



COLBY FREE PRESS

8 pages

Tuesday hot; Saturday maybe hotter

By Steve Haynes

Colby Free Press
s.haynes@nwkansas.com

Thought it was warm Tuesday? The record books say you were right. The high of 81 broke a record of 78 degrees set in 1946, and forecasters say there's more to come this weekend.

Jesse Lundquist, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service office in

Goodland, said records tumbled across the area Tuesday. Goodland reported a high of 78, topping 77 set in 2007; Burlington had 77, passing 75 in 1945; and Tribune posted 79, compared to 78 in 2005.

It was cooler Wednesday, and today's forecast was for a high of 79, short of the record of 86, he said. The high was expected to soar to 85 on Saturday, however, and that would break a record of 81 for St. Patrick's Day.

"Friday we could set some records," Lundquist said. "Records all across the area could be broken."

Why?

He said an upper-level ridge, or high-pressure area, was over the area.

"Some good south winds should bring up warm air from the south," he said, adding that a trough, or low, was expected Saturday and should cool things a bit.

"For this time of year, it's pretty strong,"

he said. "The dry air allows us to warm up pretty good. Low relative humidity will continue into next week."

That combination, wind and dry air, could cause the fire danger to spike over the weekend, he added.

"With hot and dry conditions, it's not the best time to be burning," Lundquist said. "The relative humidity is 10 to 15 percent."

"Any sort of a wind can quickly get a

fire out of control."

Some relief is expected with a cold front Tuesday. The service predicts a 20 percent chance of thunderstorm Monday through Wednesday with highs falling into the 60s. Lundquist said that's still warm for this time of year, but a little more reasonable.

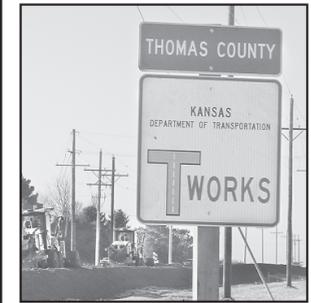
"We're still going to be above normal," he said, "but it's only going to be in the 60s."



Grading the way

Thomas County road crews were out this morning, grading about 1,400 feet of County Road 30 from U.S. 83 near Breton to the McCarty Dairy. When the grade is level, the crew will pack down gravel and millings removed from the surface and treat it as a base for paving. Contractor Bryant and Bryant will put down concrete under a \$212,000 agreement. Commissioner Paul Steele said the state Department of Transportation will reimburse that amount.

STEVE HAYNES/Colby Free Press



City, county join to install weather gear

By Kayla Cornett

Colby Free Press
kcornett@nwkansas.com

The Colby City Council approved an agreement with Thomas County for installation and annual service of the Vaisala AviMet DataLink system, which will make and report automated weather observations at Colby Shalz Field.

The hourly observations will be available at home, also, as a "streamer" at the bottom of the screen on televisions tuned to the Weather Channel.

The system will provide Colby weather updates to the Federal Aviation Administration's Flight Services and Air Traffic Control, as well as commercial weather providers, Internet sites, pilot briefing systems and private forecasting companies, the company's website says. City officials say it will be available to the public through these sites, but there won't be a specific website to check it.

There is a weather link on the city's website now, but Mark Ostmeyer, manager of Shalz Field, said the new system will be a way for people elsewhere to check the weather in Colby.

Ostmeyer said updates will be sent once an hour. He told the council that the county agreed to

co-sponsor the service, paying half the cost of installation. Ostmeyer said the cost has gone down because they will be using a cellular modem instead of a satellite modem to relay information. The equipment for a satellite modem costs \$6,000, he said.

"That's why we didn't do it sooner," Ostmeyer added.

He said that right now, no weather information is available to someone on the way to the airport. Radio transmissions of the weather aren't available until you are within 20 miles of the field, he said.

Currently, updates are available by phone, he said, but once the new system is in place, there will be an update for Colby at the bottom of the screen on the Weather Channel.

"That's one of the advantages to the general public," he said.

The equipment cost \$900, installation is \$400 and service itself is \$75 a month, or \$900 a year, Ostmeyer said.

In other business at the meeting March 6, the council:

- Approved an amended contract with Midwest Right of Way Services for help buying airport land. City Attorney John Gatz

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Citizen-voter bill may die in Senate

TOPEKA (AP) — State senators aren't sure they'll vote on Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach's proposal to require new voters to prove their U.S. citizenship ahead of this year's presidential election.

Testimony from opponents took up most of the Senate Ethics and Election Committee's hour-long meeting today. The panel adjourned without taking a vote.

It was the committee's last

scheduled meeting of the year. Chairwoman Terrie Huntington, a Fairway Republican, said she's not sure she can schedule another.

Kansas has a proof-of-citizenship rule set to take effect Jan. 1 for people registering to vote for the first time in the state. Kobach wants to move up the effective date to June 15.

Kobach said if the committee wants to move forward, it will find a way to have another meeting.

Scott City fire victims had ties to area

Authorities have identified the woman and three children killed in a house fire last weekend in Scott City. All four had Goodland ties.

Jackie Ann Coberly, 28, and her son Brandon Carter, 4, died in the Saturday morning fire along with her boyfriend's daughters, Terra Renee Murphy, 8, and Cassie Linn Murphy, 6.

Terra and Cassie were the daughters of Jeffrey Wayne Murphy and Branda Renee Beckner-Murphy, formerly of Goodland. Terra was born in Goodland.

The Scott City Fire Department responded to the call at 7:15 a.m. Saturday. Coberly had called to report the fire, officials said, but was unable to get out of the home.

Cassie was pronounced dead at the Scott County Hospital. Terra was flown to Via Christi St. Francis Medical Center in Wichita, where she was pronounced dead. Coberly and her son were also flown to Wichita, they were pronounced dead on Sunday.

Scott City Police said Tuesday that the state Fire Marshal's office is investigating, but no suspicious activity is suspected.

Terra Murphy was born in Goodland on July 27, 2003. She had lived in Scott City since 2005. Cassie Murphy was born on Jan. 17, 2006, in Scott City.

The girls were members of the Nazarene Church and the El Quartejo Saddle Club in Scott City.

Survivors include their parents, a brother, Clayton Smith of Scott City; grandparents Mike Beckner, Goodland, Rhonda Beckner,

Goodland, and Dennis and Vicky Murphy of Healy; great-grandparents Francis Beckner, Goodland, and Jim Martin, Darci Wren, Mike Smith and Burton Rose, all of Scott City; and an uncle, Justin Beckner, Goodland.

Instead of flowers, memorials may be given to the Terra and Cassie Murphy Memorial Fund at Price and Sons Funeral Home, 401 S. Washington St., Scott City, Kan., 67871.

Jackie Coberly was born June 28, 1983, in Jetmore to Jack Dwayne and Stephanie Smith Ivey. She was a lifelong resident of Scott City.

Survivors include her parents; two sons, Justin Hundertmark and Zackery (Coberly) Proctor, both of Scott City; a brother, Tony Ivey, Goodland; a sister, Melissa Perez, Cimarron; three half brothers,

Michael Noland, Dodge City, and Elvis and Jessie Ivey, Scott City; two half sisters, Pamela Rogers, California, and Lisa Ivey, Scott City; and a grandmother Wanda Smith, Dodge City.

Brandon Carter was born Feb. 13, 2008, in Garden City to Timothy Carter and Jackie Coberly. He was a lifelong Scott City resident.

Survivors include two brothers, Justin Hundertmark and Zackery Proctor of Scott City, and grandparents Jack Ivey and Stephanie Ivey of Scott City.

Services for the girls will be at 9:30 a.m. Friday at the First Baptist Church in Scott City with pastors Kyle Evans and Ward Clinton officiating. Services for Coberly and her son were Thursday.

Burial will be at the Scott County Cemetery.

Oceans' deep may be the Earth's last frontier

By Seth Borenstein
AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON — Earth's last frontier is about to be explored firsthand after more than half a century. It's a mission to the deepest part of the ocean, so deep that the pressure is the equivalent of three SUVs sitting on your toe.

And it's being launched by the rich and famous.

In the next several days, James Cameron, the director of "Titanic," "Avatar" and "The Abyss," plans to dive nearly seven miles down in a one-man lime green submarine that he helped design. The location is

the Mariana Trench in the South Pacific.

Airline and telecom entrepreneur Richard Branson is not far behind. And Google Inc. co-founder Eric Schmidt is funding another deep water submarine project that's still on the drawing boards.

More people have been to the moon than to this place beneath the sea roughly 200 miles southwest of Guam.

Only two people, Swiss engineer Jacques Piccard and U.S. Navy Capt. Don Walsh, have been to this underwater valley. And they spent only 20 minutes

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