



COLBY
FREE PRESS

Kansas helps in latest storm

SANANTONIO (AP) — Abone-rattling blast of sleet and snow kept Texas and Oklahoma residents shivering in its icy grip, while a blizzard north of Los Angeles caused big-rigs to jackknife.

At least 65 storm-related deaths have been reported in nine states since Friday, including 10 in Texas and 23 in Oklahoma. The Alamo was closed Wednesday, as was a 300-mile stretch of Interstate 10 in Texas from Fort Stockton to San Antonio.

Much of the brunt of the latest Southern storms was to move east Thursday. Another barrage was to bring up to 8 inches snow to the Plains by late Friday.

Students who enjoyed extended weekends after Martin Luther King Jr. Day were to head back to class Thursday in San Antonio, Houston and Austin as transportation officials reopened some roadways that were closed because of icy conditions.

Snow accumulations were light by some other regions' standards — the Dallas area topped out at 3 inches — but hundreds of airline flights were canceled and tens of thousands of electricity customers lost power.

A Houston city employee was killed Wednesday when he was hit by a car and knocked over a guard-rail as he and a co-worker tried to help an accident victim, said Frank Michel, spokesman for Houston Mayor Bill White. "Very tragic," Michel said. "He was attempting to be a good Samaritan and lost his life."

No place in Oklahoma has been harder hit than McAlester, where many stores were operating on generator power. At the E-Z Mart, store manager Becky Clayton was selling out of bags of ice, soda, water and potato chips. With most restaurants and cafes closed down here, customers also made a run on her deli.

"I was ready for summer before it ever got cold," Clayton said.

Ice coated power lines throughout McAlester, and nearly 1,000 linemen, tree-trimmers and support workers from Kansas, Louisiana, Texas and Tennessee were there Wednesday to repair the damage.

Many schools across Oklahoma planned to remain closed Thursday, some through the rest of the week.

In Tulsa, Okla., the city's salt supply was running critically low, as 50 spreaders worked to clear streets near schools and hilly areas.

"Everyone's in the same boat," said Dan Crossland, the city's street maintenance supervisor. "We're scrounging for resources."

The number of customers without electric power in Oklahoma dropped by about 18,000 on Wednesday, but 74,000 thousand others still were waiting for the lights to come on again.

More than 250 flights were canceled from Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport on Wednesday. Austin-Bergstrom International Airport canceled 102 flights, while San Antonio International Airport canceled 23 morning flights and Houston's two major airports experienced delays.

In addition to the fatalities in Oklahoma and Texas, the wave of storms was blamed for 11 deaths in Missouri, eight in Iowa, four each in New York and Michigan, three in Arkansas and one each in Maine and Indiana.

The entire state of Maine was no warmer than the single digits, and several communities saw dangerous wind chills. It was minus-16 degrees in Caribou.

In California, a four-night cold snap wiped out as much as three-quarters of the state's citrus and harmed virtually every other winter crop, from avocados to flowers.

Final preparations



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Robert Lee, an employee at the Colby Community Building, got ready to move parking signs outside for the Orange and Black Basketball Classic tournament, which begins tonight at the community building and high school gym. Colby girls play at 6:30 p.m. and the boys play at 8:15 p.m. at the community building. Both teams play Scott City.

Blizzard cost \$360 million, still counting

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

The Federal Emergency Management Agency and other state officials gave an update today on the aftermath of the New Year's Day weekend snowstorm during via telephone press conference.

Gen. Tod Bunting, Adjutant General with the Kansas Army National Guard and Tom Costello, FEMA's federal coordinating officer for the disaster area, talked about the cost of damages from the storm.

Bunting said the estimate so far is \$360 million for Kansas. Most of that, \$350 million, is damage to public utilities in northwest and southwest Kansas. Another \$10 million is miscellaneous damages. He made clear this is only an initial estimate.

"This was a big storm but I'm very pleased with the team effort," Bunting said.

A 44-county area was declared a disaster area by President George W. Bush Jan. 8 to help expedite federal aid for storm recovery.

The impact of the storm was large.

"This is really a significant disaster in financial terms, as well as human and animal," Costello said.

No estimates on agricultural damages have yet been tallied.

Angee Morgan, coordinator for the state's emergency management office, said Haskell County was the hardest hit, with \$32 million in damages. She said three people died in the storm — one in a car wreck and two in a mobile home fire in Garden City.

Many injuries resulted from the

“ People were hardy and prepared.”
Tod Bunting, Kansas Adjutant General

storm. A Kansas Highway Patrol trooper was injured in a wreck, along with other auto accidents.

Bunting said northwest Kansas received mostly snow and the southwest received more ice.

Costello explained FEMA has two categories of assistance. One is emergency work, such as debris removal and emergency protective measures.

Assistance has been approved in emergency protective measures, but not in the area of permanent work, which includes repairing damage to roads, bridges and other infrastructure.

Federal assistance will be available to cities and counties to help recoup some of the cost of snow removal. They will be reimbursed up to 75 percent of the cost in whatever 48-hour section of the storm they choose.

Costello said the damage assessments required by FEMA were expected to be finished today, and local meetings to start the application process will begin next week.

As far as lessons learned from the storm, Bunting said self-sufficiency would be it. People knew the storm was coming, and got ready for it.

"People were hardy and prepared," Bunting said.

Charges dropped against Winona man

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

Charges against a Winona man of stalking a minor female were dropped today in Logan County District Court.

Logan County Attorney Andrea Wyrick said James E. Colling is no longer charged with stalking of a

minor female. She said the case against Colling has been dismissed for legal reasons.

Wyrick would not elaborate about the reasons. However, she said she dismissed the case without prejudice, meaning should it be warranted, charges can be filed against Colling at a later date.

Colling's defense attorney, Todd

Stramel of Colby, said charges should have never been filed in the first place.

"James Colling did absolutely nothing wrong," Stramel said. "He did not do what the state alleged he did. I think it's a shame he was charged in the first place. In my opinion, the state realized they had no case and this is their way of correcting it."

According to court documents filed in December, Colling was alleged to have intentionally, feloniously, maliciously and repeatedly followed or harassed a female minor giving her reasonable fear for her safety. The allegations reportedly took place from April to September 2006.

A janitor for the Oakley school system at the time of his arrest, Colling resigned from his job Oct. 9. Colling had worked for the Oakley school district since December 2005.

Stramel said his client has obtained employment elsewhere, but that the entire situation has been difficult for Colling.

Brownback calls for diplomacy in resolving Iraq conflict

WASHINGTON (AP) — Back from a weeklong trip to the Middle East and Africa, Kansas Sen. Sam Brownback said Wednesday he is disappointed at the lack of security in Baghdad and urged the Bush administration to launch a serious diplomatic effort to resolve the conflict in Iraq.

Brownback, one of a small group of Republicans to publicly oppose sending more U.S. troops to Iraq, called on Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of State

Condoleezza Rice to begin "shuttle diplomacy" with leaders of the three major Iraqi groups.

Brownback painted a bleak picture of his meetings with Iraqi leaders, saying Sunni leaders "blame everything" on Shiites and vice versa. Although Sunnis are a distinct minority in Iraq, they had dominated the government until the U.S.-led ouster of Saddam Hussein left Shiias in control.

"All of this suggests that at the present time, the United States cares

more about a peaceful Iraq than the Iraqis do," Brownback said in a speech on the Senate floor. "If that is the case, it is difficult to understand why more U.S. troops would make a difference."

Brownback has not said whether he would vote for a Senate resolution opposing Bush's plan for a 21,500 troop buildup in Iraq. A group of senators, including Republican Chuck Hegel of Nebraska, announced agreement Wednesday on a resolution opposing the troop

buildup. While Brownback said it is up to Iraqis to resolve sectarian differences causing much of the bloodshed in Iraq, he said he was not calling on the United States to withdraw troops "and leave behind a security vacuum."

Only a broadly supported, bipartisan strategy will allow the United States to remain in Iraq, Brownback said, and he urged Democrats to outline what level of commitment they would support.

Brownback said shuttle diplo-

macy would involve meetings among Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish leaders outside of Iraq. The meetings would be similar to the Dayton accords that helped resolve conflicts in Bosnia, he said.

It has been nearly two years since Brownback's last visit to Baghdad, but he said the city is no more secure than it was in March 2005.

Brownback suggested, as he has in the past, the possibility of dividing Iraq into three states, with the Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds each con-

Blowing snow causes accidents on interstate

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

Icy conditions on Interstate 70 Wednesday caused two accidents. Winds caused blowing snow and patches of ice.

According to a report from the Kansas Highway Patrol, one accident happened at 1 p.m. at mile marker 55, about one mile east of Colby's east exit.

Peter Damico, 55, of Virginia, was driving east on in a 1999 Dodge pickup. Damico lost control of the pickup because of road conditions. The pickup went south off the road and rolled, coming to a rest on its wheels.

Damico was transported to Citizens Medical Center in Colby with injuries. He was wearing his seatbelt.

The second accident was at 8:50 p.m. on westbound I-70 at mile marker 59, six miles east of Colby.

John T. Harvey, 24, of Pegram, Tenn., was driving west on the interstate in a 2000 Ford pickup. He lost control on the ice, entered the median and overturned. The pickup came to rest on its wheels.

Harvey was taken to Citizens Medical Center with possible injuries.

An update on the condition of both men was unavailable at press time.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Complex location

This open space at the corner of College Drive and South Franklin Avenue is the proposed location for Colby Community College's new wellness/activities complex at a cost of \$20 million. The photo points southwest with businesses in the background.