

# Utility companies must keep the heat on under winter rule

The Kansas Corporation Commission's Cold Weather Rule took effect last Thursday and remains in effect through the end of March. The rule prohibits utility companies from disconnecting a customer's natural gas or electric service during periods of extreme cold and requires them to offer a 12 month payment plan to allow consumers to maintain or re-establish utility service.

"The Cold Weather Rule helps to ensure that Kansans can be warm in their home this winter," said commission Chairman Mark Sievers. Consumers are encouraged to take steps to prepare for colder temperatures this winter."

Under the rule, utility companies are prohibited from disconnecting a customer's service when temperatures are forecast to be at or below 35 degrees over the next 24 hours and cannot initiate dis-

connection until temperatures are forecast to be above 35 degrees for the next 48 hours. They must contact the customer 24 hours before disconnecting service.

The commission wrote the rule in 1983 as part of their billing standards. It applies only to residential customers of electric and natural gas utility companies under the commission's jurisdiction. For a complete list of utilities regulated, go to [kcc.ks.gov/pi/jurisdictional\\_utilities.htm](http://kcc.ks.gov/pi/jurisdictional_utilities.htm).

The commission wants Kansans to have services, but also recognizes their responsibility to pay for it.

"Make sure heating equipment is in good working order," Sievers said. "Set your thermostat at a reasonable level, weather strip and caulk windows and doorways - doing these things can cut down on heating costs."

Under the rule, any residential customer with a past due balance will qualify for payment arrangements under the Rule. It is the customer's responsibility to make those arrangements.

Customers must contact their utility company and inform that they cannot pay their bill in full, and then agree to pay 1/12th of the total amount owed, 1/12th of the current bill, the full amount of any disconnection or reconnection fee, plus any applicable deposit to the utility. They must agree to pay the remaining balance in equal payments over the next 11 months, in addition to their current monthly bill.

Information about the Cold Weather Rule is available at: [kcc.ks.gov/pi/cwr\\_english.htm](http://kcc.ks.gov/pi/cwr_english.htm) or from the commission's Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Protection at (800)662-0027.

## Expanding the business



SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press  
Ambassador Kristin Ostmeier gave Alvin Jueneman (left), crop production manager for the Colby CHS Agronomy Center, a congratulatory plaque at a ribbon cutting Friday morning for new liquid storage tanks which were built last winter at the company's plant east of town.

## State website gives seniors healthcare advice

A new state effort went online last Thursday to provide Kansas seniors with advice on how to get health care.

The Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services formed the Aging and Disability Resource Center to provide in-

formation, referrals and contacts for trained counselors.

The department has a contract with the Southwest Kansas Area Agency on Aging to operate the center. The agency will work with 10 others across the state to provide these services. The cen-

ter is designed to provide seniors with referrals to services under the department and put them in contact with someone in their area trained in health-care options counseling.

To contact the center, call (855) 200-2372.

## Verizon activates tower in Brewster

Verizon Wireless has activated a new cell tower in Brewster to improve network coverage along Interstate 70.

The new site will enable more customers to make calls; send and receive e-mail and text and access the Internet, while enjoying clearer reception and fewer dropped

calls, the firm says.

It will provide enhanced voice and data coverage in the town of Brewster and along I-70 between Colby and Goodland. The tower is at 320 County Road Q, about half a mile east of Brewster.

"Network reliability is the No. 1 reason that customers choose and

stay with Verizon Wireless," said Brendan Fallis, president of the Kansas/Missouri Region for Verizon. "Getting through on the first try and maintaining a connection are important to our customers. We continue to optimize our network so that it remains the most reliable in the nation."

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