

Digging dangers are focus of meeting in Colby

By TISHA COX
Colby Free Press

Be careful where you dig. That best sums up the message imparted at the public education contractor awareness program held Thursday night at the Thomas County 4-H Building at the fairgrounds.

Presented by the Pipeline Group, the program attracted a large crowd from nine Kansas and Colorado counties.

A. Ray King of the Pipeline Group of Midland, Texas presented information on the proper procedures for digging. He used slides to

show what can happen when pipelines are hit, many of which included fires and one that was of migrating natural gas that looked exactly like a plume of water shooting into the air.

He also showed slides of a drilled water main and other natural gas breaks.

“That has happened to everyone of us through our careers,” he said.

King said the fuels people might have to deal with in this are aviation fuel, crude and fuel oil, gasoline, hydrogen sulfide and natural gas.

He told the group what should be

done in case of an accident in a residential area. “Call 911,” he said. He told the group that is state law, and then told them to notify appropriate public officials.

People in the area should also be notified, but he said a phone call isn’t the right way. “You knock on the door and get them out,” he said, adding that a company radio, digital camera or a cell phone are all potential sources of ignition. “Do not ring the doorbell.”

He said you need to find out who to call before starting to dig, and that is ‘Kansas One-Call.’

The One-Call system, he said, is a network that can handle excavation calls and helps give notice to facility owners that work is planned and they need to be on the lookout.

King said all liquid and gas pipeline facilities must belong to a One-Call center, again stressing, “it is state law.”

“You want to have everything located before you dig,” he said. The One-Call center also helps locate requests so the excavators know where pipelines and other potential problems are buried.

King said the biggest way to pre-

vent problems was for people to be aware of their surroundings when working around an excavation or pipelines. He said sight, sound and smell are the best ways to identify a problem if it exists because some of the gasses give off a very distinctive smell, or they can be heard escaping from a pipe.

“If they don’t look right or don’t feel right — don’t do it,” he said.

Gas and oil lines also aren’t the only buried pipelines people have to worry about when digging. King said electrical lines, cable and telephone lines, fiber optic cable, wa-

ter and sewer or drain lines can also pose a problem. He said all it takes is one phone call to alleviate most potential problems.

The number to call before digging is 1-800 DIG SAFE. “It’s free and can save your life,” King said.

For more information, visit www.kansasonecall.com or www.pipelinegroup.com.

He also gave the number for the regional FBI WMD Coordinator, Dave Cudmore. King said if anyone sees anything unusual around a plant or pipeline, people should call (816) 512-8684.

Con artists continue to elude authorities

By PATTY DECKER
Colby Free Press

Police officials here and in Colorado continue to look for a pair of con artists who pulled a scam on a bank here and elsewhere — but so far they have avoided capture.

Earlier this week, Colby police officials learned that the quick change artist and his accomplice took a bank in Burlington, Colo. for an undisclosed amount of money on the same day the pair took money from Colby’s Farmers and Merchants Bank, said Gary Shull, investigator with the Colby Police Department.

“The Bank of Burlington was ‘scammed’ in the same method as was done here,” Shull said. Although the Burlington bank did not file a police report at first, he said, one of their bank officers did notify police here and provided information that the pair was in their town.

The incident in Colby happened toward the end of July when the quick change artist asked the bank teller to change \$50 bills into \$100 bills. He then decided \$100 bills were too big and asked for \$20 bills, Shull said. After the teller had

counted out the \$100 bills and left them on the counter, she reached down to get more \$20 bills as the suspect took some of the \$100 bills off the stack. After counting out the \$20 bills back to the suspect, the teller put the \$100 bills in the drawer unaware that the suspect had already lifted some prior to the final exchange.

The suspect is wanted not only in Colby for theft, but also in Burlington and Limon, Colo. The bank teller, along with the picture from the surveillance camera, were able to provide authorities with some description of both the suspect in the bank and the vehicle waiting outside. The “inside” man was described as having a dark complexion, about 27-33 years old, dark hair, 5’5” tall, medium build with a loose fitting watch on his left wrist and a ring on his right hand. Witnesses could not describe the driver, but did say the car was a black Jeep Cherokee.

Although it is unlikely the two are still in the area, Shull urges anyone who might recall some detail about the crime or has other information to call 462-4460.

Says Nile caused death

GREAT BEND (AP) — A Great Bend woman says her father was the state’s first fatal victim of West Nile, but health officials have not confirmed that. Richard Lee Griffin died at a Wichita hospital in February at the age of 68.

His death certificate lists the cause of death as “complications of West Nile virus encephalitis, post-polio type syndrome and respiratory insufficiency,” *The Hutchinson News* and the *Great Bend Tribune* reported this week.

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment, however, does not have any record of anyone dying from the virus, said spokes-

woman Sharon Watson. The doctor who signed the death certification, Sherri Abel, said she had no doubt that West Nile virus caused Griffin’s death.

Because of privacy restrictions, Watson said she could not reveal what happened in Griffin’s case.

“I can only say that the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) has not confirmed any deaths attributable to West Nile virus in Kansas,” she said.

Griffin’s daughter, Carla Peterson, said her father began having respiratory problems in early September 2002, but he continued to get sicker despite treatment.

Men and machine at work



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

A road crew from Venture Corp. of Great Bend laid down new asphalt on Range Avenue this morning. The overlay project runs from Cedar to Interstate 70 and should be completed by the end of August. Work on the road has been going on all week.

Bill’s confusion discussed by Speaker

By TISHA COX
Colby Free Press

Destination-based sales tax. It sounds confusing. And at a public meeting held at Colby Community College on Wednesday it was apparent it is.



Doug Mays

Business people and others at the meeting said it is difficult to understand. But their fears were eased somewhat to learn that the state wants to makes it easier to implement.

Doug Mays, Speaker of the Kansas House, stopped in Colby as part of his statewide tour to talk about the new legislation.

Rep. Jim Morrison, Colby, 121st District, said that the legislation

could eventually allow sales tax to be collected on Internet sales. Currently, he said, sales tax is collected at the point of sale.

He said the new legislation affects businesses that ship merchandise or make large deliveries because they now have to collect sales tax based on where the goods eventually end up.

“It’s only when it’s shipped,” Morrison said.

And he said it is an added burden because most merchants aren’t going to know what the sales tax is in another town or county is.

Morrison said the state hasn’t come up with an effective means of providing that information.

He said it’s “patently unfair” for people to go look at something in a store locally and then go buy it online. “Sales tax is lost that way,” he said.

Mays said the entire process has

been hard on everyone and he wanted to hear from retailers on what the state can do to help improve the situation.

“The implementation has been onerous,” he said. “I’d like to hear from retailers on this.”

He wanted to know how serious the problems are with the new system and what they would like the state to do to help out.

He said the state treasurer’s office has online a tax calculator to help businesses figure things out, but that is even confusing.

Mays said he wanted to assure business owners that they don’t have to invest large amounts of money on software to help them figure out the sales tax they need to collect, and he said there are a couple of options available on what to do right now.

One would be a special one-day legislative session to deal with the

new tax bill, or to wait until after the first of the year when the moratorium runs out.

The legislation was to have gone into effect on July 1 of this year but the legislature postponed it until Jan. 1, 2004.

“The Speaker wants to extend that six more months so the legislature can do something about it,” Morrison said.

Mays said there is another option. “Do nothing,” he said, adding the best thing to do would be to wait. “A lot at this point depends on the government.”

He said letters to the governor’s office or the legislature detailing the specifics of the problems people are having or their questions would help.

“What do you want us to do?” Mays said. “That’s the real question here. We’re looking for ways to fix it.”

Swiftiness of massive power blackout stumps the experts

By LARRY MARGASAK
Associated Press Writer

A massive power blackout retreated stubbornly today as power officials struggled to understand why the historic outage spread in minutes through the northeastern United States and southern Canada. Lights flicked on and air conditioners restarted for some, but millions of others baked in stuffy rooms.

Cleveland weathered its worst water crisis in history as the blackout shut all four major pumping stations. The pumps which serve more than 1 million residents in the city and 20 suburbs began operating Friday morning, but the National Guard tanked in 7,600 gallons of drinking water to help until taps flowed again.

In New York City, power was re-

stored Friday morning to parts of all five boroughs and some suburbs, but millions faced a morning rush hour without subway service or many traffic lights and no timetable for full restoration of power.

“Today will also present challenges,” New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg told reporters. He asked essential city workers to come in but told nonessential counterparts to

stay home and urged citizens to use judgment about working Friday.

“There are worse things than taking a summer Friday off from work,” he said.

In Michigan, some customers may have to endure a weekend without electricity. Everywhere officials urged residents, businesses and travelers to cope with the inconvenience.

“This is truly one of the instances where we’re all in this together,” Gov. Jennifer Granholm of Michigan said during a statewide address Thursday night. “So be calm, be supportive of your neighbor.” State workers in Michigan’s capitol, Lansing, were told to report to work Friday but in harder-hit Detroit to the east, they were ordered to stay home.

Forecast:
Turn to hot

Tonight...Mostly clear. Lows in the lower 60s. South wind 10 to 15 mph.

Saturday...Mostly sunny. Highs in the mid 90s. South wind around 10 mph.

Saturday night...Mostly clear. Lows in the mid 60s.

Sunday...Mostly sunny. Highs in the upper 90s.

Sunday night...Mostly clear. Lows in the upper 60s.

Monday...Partly cloudy. Highs in the upper 90s.

Tuesday...Mostly clear. Lows near 60 and highs 85 to 90.

By the numbers

Thursday’s high, 87

Low this morning, 59

Records for the date, 105 in 1935 and 49 in 1979

Year ago today, 83 and 60

24-hour precipitation to 8 a.m. today, 0.00

Month’s precipitation, 1.88

Year’s precipitation to date, 13.17

2002’s precipitation to date, 6.43

Water Usage/Colby

Aug. 14 = 2.541 million gallons

Briefly

College board to meet

The regular meeting of the Colby Community College Board of Trustees will be at 5 p.m. on Monday in the board room of the Administration Building on campus. Business items on the agenda include resignation and liquidated damages, approval of contracts and agreements, board retreat, silage purchase, change in meeting dates and payment of claims.

This is an open public meeting.

Yearbooks to be distributed Monday

The Colby High School yearbooks for the 2002-03 school year will be available on Monday at 7:30 p.m. at the school, said Donna Henry, coordinator. Students who ordered the book can pick it up at that time. Students who are 2003 graduates can pick up their yearbook anytime during regular office hours at the school, she said.

For questions, call Henry at 460-5300.

First aid/CPR classes planned

The Thomas County Red Cross is offering classes on Saturday, Sept. 6 at Colby Community College Student Union for childcare providers and others interested parties. First aid begins at 8:30 a.m. and adult, infant, child CPR begins at 12:30 p.m.

Call the chapter office at 785-462-7161 to register.

Gem Lions hosting hog roast

The Gem Lions Club will host its annual hog roast at the Gem Community Building from 5 to 8 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 27. The evening will include blue grass, folk and country music as well as food and fellowship. The group will accept free-will donations and net proceeds will go to community betterment projects.

‘Safe at Home’ video is Sunday

Everyone interested in adaptations for home safety is in-

ited to attend a showing of the video, “Safe at Home,” at 3:30 p.m. Sunday at Pioneer Memorial Library. The Post Polio Support group is presenting the film.

There will be a time of sharing after. “Bring your favorite tips for conserving (your) energy,” said Maxine Nelson, one of the coordinators. Noveline Haremza will report on her visit to the polio specialist in Denver in July.

For information call Nelson at 462-3571, or Haremza.

Fair Board to meet next week

The Thomas County Fair Board will meet at 8 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 21 at the Thomas County 4-H Building. Items on the agenda include committee reports on the buildings and grounds, the carnival, rodeo, parade, demolition derby, races, fair book and advertising.

Also on the agenda are barbecue, queen and princess contest, and the 2004 budget.

This is a public meeting.

