



10 pages

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## What if you're caught in a dust storm?

By Tom Betz  
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High winds have been common in recent weeks on the High Plains, and dust storms in previous years have caused accidents killing people between Oakley and Burlington, Colo.

Blowing dust Monday afternoon caused a 15-vehicle pile-up that killed two people east of Genoa, Colo., and closed I-70 for more than five hours.

The crash occurred about 12:56 p.m. 15 miles east of Limon, Colo. as 50 mph-plus winds created near zero-visibility.

It forced the Colorado State Patrol to close the highway in both directions between Limon and Burlington.

Five semitrailers and 10 passenger vehicles were involved in the crash, Trooper David Hall said.

"It's very surprising, in the middle of January. You expect blizzards out here but not this unexpected brownout condition where drivers can't see," Hall said.

What can you do to protect yourself?

Thomas County Sheriff Rod Taylor said drivers need to keep an eye out for weather conditions, including dust, smoke or fog.

"Be aware of the weather," said Taylor, "because these things come up so fast."

He said drivers should pull off the highway as far as they can as soon as they spot a storm.

"If you see blowing dirt," said Taylor, "pull over and wait until the wind dies down."

He said the sheriff's department policy is for officers to pull all the way into the ditch, stay in the vehicle and to keep their seat belts buckled up to avoid injury.

Sheriff Taylor said people who find themselves in a storm where they have limited visibility whether it is dust, snow or fog should find a way to get off the highway.

"In those situations one of the worst places to stop is under an underpass," he



Cars and trucks lined up along I-70 near Genoa, Colo., on Monday afternoon as a dust storm with near-zero visibility caused a 15 vehicle pile-up resulting in the death of two people and several injuries. Dry conditions and recent high winds make such storms something drivers need to watch for said Dave Floyd, weather warning coordinator at the National Weather Service in Goodland.

CHARLES HOFFMAN/Publisher of Limon (Colo.) Leader

said. "I know it appears to give some protection, but it is dangerous because other drivers may try to pull into the same area causing accidents.

"The best thing to do is to pull off the highway and stay in your vehicle until the visibility improves or a trooper or deputy can get to you."

Pick up the phone and dial 911, he said. The sheriff's department will try to get in touch with the landowner, who can work the land and cut down on the dust.

"Sometimes they don't even know it's blowing," Taylor said.

"If dense dust is observed blowing across or approaching a roadway, pull

your vehicle off the pavement as far as possible," said Dave Floyd, warning coordination meteorologist at the Goodland National Weather Service office. "Stop, turn off lights, set the emergency brake and take your foot off of the brake pedal to be sure the tail lights are not illuminated.

"Don't enter the dust storm area if you can avoid it.

"If you can't pull off the roadway, proceed at a speed suitable for visibility, turn on lights and sound horn occasionally. Use the painted center line to help guide you. Look for a safe place to pull off the roadway.

"Never stop on the traveled portion of the roadway."

Floyd said in the past, motorists driving in dust storms have pulled off the roadway, leaving lights on. Vehicles approaching from the rear and using the advanced car's lights as a guide have inadvertently left the roadway and in some instances collided with the parked vehicle.

"Make sure all of your lights are off when you park off the roadway," Floyd said.

Many new cars have automatic lights, and the driver has to manually turn the lights off Floyd said.

Dust storms begin when the wind picks up small particles of dirt which then bounce off other particles, said Sunflower District Extension Agent Dana Belshe. The dirt gains momentum and begins to roll forward.

Belshe said farmers can use a chisel, roughing up the land, to make it harder for wind to pick up the dirt.

"It breaks up the wind at ground level," he said.

In the long term, blowing dirt begins when ground residue from growing crops or the aftermath of the crops begins to disappear or is removed. The residue holds moisture in the ground to produce growth and keep the soil in place. Belshe said the no-till farming practice has helped keep more cover on the fields and reduced the blowing dirt.

Although land owners can try to keep dirt from blowing, he said, sometimes conditions are beyond their control.

"There is not a whole lot you can do when the wind gets up to 80 miles per hour," Belshe said.

## Volatile market adds to farm cost problem

By Andy Heintz  
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Thomas County farmers have had to deal with a volatile market for crops they produce and volatile costs for "inputs," including fuel, fertilizer, seeds and pesticides, since the fall harvest.

Dan O'Brien, an agricultural economist for Kansas State University Research and Extension in Colby, said yields were decent this year, but prices are down from their highs last year.

He said at today's prices, farmers on average are making a low to moderate profit.

Prices today are lower partly because the high prices of supply last summer caused consumers to scale back demand, O'Brien said. Farmers will be affected by the prices, he said, but much of their income will still depend on what the crops this year produce.

O'Brien said farmers are trying to decide which crops they should plant this year. The four most farmers will consider are corn, soybeans, grain sorghum, or milo, and sunflowers.

Bryan Olsen, K-State area agronomist for the northwest, said

milo has been the most profitable crop on dryland acres here. He said prices for corn on dryland acres had experienced big fluctuations. The price of corn can vary a lot, he said, depending on where you are in the county.

The average price per bushel for corn, wheat, milo and soybeans on Wednesday were:

- Wheat — \$5.59
- Milo — \$2.83
- Corn — \$3.57
- Soybeans — \$9.15

These prices are significantly less than what these crops were selling for last summer. The average price per bushel for the above crops on Aug. 1:

- Wheat — \$7.69
- Milo — \$4.71
- Corn — \$5.25
- Soybeans — \$12.35

A drop in fertilizer costs since last summer has saved farmers some money. Mike Shirley, agronomy division manager for Frontier Ag., said fertilizer prices have dropped anywhere from 30 to 50 percent.

Dale Herschberger, owner of ZEZ Commodities, said ammonia fertilizer has fallen from a \$1,000 high last summer to about \$650 today.

## Orange and Black action continues



ANDY HEINTZ/Colby Free Press

Senior Tyson Miller dribbled down the court during the Eagles' game against Ulysses last night in the first round of 24th annual Paul Wintz/Tom Bowen Orange and Black Basketball

Classic. Colby hammered the Tigers 62-35. The Eagles play Scott City at 6:30 p.m. today at Colby Community Building. See more photos, story on Page 10.

## Briefly

### Radio Control club plan race day

The Racing for Christ radio controlled car club will have the first race of the year at 2 p.m. on Sunday at First Baptist Church, 615 W. Webster. The club will be giving an RC car away in April. Come find out how to win the car. For information call Kent Higler, 462-3440.

### Girls out hawking cookies

If you're on a diet, you may not want to answer the door. But who can resist Girl Scout cookies? Sales run through Sunday, Feb. 1, said Scout leader Penny Cline. Cinna-Spkins have been renamed Daisy Go Rounds in honor of the littlest Scouts, who will be out selling cookies this year, but they still come in 100-calorie packs. If you miss the knock on the

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door, call Mint Culver at 460-6005 or Cline (after 6 p.m. only) at 460-2929 to order.

### Pets available for adoption

Looking for a pet? Colby Animal Clinic has one dog, a medium-sized, fairly young female, maybe a spaniel or border collie-mix with a nice temperament, available for adoption. Lost or strayed animals are often brought to the clinic. Call or stop by 810 E. Fourth St. All animals have current shots, and costs are minimal. For questions, call 460-8621.

### Events help man fight cancer

Friends of Reid Atkins, a long time resident of Thomas County, plan a fund raiser to help with his medical costs from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday

after church services at the Little Theater in the Colby Community Building. Sloppy joes, chips, relishes and desserts will be offered for a donation. Raffle tickets will be available for \$1. Atkins, who has non-hodgkins lymphoma, is a patient at the University of Kansas Medical Center in Kansas City, awaiting a bone marrow transplant. Kansas Quick Lube, 1927 S. Range, is offering a free oil change for every \$100 donation. Uptown Style Salon and Day Spa, 505 E. Fourth is holding a cut-a-thon to help Atkins on Monday, Feb. 2, from 9 a.m. to noon. Call 462-2383 for an appointment.

### Thrivent Financial for Lutherans meets Saturday

Thrivent Financial for Lutherans quarterly meeting will be at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday at Trinity Lutheran Church basement at Fifth and Country Club.

Pot luck meal with meeting. For information call (785) 443-3089.

### Tech students plan soup supper

The Colby High School and Middle School chapters of the Technology Students Association plan a soup supper starting at 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 29, during the Colby-Hays Thomas Moore Prep basketball games. The supper is to raise money for the student's trip to the national competition in Denver. Homemade chili and chicken noodle soup, desserts and drinks will be available for a donation. For information call Lamoreaux Fulwider at 460-5300.

### Conservation reservations due

The Thomas County Conservation District annual meeting will be at 6:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 16, at the Colby United Methodist Church. Deadline for reservations is Friday. Call Debbie Potter at (785) 462-7482, extension 303.