commissioners' room, which is not used much between the meetings.

Rogers said having the office outside the courthouse would be more convenient for his assistant, Judy McKee, who does not have a key to the courthouse.

He said the sheriff and assessor had offered some office equipment. Rogers said Sheriff Kevin Butts has offered a used copier, and Assessor Terry Ballard offered a used computer.

"We are limited to four electrical outlets up there," Rogers said of the law library. "I have tripped the breaker at least once, and it affects the judge's chamber."

Commissioner Mitch Tiede said he didn't know of any other space in the courthouse, and wondered what might be available downtown.

Rogers said he understood commissioners would have to consider the cost of rent, utilities and other.

Crissy Conger, central dispatch manager and emergency management assistant, said it would be good to have a building where McKee could have a key.

The commissioners suggested that Conger, Rogers and McKee look into what might be available. Rogers said where the office is now makes it sort of hidden.

cipals meet to see what could be available and for Rogers to lay out the specifics of what the county needs.

"The need to activate something like an emergency operations center is seldom," Floyd said, "but it would be available."

Pietrycha was at the emergency planning meeting because he is the amateur radio emergency coordinator for Sherman, Cheyenne, Wallace and Rawlins counties, Rogers said.

He said the amateur radio network would open up another communication option available through the weather service location.

"The conference room they are offering is fully equipped with wireless Internet and phones," Rogers said. "We can hardly pass it up. The weather service thinks there are things they can do for us, and they are becoming a big asset in emergency situations."

Conger handed out a memorandum about a meeting to be held at 1:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 10, at the weather office to show the county commissioners and city officials what is available.

"Would this be available for non-weather related emergencies?" Commissioner Kevin Rasure asked.

Rogers said it would be available for any emergency.

Commissioner Chuck Thomas asked Conger if she could operate central dispatch out of the weather service.

"We would move to the sheriff's office if we had a power problem," Conger said, "but we would like to be able to have equipment to operate from a remote location."

The sheriff's office, weather service and city administration building all have emergency generators to maintain basic power, though the courthouse does not.

Rogers said there are a couple more steps he would like to see taken, and possibly some additional equipment that could be used for an emergency.

Commissioner Mitch Tiede said he thought it was a good option to look at and would be interested in seeing the conference room next month.

Visitors board plan would promote area

By Sharon Corcoran
The Goodland Star-News

What do you tell tourists about to make them want to visit western Kansas? Travel scenic byways? Hunt for fossils? Visit historic sites?

When you live here, promoters say, you may pass things every day that would be interesting to visitors and not even notice.

The Sherman County Convention and Visitors Bureau and other area tourism agencies have asked for help from Fermata Inc., a consulting firm based in Austin, Texas, to find the best ways to market the area.

The state Travel and Tourism Division of the Department of Commerce gave \$6,000, and the Western Kansas Rural Economic Development Association, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks and the Southwest and Northwest Travel and Tourism councils also contributed to a study. The company will do a study of natural sites in western Kansas and develop maps, brochures and a marketing strategy for the region, but the groups need to decide how to use the information first.

Ted Eubanks, chief executive officer of Fermata, has done a presentation on the study, Donna Price, visitors bureau director, told the bureau's board on Tuesday.

She said he mentioned fossils found in Sherman County, which she said haven't even been touched on in promoting tourism. Also, Price said, they identified seven potential scenic byways in western

Kansas, including one from Goodland through Cheyenne County to the state line and one south through Sharon Springs. He said they could have come up with 700, she said.

A retreat is being planned, she said, for the agencies to get together and decide what direction to take with the findings.

It's a process that will take a while, she said, and a lot of grant writing, but that won't stop the agencies from putting the information to work.

"We've spent \$10,000 on the study," Price said. "We're not letting that go by."

The agencies are working together, not just because of the money, she said, but because of the time and effort involved.

"We have to work on this as a region," she said. "We can't do it on our own; it's too big."

Fermata did a study on the Flint Hills region, Price said, and that area is moving ahead.

Price reported things are moving along well for the Kansas Agri-Tourism Advisory Council. The council is reaching out to farmers, she said, to help them understand what's going on in agritourism.

Frontier Farm Credit has been paying for a web site for the council, she said, and instead of having it updated every month, they are thinking of updating every two to three months and using some of the money for agritourism promotion through the state Department of Commerce.

\$2,000 prize drawing at 1 p.m. on Saturday

DRAWING, from Page 1

of shopping in Goodland.

Pilger got her ticket from Mann's Jewelry. She said she was not sure where the money would go.

Kling said her second winning ticket came from Garcia's Home Furnishings.

The big drawing will be held outdoors on 11th Street between Main and Center, in front of the Mad Hatter, unless the weather is bad. If it's too cold to do the drawing outside, it will move to the building next to *The Goodland Star-News* at 1207 Main.

Ticket holders must be present to win the grand prize of \$1,500 and first prize of \$500.

Participating merchants have been handing out tickets since before Thanksgiving. Clerks pass out one ticket for every \$10 a customer spends, with a limit of 250 tickets per transaction. If you ask at *The Star-News* office, we'll give you one free ticket, so no purchase is required to win.

Participating businesses are Garcia's Home Furnishings and Appliance, Elliott's, American Communications, Mann's Jewelry, Shores Brothers Auto Supply, Sherman County Farm Bureau, Klip 'n Kurl Salon, McClung's Appliance and Furniture, High Plains Office Supply and *The Star-News*.

It's simple enough, but there are a few rules.

- You must be 18 to participate.
- Employees of participating businesses are not eligible at their

workplace, but can collect tickets from other sponsors. *Star-News* employees and their immediate family are not eligible.

- All prizes will be awarded in scrip, which can be spent only at participating businesses.
- The last day to collect tickets is Friday.
- Winners must be present at the grand prize drawing and show their winning ticket.
- All winners agree to have their name and photo published. Winners of major prizes must provide their tax identification number, and agree to be interviewed and photographed.

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