

## Weather Corner



National Weather Service

**Tonight:** Scattered flurries after midnight. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 15. South wind 5 to 15 mph becoming northwest.

**Saturday:** Scattered flurries before noon. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 20. Blustery, with a north wind 10 to 15 mph increasing to between 20 and 25 mph. Winds could gust as high as 30 mph.

**Saturday Night:** Mostly cloudy, with a low around 1. Wind chill values as low as -13. Blustery, with a north wind between 10 and 20 mph, with gusts as high as 30 mph.

**Sunday:** Partly sunny, with a high near 13. North wind between 5 and 15 mph.

**Sunday Night:** Partly cloudy, with a low around 1.

**Monday:** Partly sunny, with a high near 26.

**Monday Night:** Mostly cloudy, with a low around 11.

**Tuesday:** A 20 percent chance of snow. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 24.

**Tuesday Night:** Partly cloudy, with a low around 7.

**Wednesday:** Mostly sunny, with a high near 29.

**Wednesday Night:** Partly cloudy, with a low around 16.

**Christmas Day:** Sunny, with a high near 50.

**Thursday:** High, 30; Low 6

Precip: Thursday 0.48 inches

Month: 0.59 inches

Year: 21.10 inches

Normal: 20.34 inches

(K-State Experiment Station)

## Bush approves emergency bailout

WASHINGTON (AP) — Citing danger to the national economy, President Bush approved an emergency bailout of the U.S. auto industry today, offering \$17.4 billion in rescue loans in exchange for tough concessions from the deeply troubled carmakers and their workers.

The government will have the option of becoming a stockholder in the companies, much as it has with major banks, in effect partially nationalizing the industry.

At the same time, Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson said Congress should release the second \$350 billion from the financial rescue fund that it approved in October to bail out huge financial institutions. Tapping the fund for the auto industry basically exhausts the first half of the \$700 billion total, he said.

On Wall Street, stock prices rallied as investors cheered the government's action, though early gains eased later in the day.

Allowing the massive auto industry to collapse in the middle of what is already a severe recession cannot be allowed, Bush said.

"It would worsen a weak job market and exacerbate the financial crisis," he said. "It could send our suffering economy into a deeper and longer recession. And it would leave the next president to confront the demise of a major American industry in his first days of office."

President-elect Barack Obama, who takes office a month from Saturday, praised the move.

"Today's actions are a necessary step to help avoid a collapse in our auto industry that would have devastating consequences for our economy and our workers," he said.

If the carmakers fail to prove viability by March 31, they will be required to repay the loans, which they would find all but impossible.

A firm will be deemed viable only if it can show positive cash flow and can fully repay the government loans.

General Motors Corp. CEO Rick Wagoner said in Detroit that GM had much work ahead but he was confident it could reinvent itself with the government help and even lead an economic recovery in America.

The president of the United Auto Workers, Ron Gettelfinger, said, "This will keep the doors of America's factories open, keep Americans working and prevent the devastating economic consequences for millions of Americans and thousands of businesses that would have resulted from a liquidation of operations by one or more auto companies."

Bush said, "The time to make hard decisions to become viable is now, or the only option will be bankruptcy. The automakers and unions must understand what is at stake and make hard decisions necessary to reform."

Some \$13.4 billion of the money would be available this month and next — \$9.4 billion of it for General Motors and \$4 billion for Chrysler LLC. GM is slated to receive the remaining \$4 billion in loans after more money is released from the financial rescue account.

Not everyone was applauding the bailout.

House Republican leader John Boehner called the administration's plan "regrettable." He said that granting loans to automakers was never the intention when Congress passed the \$700 billion plan to rescue financial institutions and that the new plan "has failed both autoworkers and taxpayers."

Bush said the companies' workers should agree to wage and work rules that are competitive with foreign automakers by the end of next year.

And he called for elimination of a "jobs bank" program — negotiated by the United Auto Workers and the companies — under which laid-off workers can receive about 95 percent of their pay and benefits for years. Early this month, the UAW agreed to suspend the program.

## Storm takes traffic off the road



Semi-trailer trucks at the Oasis Travel Center were waiting for better road conditions after a winter ice and snow storm made travel conditions dangerous.

EVAN BARNUM / Colby Free Press

## Artificial trees first made in Germany

To help promote the use of real and live Christmas trees, the grower-members of the National Christmas Tree Association helped develop a computer game called "Attack of the Mutant Artificial Tree." The association's link to the game is at [www.christmas-tree.org/kewlbox.cfm](http://www.christmas-tree.org/kewlbox.cfm).

Although historical records are less than certain, tradition credits Germany for originating the Christmas tree. The records prove, however, that Germany is where the first artificial tree was developed. To protect their shrinking forests, the Germans made trees from metal wire, covered with green-dyed goose feathers.

The Addis Brush Co. created the first U.S. artificial trees. Initially, it used the same machinery that produced its toilet brushes. In 1950, however, the company patented its "Silver Pine," which came with a revolving, colored gel-topped light to place underneath.

One way to find out whether an existing artificial Christmas tree contains lead is to contact the manufacturer or order testing kit at [www.leadtesting.org](http://www.leadtesting.org).

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