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Icy roads lead to wrecks over holiday

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A holiday blizzard that brought a white Christmas to Colby last week also brought dangerous driving conditions, resulting in more than a dozen wrecks in town and on I-70.

After a wet day of heavy fog and light rain Tuesday, the roads began to ice up in the evening. Snow began Wednesday morning, with the storm dumping 2 to 3 inches around Colby. Then winds up to 45 mph drifted the snow up to several feet in places and cut visibility to under a mile.

The snow let up for Christmas, but the winds remained. The National Weather Service in Goodland reported constant winds of 34 miles per hour with gusts up to 45. The Colby Airport weather station recorded a gust of 44 on Christmas Day.

A smaller storm rolled in Saturday, bringing another half-inch of snow. The service is forecasting a sunny day today, with a high near 37. The rest of the week should be similar, but with a slight chance of snow possible early Tuesday.

Most of the crashes during the snowstorm were reported Wednesday.

The Colby Police Department reported four, on South Garfield Avenue, Franklin Avenue, at the intersections of Fourth Street and Range Avenue and Garfield Avenue and Ash Street. A truck struck a guard rail by Fike Park on Range on Wednesday evening.

The Thomas County Sheriff's Office reported five accidents on I-70 on Wednesday, including a rollover, but none resulted in injuries.

Kansas Highway Patrol troopers covered another at 10:15 that evening on I-70 involving two vehicles. The patrol reported that Erich Tyler, 22, Colorado Springs, was driving east in a 2008 Dodge sedan, going slowly due to the icy conditions. Dulce Gonzales, 25, of Raytown, Mo., came up behind Tyler, lost control and crashed into him. Tyler's car flipped around, coming to rest facing west, while Gonzales' went onto the south shoulder.

Lewis had two passengers in the car, one of whom, Marcus Lewis, 25, was taken to the Logan County Hospital, then flown to a hospital in Denver. Gonzales had six passengers. Three children ages 2, 3 and 6 were taken to the Oakley hospital while another, age 6, was

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County tackles year-end details

By Vera Sloan
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Thomas County commissioners were busy taking care of end-of-the-year details on Monday.

They heard a request from Susan McMahan, county emergency management director, to take possession of the night-vision goggles left by the former county attorney. These were discovered in an inventory when the office was vacated the end of 2008.

The county attorney, Andrea Wyrick, had purchased two sets of night goggles with drug forfeiture money; one for the sheriff's department and one set for the Colby police. The commissioners asked that one set be retained in the county clerk's office, because it had never been a policy for the county to buy equipment for the city.

McMahan said she would share the night goggles with the sheriff's office, but would be glad to keep them in her inventory to get them out of the clerk's vault.

The commissioners said they would talk with the new county attorney, Bruce Flipse, first, because they believed the goggles were no longer needed as evidence, but would wait to get his approval.

Larry Jumper, landfill operator, told the commissioners about a meeting with landfill managers from area counties. He said those present agreed that counties need to raise their "tipping fees" to encourage people to recycle trash and to separate construction and demolition debris, that cardboard is a growing problem, and that more trash could and should be recycled to save space in the landfills.

The commissioners approved changes in landfill charges for municipal solid waste: (ordinary trash) from \$32 a ton to \$35 for contract haulers and municipal users. They increased the minimum charge individuals on construction and demolition debris of \$3 to \$4 per ton, and increased the charge for cardboard from \$3 to \$5 per ton. Individuals can still dump a pickup load of ordinary trash or yard waste for no fee.

"Plans for this summer will include doing a final cover on two of the cells that should have been closed since the 1970s," he said. "It will be major, but we have money in the landfill cell project fund to do the project."

County Treasurer Donita Applebury approached the commis-

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VERA SLOAN/Colby Free Press

Colby High group reminds liquor stores not to sell to minors

Rachael Juenemann, a member of the Colby High School chapter of Students Against Destructive Decisions, and sponsor Megan Augustine took advantage of the sunny afternoon on Dec. 21, to deliver liquor-bottle sacks to Colby liquor stores, including the Bottle Gallery. They were delivering sacks with a message to remind store owners and employees to not sell alcohol to kids. The message on the sack says: "Nine out of ten drinkers set a responsible example for youth. Don't be that 1 who provides alcohol 2 youth and gets fined, jailed and sued."



Legislature in spotlight as session nears

By John Hanna
Associated Press Writer

TOPEKA — The Kansas Legislature faces extra scrutiny over proposed increases in its own spending as state government grapples with financial problems.

Proposals submitted this fall by the Republican-controlled Legislature to Democratic Gov. Mark Parkinson's budget staff would add about 4 percent to the legislative branch's current budget and boost its spending by an additional 3 percent during fiscal year 2011, which begins July 1. The fiscal 2011 figure would be 28 percent higher than spending in fiscal 2006.

Aides to Democratic Gov. Mark Parkinson question whether the proposals undercut some legislators' insistence that the state must continue to cut spending to keep its budget balanced. Parkinson has said he won't seek deep cuts in fiscal 2011; he plans to propose raising tobacco taxes and is considering other taxes.

"There's been an unwritten agreement that the executive branch of government doesn't

tell the legislative branch how much money it ought to spend, and I'm really not interested in violating that, other than to say that the best way to lead is to lead by example," Parkinson said during a recent interview.

Republican leaders view the criticism as unfair. Some said the proposals being criticized are like recommendations routinely submitted by executive branch agencies each year to show how additional dollars would be spent, should the money be available. And one House leader questioned whether Parkinson's staff has room to talk, because the governor's office budget has ballooned — far more, in percentage terms, than the Legislature's in recent years — as it has taken over grant programs from other agencies.

And, GOP leaders said, no matter what proposals went to Parkinson's staff, legislators will make sure their own budget won't be spared.

In their session last spring, legislators set aside \$26.8 million in state revenues for their budget, including the Legislative Research Department, its auditing division and its legal

and bill-drafting staff. In July, when Parkinson imposed budget-balancing measures, legislative leaders ordered trimming in their budget, too.

Those reductions are still reflected in the Legislature's revised proposal for its current budget, but other changes would boost the legislative branch's spending of state tax dollars to \$28 million, an increase of nearly \$1.2 million. The proposal for fiscal 2011 is nearly \$28.9 million.

In fiscal 2006, the legislative branch spent about \$22.5 million in state tax dollars. That's a benchmark for Parkinson's staff because in fiscal 2006, the state spent \$5.14 billion in general tax revenues, and the state expects to have only a little more than that, \$5.18 billion, in fiscal 2011.

Fiscal 2009, which ended June 30, provided some evidence that legislators can trim their spending after setting a budget for themselves. Legislators once planned on a sizable increase in fiscal 2009, but cut it back earlier this year,

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Briefly

County offering H1N1 flu shots

The Thomas County Health Department will offer H1N1 flu shots to everyone at a clinic from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. and noon to 4:30 p.m. Wednesday at the department's office, 350 S. Range Ave. No appointment is needed and there is no charge. For information, call the flu hot line at 460-4599 or the department office at 460-4596.

No trash pickup on New Year's

The Colby Sanitation Department will be off Friday for New Year's Day. Friday's trash route will be picked up Thursday. Residents on this route should have their trash cans on the curb by 8 a.m., said Public Works Director Chris Bieker. For information, call Public Works at 460-4420.

Court offices to close early

The office of the Thomas County District Court

clerk will close at noon Thursday to complete year-end accounting paperwork. It will reopen next Monday. For information, call Kim Schwarz at 460-4540.

Pets available for adoption

Looking for a pet? Colby Animal Clinic has a 1- to 1 1/2-year-old brown female boxer, a 1- to 2-year-old male dachshund-beagle mix and a 3- to 4-month-old female mixed lab puppy 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.

Fatherhood program to start soon

The Northwest Kansas Regional Prevention Center's "24/7 Dad" fatherhood program will be offered again starting at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 5, at the First

Presbyterian Church in Colby. For information, call the center at 460-8177.

Hospital plans birthing classes

Citizens Medical Center will hold a four-week series of childbirth education classes from 7 to 10 p.m. Thursdays beginning Jan. 7 for women due to deliver before May. The partner who will be with the mother during labor should attend. The next classes will begin April 1. For information or to register, call Jeanene Brown in the Education Department at (785) 460-4850.

For latest flu info, call 460-4599

A hot line for questions on seasonal influenza and the H1N1 flu strain will be available throughout the flu season at (785) 460-4599. The Thomas County Health Department posts information about the status and availability of vaccines, priority groups and

the like.

Sheriff can check vehicles

The Thomas County Sheriff's Office can check vehicle identification numbers for cars, light trucks and motorcycles. The office is open 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. Call Sheriff Rod Taylor at 460-4570 for information or to set up an appointment. Taylor said trailer inspections still have to go through the Kansas Highway Patrol office in Hays. The fee is \$10; the check is required to get tags on many vehicles.

