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Postmaster under federal investigation

Colby Postmaster Kenton Krehbiel and customer services supervisor Stanley Strange were placed on paid leave last week in an ongoing internal investigation.

The Office of the Inspector General for the U.S. Postal Service issued a statement this morning, saying they conducted an investigation at the Colby Post Office. They found there was a violation of Postal Service procedures regarding the External First Class Measurement system. The system involves using an outside contractor to independently measure delivery time of local mail.

The Inspector General's office said no one was arrested, and the results of the investigation were turned over to Postal Service management so they could take appropriate action.

Brian Sperry, regional spokesman for the Postal Service, said that due to privacy laws concerning personnel, the service couldn't comment any further.

Goodland Postmaster Penny Sheldon will be temporarily filling the Colby post.

Krehbiel has been postmaster in Colby since February of 2004. Before that he was postmaster in Goodland for seven years. He has also worked in post offices in Oakley, Garden City and Hutchinson since joining the Postal Service in 1975 as a clerk and carrier.

Krehbiel is currently the president of the Colby Community College Board of Trustees. He has been on the board for 22 years and before that served on College Endowment Association board.

Changes in store for medic service

By Christina Beringer

Colby Free Press
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Big changes are taking place at Thomas County Emergency Medical Services, explained training coordinator Candy Bryant at Monday's commissioner meeting.

In addition to searching for a new director to replace Kenny Gatlin — whose last day is Nov. 16 — the county agency is also undergoing a statewide mandatory transition.

"It's all hitting at once," said commissioner chairman Ken Christiansen. "I can only imagine how stressful it is for you (EMS employees), trying to get transitioned without a director."

Bryant said it has, indeed, been tough waiting for a new director to be hired, "but it's for the best," she said after the meeting.

"Right now we are on a hold up. We need a director to help guide and make decisions before we can

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First snowstorm of the year



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

Colby woke up to its first taste of winter this morning as a half inch of snowfall was recorded at the Kansas State Northwest Research-Extension Center by 8 a.m. Though it continued to snow through the morning, the storm was expected to taper

off, with a forecast high of 43 Thursday. Unsettled weather is predicted for this weekend into the beginning of next week, with the next storm system due through the region on Saturday.

Safety issues at forefront after explosion

By Michael J. Crumb
and Roxana Hegeman

The Associated Press

WICHITA — No one needs to tell Steven Stallbaumer about the dangers of working in grain elevators.

He was unloading fertilizer outside a Kansas elevator in 1998 when it exploded, killing seven

workers. The blast knocked Stallbaumer underneath a railroad car, and he figures that saved his life. A big motor fell from the top of the elevator and landed beside the dump truck where he had been working.

A similar blast killed six people last weekend at the Bartlett Grain Co. elevator in Atchison, about 50 miles northwest of Kansas City.

Farmers take corn and other grain to elevators to be stored and sometimes processed before it's marketed and sold. There are more than 10,000 commercial grain-handling operations nationwide, with large numbers in Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska and Texas. Fine, highly

combustible dust particles flow through the buildings as the grain is moved. A spark from equipment or an overheated bearing on a conveyor can ignite the dust, sending a pressure wave that detonates the rest of the dust floating in the facility.

The explosion at the Bartlett elevator happened while workers were loading a train with corn. Figuring out what sparked it could take up to six months, said Scott Allen, spokesman for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. The elevator had not been inspected since Bartlett purchased it about five years ago, although OSHA has stepped up inspections in Kansas since the DeBruce ex-

plosion. Bartlett officials declined to answer questions about their safety procedures or facilities.

OSHA has several inspectors at the Bartlett elevator and will be interviewing employees and company officials. But, investigators can't always determine what happened because the blast can destroy evidence.

"It's kind of like going into a building that's burned and trying to determine what happened," Allen said.

Stallbaumer still gets flashbacks about the DeBruce explosion. His voice breaks when he remembers his buddies who died, and he said he still thanks God every day that he survived.

Kansas Secretary of Revenue says growth is a high priority

By Kevin Bottrell

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KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

Kansas Secretary of Revenue Nick Jordan met with local officials and residents on Tuesday at the Thomas County Office Complex.

Everything is on the table, said Kansas Secretary of Revenue Nick Jordan to a small group of Colby residents Tuesday.

Jordan was asked by Larry Barrett whether programs that rely on tax credits would be impacted by the tax reform the state is now discussing. He specifically referenced NetWork Kansas, a program that helps new and expanding small businesses. Jordan said that when he was a state legislator he was instrumental in forming NetWork Kansas and would like to see it and other programs remain viable.

"Everything is on the table," he said, "but nothing is decided yet."

Things have been looking up for Kansas lately. The state has had six straight months of revenue growth. However, the state took in \$4 million less in taxes than it had expected to in October. Jordan said revenue collections were actually higher than projected, but the state had to pay tax refunds to several companies.

"We've had seven months of growth," he said, "but

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Western Kansas may get air service

GARDEN CITY (AP) — Federal transportation authorities have tentatively selected air service providers for several western Kansas cities.

The Garden City Telegram reports (<http://bit.ly/uZH8yA>) that the U.S. Department of Transportation issued an order Monday selecting American Eagle Airlines

to provide federally-subsidized air service between Garden City and Dallas.

The same order tentatively chooses Great Lakes Airlines to provide service between Denver and Dodge City, Great Bend, Hays and Liberal.

Garden City's aviation director says "show of cause" orders like

the one issued Monday are generally followed. However, the order requires a 10-day period for anyone to object to it can become official. The final day for objections is Nov. 9.



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School, church provide safe activities



Two local organizations provided safe alternatives to traditional trick-or-treating on Halloween. Diane Carter (above) painted faces at the Heartland Christian School Fall Festival on Monday, one of several activities available including bowling and volleyball. Pastor Jarrod Spencer and his wife Aubrey (left) passed out candy at the Church of Christ's "Trunk or Treat" earlier that afternoon.