



COLBY FREE PRESS

More snow coming

By TISHA COX
Colby Free Press

Area residents woke up to more snow this morning.

Randy Coleman, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Goodland, said Colby received about two to three inches of snow overnight Tuesday and accumulations between Wednesday afternoon and Thursday morning could be up to four more inches.

He said the total amount of snow the area can expect is up to eight inches.

Along with the snow, Coleman said wind is also a factor, with winds gusting 20 to 30 miles overnight and dropping to 10-15 miles per hour Thursday.

Coleman said the wind could drop visibility on roads down to half a mile with heavy bands of snow through the afternoon and evening.

He said the area will also experience cold temperatures with highs not getting above freezing on Thursday and Friday.

Lows will be in the low to mid teens.

"It'll be pretty cold," Coleman said.

Even though the current storm will taper off by Thursday morning, Coleman said right now, there's a moderate chance for more snow on Sunday.

Despite snowpacked roads and



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Mark Fabrizio clears off the sidewalk in front of the Colby Job Service building this morning. As much as eight inches of snow could fall before Thursday morning, weather officials said.

poor visibility, area law enforcement reported no major traffic incidents Wednesday morning.

"There are no major accidents or even minor ones," said Sheriff Tom Jones.

"So far everybody is driving reasonable and with caution. We're doing fine."

As of this morning, he said county roads were snowpacked with

small drifts and the snowfall was light to moderate. Jones said inter-sections are getting slick but the city, county and state are out treating the roads.

He said hopefully they can maintain the roads throughout the day to keep them from getting worse.

Jones said over by Brewster, there was less snow than in Colby.

"It's not as bad there," he said,

adding he didn't yet know conditions in the eastern half of the county.

The Colby Police Department reported streets in town were snowpacked and there were no accidents reported yet. The Kansas Highway Patrol in Norton also reported no major accidents.

Also, area schools were closed because of the weather.

Board votes to get track surface bids

Negotiation talks end in stalemate with the principals

By TISHA COX
Colby Free Press

It looks like work could get done on a new track surface at Dennen Field after all. The Colby school board approved giving Superintendent Kirk Nielsen permission to solicit bids for the resurfacing project at its meeting Monday night.

Nielsen told the board he could get bids and present them to the board at the first meeting in March.

The board heard presentations in November from four companies on resurfacing the track, which was when the discussion started.

The track surface is a concern because the latex is eroding in spots but it's lasted longer than expected.

The latex surface was laid in 1989.

Nielsen said the companies have already been out to look at the track and he should have bids to give to the board at its March 15 meeting.

In other business, extending administrative contracts was a bone of contention for the board, who, minus John Cranston, couldn't agree on how long they wanted to extend the contracts of principals Brian Kraus, Robb Ross and Terrel Har-

rison. After two executive sessions and two votes, they decided to table the matter until the next school board meeting.

"They opted not to do anything," Nielsen said, adding the board couldn't agree on whether they wanted to extend the contracts one year or two.

The board went into executive session for 10 minutes to discuss the issue and took a vote on extending the contracts two years when they came back to open session.

There was a 3-3 vote, with board members Tracy Rogers, Dewey Augustine and Joel Powell voting for a two-year extension and members Kevan Taylor, Stan Molstad and Gerry Fulwider against.

After another 10-minute executive session, they took a vote on a one-year extension. There was another 3-3 vote, this time with Fulwider, Taylor and Molstad voting for the one year extension and Augustine, Rogers and Powell voting against.

Board member Gerry Fulwider had concerns with the proposed length of the extensions. He said he considered it a "potential liability."

In other business, the board approved the starting dates for the 2004-2005 school year and republishing the amended 2003-2004 budget.

Amazon.com to begin complying with sales tax law in April

TOPEKA (AP) — Online retailer Amazon.com will begin collecting sales tax on Kansans' Internet purchases starting April 1, company officials told legislators Tuesday.

Rich Prem, the company's head tax official, said Seattle-based Amazon.com has been working toward compliance with Kansas' new destination-based sales tax law

since it took effect last July.

Prem estimated that Amazon.com will collect and remit \$1 million to \$1.2 million a year in sales taxes on items bought by Kansans.

Coincidentally, most of the goods that Kansans buy through Amazon are shipped from the company's automated distribution center in Coffeyville, which employs 375 people.

The new state law changes the way the sales tax on a given item is calculated and collected.

Rather than having merchants collect all of the applicable sales tax at the place where an item is sold, the new law requires that they collect the taxes that apply at the place where the item is delivered.

Currently, Kansans are required to pay a use tax to the state for pur-

chases they make out of state, over the Internet or from catalogs, if the retailer fails to do so.

"Presumably, some customers are self-assessing and remitting that tax," Prem said, drawing chuckles from legislators.

Prem said Amazon.com is joining retailers such as Target and Toys "R" Us, which already collect sales tax on Kansans' Internet and cata-

log purchases.

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius on Tuesday praised Amazon.com's steps toward complying with the state's new law.

"This is tax we're missing right now," she told reporters.

The state has a 5.3 percent sales tax, while its 751 taxing jurisdictions can add their own local taxes — so that the total sales tax on an

item can vary even within a single county.

Kansas is among a consortium of states moving toward streamlined sales tax collection, with a goal of collecting taxes on Internet and catalog sales.

Prem said many states, including Ohio and Washington, are looking to Kansas for guidance in implementing the changes.

Community College board updated on federal grant

By TISHA COX
Colby Free Press

The Colby Community College board heard a program review on the progress to get a federal Title III grant and economic development from Barry Kaaz, the college's business and industry representative at its meeting Monday.

College president Mikel Ary said Kaaz is working on the application for the grant, which must be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education by the end of February. He

said the grants are used to help underdeveloped institutions and allow schools to start new programs.

The maximum is \$1.8 million over five years.

Ary said the school has received several of the grants but hasn't been awarded one in about 10 years.

"They're a great boon to the institution if you can get them," he said.

The school should find out between April and June if it was awarded a grant. Ary said only 30

to 35 are awarded each year.

Kaaz also talked about his efforts to reach out to businesses in the area to try to meet their needs. Ary said Kaaz took a survey and found out what businesses want.

Ary said based on the results, the school will continue to offer tailor-made programs and workshops to businesses when they need them. He said a typical example is if an area bank gets a new computer system and asks for training to help the employees learn to use it.

In other business, Ary said the school is making another attempt to secure more federal funding for the school through appropriations, the same method it used last year to get money to put toward a new wellness center.

If the college managed to get the money this time, he said it will be used to help with the school's nursing program.

The funds would be used to create more opportunities and bring more people to the field.

Ary said there is a shortage of nurses in the state, a problem that's a concern to Rep. Jerry Moran and an issue that's been addressed in a study by Barton Community College.

The study, Ary said, shows that schools are suffering a deficit when it comes to nursing.

It's costing more to educate students, he said, because health care education costs three to four times more than a normal post-secondary education.

Fewer and bigger farms counted in newest agricultural census

WICHITA (AP) — The nation's shrinking numbers of farmers worked more acres, got older and grew increasingly more diverse, National Agricultural Statistics Service reported Tuesday.

Preliminary data released Tuesday for the 2002 Census of Agriculture, an in-depth snapshot of U.S. agriculture taken every five years, portrayed a changing picture

among the nation's 2.12 million farms.

That number was down from the 2.21 million farms counted during the 1997 farm census. But their size grew from an average 431 acres to 441 acres during the same time span. More than 939.5 million acres of land in the nation is farmland.

A farm, for the purposes of the survey, is defined as any place

where \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold.

In Kansas, the survey counted 64,348 farms in 2002, down from 65,476 in 1997.

"It should come as no shock to anyone in Kansas that there are fewer farmers and larger farms. That is indicative of a whole number of structural trends impacting

agriculture that is borne out by this census," said Mike Matson, spokesman for the Kansas Farm Bureau.

What caught the attention of Kansas statisticians was the breakdown on the types of farms lost, said Eddie Wells, statistician for the Kansas Agricultural Statistics Service.

Between the two census years, Kansas lost 2,244 farms that had

sales of between \$100,000 and nearly \$500,000. By contrast, those making less than \$2,500 in sales grew by more than 7,000.

"When you look at the total, it didn't change much in the number of farms — but again, look at the type of farms changing," Wells said.

About 47.22 million acres of the state are now farmed, up from 46.65 million in 1997.

Briefly

Free soup supper, program

Motorcycle Mary's School of Finance will be presented from 6 to 9:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 18 at Hoxie United Methodist Church. There will be a free soup supper at 6 p.m. and free child care provided. The program is free to the public. To register or for more information, call Hoxie United Methodist Church at (785) 675-3565.

Pancake feed Saturday

The annual Oddfellows and Rebekahs pancake and sausage feed is planned for Saturday from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the

Colby Community Building. Proceeds from the pancake feed are used for freshman and sophomore scholarships.

Share sign up this week

Heartland Share sign up for February began Monday and will continue through Friday at the State Farm Insurance office in Colby. Delivery will be at Sacred Heart School gymnasium starting at 10:30 a.m., Saturday, Feb. 21. For questions or information, call Gene Griffin, 462-3579.

Red Cross offers first aid

The Thomas County Red Cross is offering Standard First

Aid at 1:30 p.m., Friday at the Thomas County Office Complex. This course consists of first aid and adult CPR only. To enroll, call (785) 462-7161.

Tax help available

AARP Tax Aide help is now available on Mondays and will continue through April 15 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the meeting room at Pioneer Memorial Library. In addition, on Wednesdays, help will be available on simple tax forms from 1-3 p.m. at the Senior Progress Center. For information, call Alvin Volk at 462-2645 or Lela or Don German at 460-3062.



More snow

Colby, Oakley, Hoxie area Tonight...Cloudy. Low +17. Snow chances 80 percent. Additional snow 1-2 inches, bringing the total for the storm to around 6 inches. East winds 10-15 miles per hour. **Thursday...**Cloudy. Snow chances 50 percent. Little additional accumulation. Highs in the upper 20s. Winds north 10-15. **Thursday night...**Cloudy. Lows +13. Winds north 10-20. **Friday...**Mostly cloudy. High upper 20s. Winds northwest 15-20.

The numbers
Tuesday's high, 35
Low this morning, 13
Records for Feb. 4, 75 in 1962 and -23 in 1899
Year ago today, 37 and 15
February precipitation, 0.20 inches
February snowfall, 5 inches
Snowfall past 24 hours, 3 inches
The sources:
The forecast is from the National Weather Service, and other numbers are from the Northwest Research-Extension Center, Colby. A recorded forecast updated throughout the day is available by calling (785) 899-7119. Current temperatures are available by calling 460-TEMP.

