



Firefighters get trained on Hazmat

By Heather Alwin
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Members of the Colby Fire Department took hazardous materials, or Hazmat, training Wednesday with the Kansas National Guard's 73rd Civil Support Team from Topeka.

Sam Konkel, the lead trainer for the exercise, is a full-time firefighter from Sedgwick County. He designed a training scenario centered around left-over chemicals in a hangar at the Colby Municipal Airport. The task of the Colby firefighters and guard members was to identify the chemicals and make recommendations to government leaders and medical providers.

Certain chemicals could be analyzed where they were found

while others required the trainees to take samples for testing at a mobile lab. The fire department does not clean up spills, Assistant Fire Chief Sean Hankin said, but instead focuses on identifying the material, containing it and shutting off any sources of contamination.

Colby's Hazmat crew, one of 12 such units in Kansas, includes Fire Chief Bob McLemore, Hankin, Tom Benson, Lance Bolyard, Ross Carney, Scott Hilbrink and Don Phillips. Teams in Dodge City and Salina are the next closest.

McLemore said he appreciated the opportunity to train with the Guard. In an actual emergency, the Colby Fire Department could call the 73rd for help, he said.

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Colby firefighters Scott Hilbrink (above left) and Lance Bolyard were instructed by A.J. Clemens, from the Hazmat team of the state Fire Marshal's Office, on ways to identify chemicals in a barrel during Wednesday's Hazmat training exercise. Ross Carney (left) checked Hilbrink's chemical suit before Hilbrink entered a contaminated area. Hilbrink is wearing a Level B suit, which provides protection against chemical splashes. A National Guard team (far left) collected samples in a separate hangar for the training exercise.

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City approves water main for farm supply firm

By Sam Dieter
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The Colby City Council agreed Tuesday to build an \$83,000 water main to serve the new Crop Production Services facility east of town.

The farm supply firm asked the city to install a main to service the fertilizer dis-

tribution terminal it built east of town.

The company plans to pay for the main with a 20-year assessment on its property tax. City Manager Tyson McGreer told the council that the city got an initial estimate on the project from engineers at \$83,000.

Bill Shields, area manager for the firm, said that the dry fertilizer terminal, on College Drive east of Country Club, was

annexed into the city, and the water main was supposed to be part of the annexation.

"A long story short, I've got a building with no water," he said, "and this is going to solve the problem."

The terminal was completed and went into operation Sept. 5, with a ribbon cutting on Nov. 1.

Crop Production Services, based in

Loveland, Colo., provides fertilizer, seed, chemical services for farmers. The company includes Loveland Products and Dyna-Gro seeds. It's a subsidiary of Agrium, a Canadian multinational agribusiness firm based in Calgary, U.S. headquarters are in Loveland.

In other business, the council:

- Discussed the wording of a "snow emergency" rule used to keep roads

clear during snow storms. During the recent blizzard, McGreer said, he heard residents complain they could not drive 2-wheel drive vehicles on city streets. During that blizzard, the city declared a snow emergency, which also kept people from parking their cars on main streets where snow would have to be removed.

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Gem Lions soup day



SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press

Carl Ziegelmeier and Margaret Brown sat and talked Saturday afternoon at the Gem Lions Club's annual winter soup day in the Gem Community Building.

County commissioners discuss land valuations

By Sam Dieter
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The county commissioners discussed valuations for land in the county at their Thursday meeting.

Anna Porter, state-assigned appraiser for the county, who normally works with property valuation for the state of Kansas, presented new state land valuations for 2013. In Thomas County, she said, farm and grassland values increased by just under 24 percent on average from 2012.

The valuation here jumped from \$209 to \$243 an

acre for irrigated farmland, a 16 percent increase, from \$50 to \$65 for dryland farms, a 30 percent increase, but did not increase at all for grassland, which is still valued at \$10 an acre.

Commissioner Paul Steel disagreed with the low valuation on grassland, and remarked that the valuations were prepared by economists from Kansas State University, whom he felt put more value on farmland.

In other business, the commission:

- Approved a request from County Treasurer

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Coin and Gun Show set here

Colby's annual Coin and Gun Show will be from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday at the Community Building.

The show will have about 150 tables with more than 50 exhibitors from across the country. They will be displaying and selling coins, guns and Indian and West-

ern artifacts.

This is the 52nd year for the event, started by the late Thurston Van Horn, who owned a semi-truck body shop in Colby and was involved with Pheasants Forever. Last year, about 1,800 people attended. Admission is \$3 for adults. For

information, contact the Colby Convention and Visitors Bureau at 460-7643 or Mary Jo Breece at (308) 995-2258.

