

Up in the air



SWINGING FROM ON HIGH, Chris Mitchell, Dustin Pelquin and Jack Bunch worked together to erect a Verizon Wireless tower just east of the Decatur County Co-op last Tuesday. The men work for Communications Integrations Specialties out of Waynesville, Mo.

- Herald staff photo by Stephanie DeCamp

County rejects barcoded tags for employees

By **STEPHANIE DeCAMP**
sdecamp@nwkansas.com

Decatur County commissioners decided last Tuesday to reject a grant offered through the state from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security that would require employees to provide private information and wear name tags with barcodes.

Initially, the commissioners and Emergency Management Director Jacque Boultinghouse thought that if they rejected the grant, they would forfeit federal money in the event of a disaster, but that proved to not be the case.

The grant has been discussed at the last three commission meetings. Ms. Boultinghouse said that while she was told by a state official in an e-mail that rejecting the grant would also essentially reject emergency disaster money, she didn't think that was the case.

"When a county chooses not to participate in a particular project, then what that does is help our regional council decide how many funds they'll allot to it," confirmed Toby Prine, the northwest regional coordinator for the Kansas Adjutant General's Department, which is under the umbrella of the Kansas Department of Homeland Security.

"The council can't force the county to participate; it's the county's choice. Any county that chooses not to participate in a project won't forfeit federal disaster money. Anything that's grant related is pretty complicated; there's a lot of strings attached to it, it's the nature of the federal grant money."

The commissioners were wary of the grant beforehand, however, and worried about the amount of private information its system would need to store, and the new information only increased their mistrust of the idea.

"Years ago," said Commissioner Ralph Unger, "we had a blizzard, and FEMA was involved. The county received money to grade the roads again and we got it without having to jump through all these hoops."

We already keep track of all of our people and equipment every day, so we don't need this to know who and what is out there."

"No," agreed Commissioner Stan McEvoy, "we keep perfect track of it."

The employee identification program offered by the agency would provide each county employee and

piece of equipment with a name tag that includes a bar code, Ms. Boultinghouse said. Those tags could then be scanned during an emergency like the wildfires over the summer. Scanning the tags would allow the county to know where every person and piece of equipment was when time is crucial. Also, she noted, the federal agency reimburses the county for the equipment and manpower it uses during an emergency, and this way, they would know exactly what should be paid for instead of having to figure it out later.

Ms. Boultinghouse showed the commissioners a website used in conjunction with the system at their Dec. 11 meeting, explaining exactly how much personal information would be kept for records using it.

"The main page has three tab menus and about 10 listings of people that are logged in," she said. "You click on the name and it pulls up their photo, name, title and rank."

"Then there's private information like phone and driver's license numbers. Then here you have a tab for medical information for emergencies."

"This lists doctors, allergies, diseases, anything that someone would have to know if you were injured and needed medical attention. Then it shows the qualifications you have."

"How are people going to feel about their personal information going on this website?" asked Commissioner Gene Gallentine.

Ms. Boultinghouse said that the minimum information someone in the system would need is their name and driver's license number.

Mr. Unger, who mentioned at that meeting that he had been treated once with a medication he was allergic to, appeared generally in favor of the system upon hearing of the medical emergency features. However, upon hearing of the state warning, he sided with the other commissioners on their decision to nix it.

"For the bureaucratic stuff," said Mr. Unger, "the procedure is more important than the mission for these guys."

"If you get a fire truck out, it's more important to them to get it all on paper than it is to put the fire out."

"There are so many man hours wasted on bureaucratic bull."

New laptops could help in a crisis

Of the two programs being considered under the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Decatur County commissioners decided to go for one while discussing the other.

Commissioners agreed Dec. 11 to apply for a program that will give the county four tablet computers (or possibly laptops) to access an interactive map the state has set up to help counties during a crisis.

The map helps the Emergency Services Department keep track of factors that could affect the county in an emergency like the wildfires this summer, said Emergency Preparedness Director Jacque Boultinghouse. Those could include wind, county burn bans, utilities and weather.

"If we have a chemical incident, it brings up a menu, and you pick the chemical that spilled, what-

ever it is," said Ms. Boultinghouse, showing the commissioners on a computer how the map works. "You locate it, then we draw a radius around where it is according to the wind around it, and decide whether to evacuate or not."

"This is what comes with the four computer tablets. We don't need the tablets in order to get to the map; you can access this on any computer. Basically someone in

another county wanted computers to come with it, and so now they offer it to everyone."

Ms. Boultinghouse said later that the federal department gives money to each state to pay for programs. The states then divide that money. Decatur County is one of 18 counties in the northwest region, and each region is divided according to population, she said, which "leaves us with a smaller piece of the pie."

Good Sam fire alarm goes off in storm

It's the last thing anyone wants to hear when a blizzard is howling in: a fire alarm from the nursing home.

At 6:27 p.m. Wednesday night, the alarms went off at the Decatur County Good Samaritan Center. Before the staff knew it, said Administrator Janice Shobe, about a dozen firefighters were there.

And, as it turned out, none of the residents had to go out into the cold.

"The fire department was wonderful," she said. "They were very professional and knew exactly what

they were doing."

Ms. Shobe said that Robert Groneweg of R&M Service Center later determined that the alarm went off because of a defective computer board that allowed for the furnace's heat chamber to get too hot.

"There was smoke in the building," said Fire Chief Bill Cathcart. "It was a fan that wasn't working in the heating system, and since the fan wasn't moving, things got overheated. Nothing actually burned, but it was really, really hot, with a fire smell to it."

"The staff reacted very appropriately," said Mrs. Shobe, "and they responded just the way they had been trained to. The fire department is automatically notified when the alarm goes off, and there were fumes in the hallway but no smoke."

"The residents were already in the appropriate place, in the two dining rooms behind the fire doors. They didn't need to evacuate, and we are fully sprinklered, so there's very little danger to the residents."

Mrs. Shobe said that the center's

protocol says to look at the fire panel to see where the alarm originates in the building, and to evacuate any residents that might be in that area. Then the residents are to stay behind the fire doors until the fire department gets there and determines whether they should evacuate.

"As far as I know," she said, "we've never had to evacuate. We do regular fire drills monthly, and during some of those, we move the residents behind the fire doors."

Mr. Cathcart said that this time of year, fire calls are usually due to chimneys, fireplaces and furnaces.

"Keep the chimney and furnace filters clean," he advised, "and have someone check your furnace belts and fans to make sure things are in good shape."

Man to join development group

The Oberlin City Council approved the appointment of Paul Shields as a board member of the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp. at its meeting Thursday.

"Economic development for the town is something that interests me," Mr. Shields said later, "so I thought I'd get involved."

Mr. Shields, a farmer, said he has been on the boards of the county Farm Bureau, his church and the Decatur Community Education Foundation. He and his wife Kelly

have three children, Tyler, Cassidy and Caitie.

Mr. Shields' name was suggested by outgoing board chairman Greg Lohoefer, who has been the only one of three whose terms are ending to present a replacement so far.

Mr. Lohoefer had told the Decatur County commissioners that he had someone in mind for his seat. Board members Deanna Castle and Jim Wesch are going off the board as well. The position held by the Decatur County Area Chamber of Commerce might also

be open, he said.

"You'll also be seeing a deed for property for Crop Production Services," he told commissioners. "We're selling them roughly 4.5 acres of land behind Creative Collision. And our biggest micro-loan was totally repaid in December, for \$50,000."

Mr. Lohoefer went on to say that the bowling alley, which is supported by the county, is doing well. He said they have four leagues this year and the alley has been busy every Friday and Saturday.

This month at Decatur Health Systems	January 2013				
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Providers Dr. Robert Rosin, MD Dr. Allen Hooper, MD Lynnetta Ward APRN-BC Tricia Carney APRN-C		1 Happy New Year! Clinic closed.	2 Lynnetta Sonogram Cardiac rehab	3 Lynnetta MRI	4 Lynnetta Cardiac rehab
	7 Dr. Rosin Lynnetta Oncology Cardiac rehab	8 Dr. Rosin Lynnetta Tricia Cardiology	9 Dr. Rosin Surgery Sonogram Cardiac rehab	10 Dr. Rosin Lynnetta MRI	11 Dr. Rosin Lynnetta Cardiac rehab
Schedule appointments with the Family Practice Clinic at 475-2015.	14 Dr. Rosin Lynnetta Cardiac rehab	15 Dr. Rosin Lynnetta Cardiology	16 Dr. Rosin Surgery Sonogram Cardiac rehab	17 Dr. Rosin Lynnetta MRI	18 Lynnetta Cardiac rehab
Schedule appointments with the hospital and Specialty Care Clinic at 475-2208.	21 Dr. Rosin Lynnetta Cardiac rehab	22 Dr. Rosin Lynnetta Tricia Cardiology	23 Dr. Rosin Surgery Sonogram Cardiac rehab	24 Dr. Rosin Lynnetta MRI	25 Dr. Rosin Lynnetta Cardiac rehab
The Fitness Center is open daily from 6:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Call 475-2208 for membership information.	28 Dr. Rosin Dr. Hooper Lynnetta Cardiac rehab	29 Dr. Rosin Dr. Hooper Lynnetta Cardiology	30 Dr. Rosin Dr. Hooper Surgery Sonogram Cardiac rehab	31 Dr. Rosin Dr. Hooper Lynnetta MRI	Bone density scans now available daily



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