



School gets reprieve on fire code

By STEVE HAYNES

s.haynes@nwkans.com

An agreement between the state fire marshal and legislators means Kansas school districts won't have to replace classroom doors and make other repairs designed to keep smoke from a hallway out of classrooms for up to an hour — at least not right away.

The work should never have been ordered because state law exempts older buildings from having to meet updated fire codes, said Acting Fire Marshal Doug Jorgensen. Revised citations already have been sent to about 54 Kansas schools in more than 30 districts, he said.

State Rep. Ward Cassidy of St. Francis, who had introduced a bill to exempt school districts from the repairs until the state school budget comes back to normal, said the reversal by the marshal's office is fine, but he wants to see the law changed to protect schools and businesses from this kind of inspection.

"We're in the process of reworking it to try to protect (schools) in the future," said the freshman legislator, a Republican elected last fall.

He had nothing but praise for Mr. Jorgensen, whom he said had agreed to go back 18 months to check citations issued by his office.

"He was very nice to work with," the representative, a former high school principal in St. Francis, said.

In Oberlin, Superintendent Duane Dorshorst said he wasn't even sure how much the change would save the school district. So many citations were issued in western Kansas,

he said, that the district hasn't been able to get anyone out to look at its two schools.

A revised citation arrived Friday, he said, eliminating the demand that doors with windows or louvers in corridors be replaced. The district has about 60 of the doors in its two schools, he said.

An alternative, Mr. Dorshorst said, would be an interconnected smoke alarm system for the buildings, but there are only a couple of contractors in all of western Kansas who do that kind of work.

The Oberlin district still faces a requirement that two science rooms and the wood shop in the high school be improved to "fire boxes" capable of containing a blaze for up to two hours. However, Mr. Dorshorst said, he's been told replacing drop ceilings with fire-resistant tiles might be an alternative to expensive new walls.

From Topeka, Mr. Jorgensen said he'd ordered the review after finding that a section of state law says buildings should be inspected under the codes in effect when they were built, with some exceptions. The acting fire marshal, a retired Kansas Bureau of Investigation agent, said inspectors had not been following that law.

"I'm not sure exactly when the fire marshal's office got off track," he said, noting that he came on board in January with the change of state administrations.

The governor, who has about 1,500 appointments to make when starting a term, hadn't found some-

(See SCHOOLS on Page 12)

Show draws crowd

DURING THE KFNF Homeshow on Saturday at The Gateway, Gary Juenemann of Ultimate Fertilizer explained the features of the Nex-Tech phone system to Ilene O'Leary. In another aisle, Andrew Richards showed off the features of a riding lawn mower. The show was sponsored by KFNF radio station, as it has been for the past several years. With over 20 booths and lunch served by The Gateway staff, the show drew young and old to look at different items for the home.

— Herald staff photos by Cynthia Haynes



Bowling alley grand opening this weekend

While some people may have taken the chance to get a preview of the new lanes on Main Street, the whole town will have a chance during the grand opening of the Sunflower Bowling Alley on Friday and Saturday.

The project to build a new bowling alley as part of a senior/recreation center started in 2008 with planning. Demolition of the old senior center and movie theater started at the beginning of 2009. Since then, the project has continued to move forward, sometimes faster than others, with the new Golden Age Senior Center opening first, then Sunflower Cinema and now the third part, the bowling alley.

Greg Lohofener, with the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic

Development Corp., who has been working on the project since the beginning, said they have raised around \$185,500 for the alley. Supporters need another \$5,000 at least, he said, but are waiting to hear about one more grant application.

Anyone who wants to donate can contact Mr. Lohofener at 475-3322 or Connie Grafel, marking director for the corporation, at 475-2901.

Manager Doug Huscher said during the grand opening, anyone interested in signing up for "Red Pin" bowling can do so. During the two days, there will be door prizes to be won and food for sale, including Hunt Brothers Pizza and nachos.

Shoes rent will be \$1, he said, and games will cost \$3 each. League games will cost \$2.50.

Man remembered for willingness to serve

An Oberlin man will be remembered for his dry sense of humor and desire to serve the city.

City Councilman Richard Kimble, 60, who has served since being appointed in April 2010, died Thursday at Hays

Medical Center of congestive heart failure.

His wife, Carolyn Force, said her husband was quite the joker and a bright man. He was very mechanical, she said, an electrician. (See HUSBAND on Page 12)

Paving project planned for U.S. 83 in the county

By STEVE HAYNES

s.haynes@nwkans.com

If you're going to Colby this spring, plan on a few delays as workers put a new surface on the road from Rexford to Decatur County.

In fact, it could be a long summer for travelers going to Colby or driving through the county. The results, though — new pavement all the way

— should be worth it.

By the end of summer, nearly every mile of state highway in Decatur County except for U.S. 36 should have a new surface.

Workers were to start repaving U.S. 83 and K-383 through Sheridan County, from east of Rexford to the Decatur County line near (See HIGHWAY on Page 12)

County offers cash to stop sign damage

By CYNTHIA HAYNES

c.haynes@nwkans.com

All over the county, road signs are getting knocked down, run over, stolen and tossed into ditches.

Over the last two to three weeks, dozens of signs in Decatur County have bit the dust, some more than once.

And Road and Bridge Supervisor Tim Stallman and his crew, who have to replace the signs, are tired of it.

During last Tuesday's Decatur County Commission meeting, Mr. Stallman asked that the county put out a reward for the perpetrators.

"It's pure vandalism and it's continuing," Mr. Stallman told the commissioners.

All types of signs have been hit, he said: speed limits, curves, information, stop signs, you name it. And, the damage has been happening all over the county.

Mr. Stallman said that he has decided to put up a map to see just where the signs have been hit, but

County Roundup

At their meeting last Tuesday, the Decatur County commissioners:

- Put up a \$1,000 reward to stop a continuing problem of the county's road signs being vandalized. Story at left.
- Heard that the dispatch office's new radio system is up and running. Story to come.
- Decided to pay \$2,000 extra to the Northwest Environmental Protec-

tion Group since the state will not be helping with the bills anymore. Story on Page 6.

• Accepted the loan of two cell phones from a Colorado firm, Viaero, to see how they work in various parts of the county. Story to come.

• Heard that the cost of the county's property and liability insurance is going down because it has had few claims. Story to come.

he knows that signs on state, county and township roads have all been run down.

The commissioners agreed to advertise a \$1,000 reward to try to stop the reign of terror on signs.

Mr. Stallman said the signs cost about \$30 each. The posts run \$12 to \$14, he said. Add about \$50 in labor and mileage to that and it's starting to get expensive as well as

dangerous and obnoxious.

Another problem the road crews are running into, he said, is piles of stuff in the middle of the road. Some drivers are cleaning out their hopper bottoms in the middle of the road and leaving piles of soybean meal, rocks, corn, "whatever the previous load was," he said.

Some of the piles are a foot to 18 inches high and cause a traffic

hazard, he said.

Mr. Stallman said he isn't asking for help with this from the commissioners, just letting them know what is happening. With the crop season starting again, the problem should go away.

Mr. Stallman said he has his crew running magnets over the county roads. Every day, they pick up a coffee mug or so full of screws, nails and wire, he said.

Hopefully, this will help to clean up the county roads and prevent some flat tires. Mr. Stallman said he just doesn't have the manpower to do the township roads, however.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Heard that some soft spots are starting to open up on county roads. Red Willow County in Nebraska is also starting to have this problem. Mr. Stallman said.



*Highway to get paved through county

(Continued from Page 1A)
Leoville, on Tuesday, with delays of up to 15 minutes expected through mid-May.

The job is one of five scheduled for different times this summer which will result in a new surface on U.S. 83 all the way from Rexford to the Nebraska line and on K-383 from the junction east of Selden to Jennings. K-9 and K-123 near Dresden will get new pavement, too.

A crew from APAC Kansas out of Hays will be milling off a half inch of the old pavement from Rexford to the Decatur County line, then covering the road with 2 inches of new asphalt for about 12 miles, said Kristen Brands, district public affairs manager for the Kansas Department of Transportation in Norton. At some points, the company will mill up two inches and put 2 inches back down.

A centerline rumble strip will be ground into the highway throughout the project, she said. The rumble strip is installed on two-lane roadways to warn drivers that they are drifting across the center line, helping to avoid head-on collisions.

During daylight hours, traffic will be reduced to one lane around the work zone and guided by a pilot car. Travelers should plan on a delay of 15 minutes or less, Mrs. Brands said.

The \$1.5 million project is part of T-WORKS, the transportation program passed by the Kansas Legislature last May, Brands said. Engineers say the job should be completed by mid-May.

Later in the year, said Jeff Stewart, district engineer for northwest Kansas in Norton, four projects will extend the work north and east from the Selden area:

- U.S. 83, Selden Junction to eight miles south of Oberlin. This project involves repaving a stretch of road built in 1989 and repaved about three years ago. Mr. Stewart said the contractor will mill 1 1/2 inches off the pavement, then put down two "lifts" of asphalt totaling 3 inches.

Because the pavement is fairly new, he said, about 40 percent of the millings can be incorporated into

the new asphalt, while the norm is more like 25 percent. Venture Corp. of Great Bend bid \$1.7 million to do the project.

- From eight miles south of Oberlin to the city limits (the "wide pavement") on 83. Venture will mill 3 inches off the driving lanes, then "inlay" 2 1/2 inches of new pavement and cap the entire road with 1 1/2 inches of new pavement. The bid was \$1.7 on this job also.

Both projects on U.S. 83 will get centerline rumble strips, Brands said. The wide pavement also gets side rumble strips.

- Oberlin to the Nebraska line on U.S. 83. Blevins Asphalt of Missouri will apply a conventional asphalt seal, covered with rock chips, for \$355,000, to preserve the asphalt surface.

- Decatur County line to Jennings on K-383. Hi-Plains Sand will do a conventional chip seal on this stretch for \$380,259.

- K-9 and K-123, Dresden to Selden Junction and K-123 east to the county line: Venture will mill off 1 inch of pavement and apply a 2-inch overlay under a \$1.6 million contract.

Mr. Stewart said the work list is long, partly because the department has more money this year, and because jobs bid last fall came in under estimates. That allowed the agency to move up some jobs scheduled for next summer. The stretch of U.S. 83 north of the Selden Junction is one of those, he said.

"That leftover money allowed us to bid some more jobs this spring," he said, "and this is one of them."

"Last year, we were down. Prices were up and funding had been cut. This year, we're back to a kind of normal year."

He said he isn't sure yet when all the work will start, except for the Rexford-Selden-Leoville stretch this week. With a busy calendar, he said, the area engineers are having a time scheduling everything.

For questions on the Sheridan County job, contact Area 4 Engineer Robert Weiss in Oakley at (785) 672-3113 or robertw@ksdot.org, or Mrs. Brands at (785) 877-3315 or kristenb@ksdot.org.

Working in the yard



CHECKING OUT A TILLER before heading for his garden, Alan Shields prepared to do some spring yard work Sunday afternoon.

— Herald staff photo by Cynthia Haynes

*Husband liked jokes

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Mr. Kimble was born Nov. 12,

1950, in Sidney, Neb., to Glen and Sherma Kimble. He and his wife Carolyn moved from Denver to make Oberlin their home in 1998.

He enjoyed helping anyone he could and was an avid handyman, his family said. He was preceded in death by his parents and a nephew.

He is survived by his wife, of the home; a brother, Robert Kimble of Las Vegas, Nev.; a sister, Mary Bryant of Sidney; two daughters, Ardis Luce and Lori Kimble of Cheyenne, Wyo.; two granddaughters; and a great-granddaughter.

Instead of flowers, a memorial fund has been set up at the First National Bank to help with his medical expenses.

A celebration of his life will be held from 1 to 3 p.m. Saturday at the Sappa Valley Manor, 202 N. Elk Ave., in Oberlin.

Besides serving on the council, Mr. Kimble was a board member of the Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Kimble was born Nov. 12,

*Schools won't need new doors

(Continued from Page 1A)
one who meets the legal qualifications to be fire marshal, he said, including training in building inspection. He was asked to fill in, adding that he's had "a number of calls" from school superintendents and legislators about the inspections.

After the revised citations went out, he said, one superintendent told him he'd been about to order 73 or 74 new doors. All this comes at a time when the state is scraping to cut its budget and schools have been hit hard by cutbacks.

"The state is strapped, the school districts have been cut," Mr. Jorgensen said. "It was a valid concern."

While the safety of students is a concern, he said, his office has found that most schools can be evacuated in 2 to 3 minutes. And the old doors do not appear to be an immediate hazard to life or property.

"If there is a distinct hazard, we can cite those," he said.

He said he had called a meeting of all the inspectors in the Topeka office for Monday to go over the law and the rules on older buildings.

"We want to get them all on the same page with the inspection

process," he said. "I think that will help a lot."

Rep. Cassidy said he's been working on the fire-inspection issue since taking office in January, prompted by his experience with inspectors as a principal. A slew of inspections in western Kansas early this year prompted superintendents to complain, he noted. News coverage included an Associated Press story prompted by a report in *The Oberlin Herald*.

At the same time, other bills had been filed, including at least one which would break up the fire marshal's office and parcel its duties out to other agencies.

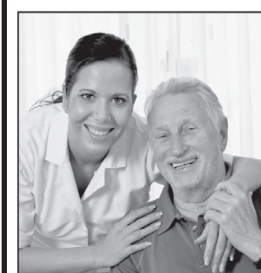
School officials often complained that something which passed in inspection one year was found to be a danger the next. Mr. Cassidy said he'd learned the fire inspectors had to go in each year for training before they went out to check schools.

"The inspectors are the ones who were giving us a bad time," he said.

Mr. Dorshorst praised the new legislator's work in Topeka.

"He's certainly done a good job for us so far," the Oberlin superintendent said.

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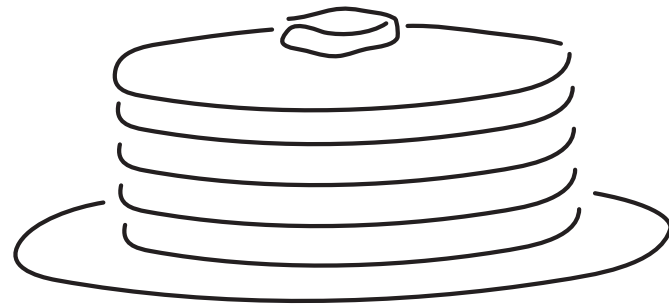
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