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Storm could drop 14 inches of snow

Schools around northwest Kansas closed early today and canceled classes tomorrow, as what forecasters expected to be a massive blizzard took aim at northwest Kansas.

Snow started to fall in Colby about 9 a.m., with 2 to 4 inches expected by evening. The National Weather Service put the entire state and nearby parts of Colorado and Nebraska under a winter storm warning until 5 p.m. Thursday. Emergency crews rushed to rollovers on the

highways this morning, as the city crew and Kansas Department of Transportation workers prepared to keep roads open.

Joe Moore, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Goodland, said the snow should be fairly light today, but winds of 20 to 30 mph could cut visibility. This morning, the service was forecasting 14 inches for Colby, but said it could be from 10 inches to maybe as high 16.

“Our confidence in this storm is fairly

high,” Moore said. “We were pretty cautious, because February snows like this in the High Plains are unusual.”

The storm is big enough that it’s sucking up moisture from the Gulf of Mexico, which is making it pretty wet. It’s just very strong, Moore said, and it started out as a pretty moist system when it came off the California coast.

“The odds are, if the forecast is correct, we’re probably looking at a snow emergency starting this evening,” City Manag-

er Tyson McGreer said while on his way to a meeting.

A snow emergency, McGreer added, means people should remove their cars from main streets so that the city can plow them. Those include Franklin, Range, Country Club, Fourth, Pine, Hill, College, Davis, Horton and Willow.

Kristen Brands, regional public affairs manager for the Department of Transportation, said maintenance crews will split to fight the storm 24 hours a day. They’ll

be on rotating 12-hour shifts.

Brands said the department didn’t do a lot of pretreatment, except for a few areas. Visibility will be a huge issue with this storm, she added, since winds up to 45 mph are expected.

She said travelers can check road conditions by calling 511 or going to the 511 website, 511.ksdot.org.

“Know road conditions and be smart

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Grocery stores will collect food for the needy

By Sam Dieter

Colby Free Press
sdieter@nwkansans.com

Dillons food stores in Colby and across the state have begun collecting food in a month-long effort to collect food for the needy.

“This is the first time that Dillons has done this project statewide, so we don’t know what to expect,” said Debi Kreutzman, community relations manager for the Kansas Food Bank.

The drive, called “Neighbor to Neighbor,” will last until Kansas Ag Food Day on March 19. The drive was organized by the Kansas Food Bank, the Kansas Department of Agriculture and the group Harvesters, a Kansas City-area food bank, along with Dillons. Customers at the store will be able to donate nonperishable items and

give \$1 to \$5 at the register.

“I hope it’s very very successful because our usage is up and so are prices,” Wynn Duffey, president of the Genesis-Thomas County food bank said.

In January, 90 families and 295 people came to the food bank, Duffey said. She added that 269 families came there in 2012, and over 90 families coming each month recently.

Genesis-Thomas County, a partner with the Kansas Food Bank, will get the food donated here, Kreutzman said, and money will be used for a credit which Genesis-Thomas County can use to buy more food, as well as personal hygiene items like toilet paper and soap, through the Kansas food bank.

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Competition set here in late April

By Sam Dieter

Colby Free Press
sideter@nwkansans.com

Colby will be the site for the last of four music competitions in western Kansas in the first High Plains Showcase.

“We know there are some great regional bands out there who will embrace this opportunity to represent their hometowns,” said Darren Irwin, who manages seven stations for event sponsor Rocking M Radio.

Musicians and bands have until Monday, April 15, to sign up for the Colby competition Saturday, April 27, at the City Limits Convention Center, Irwin said. The winning act gets to play Sunday, June 9, at the Smoky Hill River Festival in Salina.

“We’ve been looking to do something with the River Festi-

val,” Irwin said. “They wanted to start something out west.”

Rocking M has 20 stations in western and central Kansas, Irwin said. This includes KXXX and KRQD in Colby, KKCI, KWGB and KLOE in Goodland, plus one in each of the other cities.

The company is putting the showcase together in conjunction with the River Festival and the Salina Arts and Humanities Department. Irwin said that the other three sites include a show in Great Bend on Saturday, March 23, with a March 11 registration deadline; one Hays on Saturday, March 30, with a March 18 deadline; and in Garden City, on Saturday, April 13, with an April 1 deadline.

Musical acts can enter any of the four competitions, Irwin said,

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Four sent to hospital after highway crashes

By Sam Dieter

Colby Free Press
sdieter@nwkansans.com

Four people went to the hospital after highway crashes over the last week, including the K-9 handler for the Gove County Sheriff’s Office and a trucker whose rig went off the road on K-25 near the Logan County line on Tuesday.

The Kansas Highway Patrol reported that Gary Lynn Long, 54, Newcastle, Wyo., was southbound on K-25 at 3:04 p.m., about two miles from the Logan County line, when his rig went into the west ditch. The driver overcorrected,

the patrol reported, and the rig rolled, coming to rest on the driver’s side, ripping away a blacktop and dirt from the west lane of the highway.

An ambulance and fire rescue trucks responded, along with half a dozen law enforcement officers. The driver was loaded into an ambulance at about 3:30 p.m. and taken to Citizen’s Medical Center. Gwen Young, who works at the administration office at Citizen’s, said today he had been transferred to another hospital. The report said he had been wearing a seat belt.

Thursday evening, the Gove County deputy was hurt when he



Semi crashes on K-25

A crowd of firemen gathered around a crashed truck (top) Tuesday afternoon along K-25 south of Colby. They pulled the driver, 54-year-old Gary Lynn Long of Newcastle, Wyo., out of the cab (above) about 3:30 p.m. Emergency responders continued to inspect the wreck (right) after the crash, which the Kansas Highway Patrol reported happened about 3 p.m. about 13.5 miles south of town. The truck (below) ripped away a blacktop and dirt as it rolled into the south ditch, spilling a white granular substance.

SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press



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