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Crews battle pasture fire near Rexford

By Steve Haynes

Colby Free Press
s.haynes@nwkanas.com

A fast-moving fire apparently spawned by a farmer's disc jumped a county road north of Rexford on Tuesday evening and raced nearly two miles on a strong south wind before volunteers from eight fire departments could corral it.

Rexford firemen responded to the first call about 4:55 p.m., and put their effort into protecting an old farmstead about a half mile north of where the fire started. Rexford Fire Chief Bill Scott said they were able to keep the flames away from that area.

Steve Hirsch of Oberlin, training officer for the Sheridan County Fire Department, said he was on his way to a fire meeting in Hoxie. He saw the fire from the junction of U.S. 83 and K-383 east of Selden. He said he drove west toward the fire and realized the Rexford crew would need help.

Eventually, trucks and volunteers from Colby, Gem, Menlo, Selden, Hoxie, Herndon and Atwood joined the fight, bringing brush trucks, pumpers and a flock of tankers. The Thomas County road crew and Frontier Ag also sent tankers. Farmers came with disks and their own tanks.

Fire chiefs from Thomas and Sheridan counties set up a command post at Roads CC and 35, about a mile west of the oiled Rexford Road. Tankers disgorged their water into four portable tanks holding 10,000 gallons in all so they could run to town for a refill. Pumpers and brush trucks shuttled back and forth from the fire to get water under a cloudy sky.

After jumping the road, the fire roared north through a field of corn stubble, then jumped into grass along the North Fork of Prairie Dog Creek. Firemen said it jumped a fire line plowed by farmers with disk rigs, and they had to drive back out to the main road and come back into the pasture from another angle to resume the fight.

Rexford firemen, meanwhile, had gone on north to get ahead of the fire. It jumped Road DD and another fire line before crews finally stopped it about a half mile short of the Rawlins County line. That kept it away from an occupied farmstead east of Road 35.

"It got real hot, real fast up there," one fireman said.

The area burned was no more than half a mile wide at any one time, but nearly two miles long, covering grass and fields.

South winds around 25 mph, with gusts to 35, whipped the flames along. The fire jumped a road more than 40 feet across and at least two fire breaks 30 to 40 feet wide, said Sheridan County Fire Chief Ross Carder.

Eventually, the wind seemed to shift a little and drive the fire into the north-south Road 35, where firemen held it. By 7 p.m., crews were beginning to go home after refilling the pumpers from the portable tanks. Colby Assistant Fire Chief Sean Hankin said most fire crews were on the way home by 8:30 p.m.

Chief Carder said the farmer was doing spring field prep on the corn field when he noticed the fire, apparently touched off by a hot bearing on his rig. He told firemen he couldn't do much to stop it



STEVE HAYNES/Colby Free Press

Rexford Fire Chief Bill Scott (center, above), face covered in soot, talked with Hoxie Chief Ross Carder (left) and Sheridan County Training Officer Steve Hirsch (right) after volunteers from eight departments stopped a fire Tuesday evening north of Rexford. Gem firemen Pete Ziegelmeier (standing, left), Carl Miller, Jonathan Higler (passenger seat) and Paul Nieman (driving) brought a tanker into the command post at County Roads 35 and CC after fighting the grass fire.

with the type of disk he was using, which had a vertical blade.

Carder said his men had been headed for their regular weekly fire drill when the call for mutual

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Dress rehearsal



Heartland Christian School senior Rachel Myers ran through her part in a dress rehearsal for "Three Days," the school's upcoming Easter musical. Performances will be at 7 p.m. Thursday and Friday and 4 p.m. Saturday at the school. Admission is free, but donations will be accepted.

Golden Plains musicians rated high at Logan festival

By Jordan Christensen

Golden Plains High School

On April 5 the entire Golden Plains Middle School traveled to Logan for the Great Northern Elementary Conference Music Contest.

Three music ensembles competed. The middle school choir received a I rating – the highest. The girls ensemble received a II, and the middle school band a I.

The contest also included a solo competition. Receiving I ratings were Emily Rogers, baritone; Koi Wessel, vocal; Joseph Griffith, baritone; Cole Ziegelmeier, tuba; KeAnn Jacobs, trumpet; Madison Walz, vocal; Alexis Luna, vocal; and Nicholas Brown, trumpet and vocal.

Several others received II ratings: Kade Wessel, percussion; Dawson Spreser flute; and Joseph Griffith, vocal. Kami Miller did a

French Horn Solo and received an advanced performance.

The students had given a preview of their talents at the Solo/Ensemble Concert on March 24, which gave them a chance to perform for an audience.

The high school regional music contest was held April 2 in Oberlin. Caitlin Spreser received a I on her vocal solo. Hannah Antholz

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I-70 rest area closed down for repairs

The Kansas Department of Transportation has closed the rest area on eastbound Interstate 70 west of Colby for a couple of days to make plumbing repairs.

Department Superintendent Joe Capo of Atwood

said crews need to repair a broken water leak in the restroom. Workers put up barricades to block travelers from using the area, he said, adding that he hopes to re-open the rest area by Thursday.

Briefly

Pets available for adoption

Looking for a pet? Colby Animal Clinic has an 8-month old neutered male lab mix and a 2-year-old male Jack Russell terrier 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.

County office to close at lunch

The Thomas County Treasurer's office will close from noon to 1 p.m. Thursday and Friday for staff training. For information, call the treasurer at 460-4520.

Students to serve Italian food

The Colby High School forensics and debate teams will offer an Italian-theme dinner theater at 6

p.m. Thursday in the high school commons. After the meal, top forensics competitors will perform. Donations will be taken for team expenses. For information, call coach Nancy Rundel at 460-5300.

Two groups plan egg hunts

The Colby Kiwanis Club will hold its annual Easter egg hunt at 10 a.m. Saturday at Fike Park. Kids 3 and under start at 10 a.m., 4 to 6 at 10:10 and 7 to 9 at 10:20. For information, call Sean Hankin at 460-4454. The Colby Care Center will have a hunt for kids of all ages at 2 p.m. that afternoon. For information, call the center at 462-6721.

Boating safety class this weekend

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks will hold boating and water safety seminars and free boat-safety inspections from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday in

the Colby Walmart parking lot. For information, call Wildlife Officer Michael McGinnis at 462-7602.

Walking trails focus of sessions

Meetings on a walking trail plan for Colby will be from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Monday at the Colby United Methodist Church, 950 S. Franklin, and from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Tuesday at the Pioneer Memorial Library. The plan is a joint effort of the Thomas County Coalition, the Wellness Committee, the Multipurpose Activity Center and the city. Refreshments will be available and you might win a door prize. For information, call Karen Merryman at 460-8177.

Sale, donations to help family

The Brewster community plans a bake sale and fund raiser for Vernon and Sally Patton from 7:30 a.m. to noon (Central Time) Saturday at the Brewster

Frontier Ag elevator office on South Kansas Ave. Donations of food and cash, as well as shoppers, are needed to help the family with medical bills. For information, call Lila Mayer at (785) 694-2715.

Girl Scouts collecting old flags

The Colby Girl Scouts will have a collection box in the lobby of the Pioneer Memorial Library through Saturday for their annual flag disposal drive. They remind everyone that U.S. flags should be properly disposed of if they're dirty, no longer rectangular, faded or in general disrepair. For information, call Katherine Kersenbrock-Ostmeier at (785) 443-2479.

