



Blowing snow on interstate poses problems

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

An icy, snow-packed Interstate 70 has posed problems for motorists the past two days.

Thomas County Sheriff Mike Baughn said the Kansas Highway Patrol responded to four roll-over accidents Thursday.

He did not know of any injuries in those wrecks.

Numerous slideoffs and people getting stuck provided plenty of work for the sheriff's department and highway patrol.

Baughn said people ignored the snow and ice pack and not slow down, but end up sliding or rolling their vehicle into the median or a ditch. Some of those slideoffs were semi trucks.

"People don't use common sense," he said. "They're all over the place out there."

Speed and not watching road conditions caused most of the accidents.

Blowing snow across flat sections of the interstate caused patchy spots of ice.

Baughn said the Kansas Department of Transportation had snow removal trucks on I-70 Thursday working to clear the road, which helped improve conditions by the end of the day. Calmer winds later in the day also helped.

Blowing snow on U.S. Highway 24 posed problems for motorists, too. State trucks treated it with salt and chemicals.



M. Baughn



J. Moses

The light, dry snow the area received last weekend has caused most of the problems the past few days, coupled with high winds.

"That's when the trouble starts," Baughn said.

Undersheriff Jason Moses responded to a roll-over accident Thursday on Kansas Highway 25 north of Colby.

Lissa Mazanec of Colby rolled her 1995 Oldsmobile at 2:58 p.m. just south of the Colby Airport.

Mazanec lost control of her car because of the road conditions and the car rolled into the west ditch. Mazanec, a student at Colby High School, was not hurt, and went on to play in Colby's first game of the Orange and Black Classic basketball tournament Thursday.

In other sheriff's action, deputies also began a search and rescue operation Thursday afternoon. Moses said the search area was east of Red River Commodities, 1320 E. College Drive, and turned out to be a mistake.

"It didn't materialize," he said. "The supposed missing person was at home."



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Mount Colby, Franklin and Plum, has grown since the New Year's weekend snowstorm. Kansas facilities for seniors are noticing

how older residents are struggling with large amounts of snow whether walking or driving.

Icy weather adds perils for elderly

PARSONS (AP) — Cathy Classen just wanted to bring in her mail, but a door stood in the way.

The door remained frozen shut Tuesday, and Classen struggled for six hours — with periodic rest breaks — before getting it open. She has chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, tremors and weakness in her legs.

Although largely spared the heavy snow and ice from the most recent storm to coat the region, southeast Kansas has been in a deep freeze that makes life unusually difficult for the elderly and

those like Classen who cope with disabling conditions.

"There are a lot of barriers that people don't even think of," said Shari Coatney, president and chief executive officer of Southeast Kansas Independent Living, a nonprofit service and advocacy organization for people with disabilities.

One of the biggest concerns is the risk of running out of food or medicine, especially when the roads remain as slick as they have been in the Parsons area.

"Even if you stock up, no one is expecting to be stuck in the house for four or five days," Coatney said.

Neighbors should offer to pick up food, medicine or any other supplies senior citizens or people with disabilities may need, she said.

People with mobility problems could be forced to venture out on the slick surfaces themselves. If they lack the balance to negotiate on the ice, they could fall and break a bone.

Neighbors also can offer to spread rock salt or sand on slippery steps and sidewalks, put deicer on doors or help in any other way to make life easier on elderly and disabled people, Coatney said.

Less obvious problems may arise in cold weather, too.

Coatney said after the recent ice storm hit, one of SKIL's clients became stuck in his van when a wheelchair lift failed to operate because of the cold.

It's been a challenge for many of Coatney's employees, even those without disabilities, to get around on the ice. Many of SKIL's personal care attendants who help clients live on their own have been unable to get to work, forcing SKIL to "juggle" to get people to the clients' homes, she said.

But Coatney said things could have been much worse.

Orange and Black highlights page 10



Exhibit celebrates wheat harvest

Colby's Prairie Museum of Art and History is celebrating one of Kansas' reputations.

What opened Tuesday, a traveling exhibit "Wheat People: Celebrating Kansas Harvest" has been on display at the museum. Kansas is known by the nicknames "Wheat State" and "Breadbasket."

Throughout much of the 20th

century this state has produced more wheat than most other countries. That has given Kansas farmers the right claim they feed the world.

This exhibit looks at why harvest is so important. More than just economic survival for farmers, it is part of our past and our tradition. From the golden age of threshing to com-

puterized combines, harvest time holds memories for many Kansans.

"Wheat People: Celebrating Kansas Harvest" also explores how changes in technology have influenced Kansas farm families. From field equipment to how meals are prepared and served are featured. Other aspects such as nature, storage, and after-harvest festivals are

examined in the exhibit. The exhibit will be part of the 2007 Kansas Day celebration, "From Moo to You: Got Ag?!" to be held at the Prairie Museum from 1-5 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 28, 2007. Activities, exhibits and demonstrations will focus on agriculture for children and adults. The museum is at 1905 S. Franklin.

Hello Kitty!



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Students from Puddle Duck Preschool said "hello" to Slick the cat at Swartz Veterinary Hospital today. The students took a field trip to the vet hospital where they saw a surgery, learned about x-rays and learned about the lab and more.

New liver gives Kansas man life

By JASON PROBST
The Hutchinson News

HUTCHINSON (AP) — Mike Baker woke up early, walked down the stairs of his west Hutchinson home, stepped into his kitchen and began making a bologna sandwich to eat during his lunch break.

He packed his lunchbox and headed off to his first day of work in more than a year and a half as a maintenance technician at the Tyson Foods plant in South Hutchinson.

However, the sandwich sat uneaten, replaced by barbecue beef, baked beans and a low-calorie sheet cake at a company-sponsored luncheon to celebrate Baker's return to work.

"This guy looks a whole lot better now than he did the last time I saw him," Tyson plant manager Bill Woodward said. "This is a miracle standing next to us right here."

Some of the nearly 20 employees gathered in the meeting room had never seen Mike, but most had worked alongside him during his four years at the meat processing plant.

They all knew about his illness, and they all shook his hand or slapped him on the back as they made their way to the food line.

The workday was flying by, he said.

Mike's meal grew cool as he stopped to answer questions about his illness, his hospital stay at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha and his recovery.

Finally, the conversation died down, and Mike sat silent for sev-

"This is a miracle standing next to us right here."

Bill Woodward, Tyson plant manager

eral minutes.

"You're being too quiet," Kathy said.

Mike paused, looked squarely at his wife's face and smiled.

"I'm just thinking about a lot of stuff."

The room cleared out 30 minutes later and Mike returned to work.

A year and a half earlier, on June 16, 2005, Baker packed his lunch at home before driving to the Tyson plant for a shift on the night maintenance crew.

Sometime around midnight, Baker went to a bathroom, vomited blood and returned to finish his work. When his shift ended that morning, he told Kathy about the sickness and said that he still wasn't feeling well.

She told him they should see the doctor, and before they could make it out the door, Mike once again began vomiting blood.

"I've never seen someone vomit so much...blood," said Kathy, a registered nurse.

On June 17, Mike, then 49, was officially disabled and unable to continue working.

His physician in Hutchinson, Dr. William Savage, said Mike's liver disorder — alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency — had grown worse and that blood wasn't adequately moving through his liver. The restricted

flow caused blood to back up inside his veins and created a pressure surge that stretched his veins until they burst.

The University of Kansas Medical Center had diagnosed Mike with the genetic disorder in January 2005. According to the National Institutes of Health, alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency affects 1 in about 2,500 people. Most often, the disease manifests as end-stage lung disease, such as emphysema, when a person is in his 30s, 40s or 50s, Savage said.

In the lungs, the disease alters the surface area of the lungs on which oxygen and carbon dioxide are exchanged. In the liver, the disease causes cirrhosis and prevents the organ from functioning properly.

For the Bakers, 2005 and 2006 weren't years marked by months on a calendar; they were days spent wondering whether this would be the day Mike died.

Anniversaries, birthdays and holidays were spent in hospital rooms. Nights were abruptly interrupted with painful vomiting episodes and trips to the emergency room.

"It was sheer hell," Kathy said. "Not knowing from one day to the next ... we just tried to live each day the best we could, put that episode behind us and look to the next day."