

## weather report



**16°**  
10 a.m.  
Thursday

### Today

- Sunset, 4:31 p.m.
- Saturday**
- Sunrise, 7:06 a.m.
- Sunset, 4:32 p.m.

### Midday Conditions

- Soil temperature 31 degrees
- Humidity 80 percent
- Sky cloudy with light snow
- Winds northwest 12 mph
- Barometer 29.78 inches and rising
- Record High today 76° (1962)
- Record Low today -17° (1981)

### Last 24 Hours\*

- High Wednesday 17°
- Low Wednesday -10° record
- Precipitation trace
- This month 0.5
- Year to date 9.52
- Below normal 10.08 inches

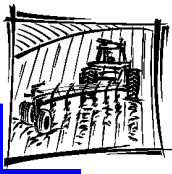
### The Topside Forecast

Today: Partly sunny with a high near 25, winds out of the northwest at 5 to 10 mph and a low around 8.  
Saturday: Sunny with a high near 34, winds out of the west at 10 mph and a low around 14.

### Extended Forecast

Sunday: Mostly sunny with a high near 36 and a low around 14.  
Monday: Mostly sunny with a high near 31 and a low around 14.  
Tuesday: Mostly sunny with a high near 35 and a low around 18.  
(National Weather Service)  
Get 24-hour weather info. at 162.400 MHz.

## local markets



### 10 a.m.

- Wheat — \$7.60 bushel
- Posted county price — \$7.69
- Corn — \$6.93 bushel
- Posted county price — \$6.93
- Milo — \$6.53 bushel
- Soybeans — \$13.37 bushel
- Posted county price — \$13.79
- Millet — \$14 hundredweight
- Sunflowers
- Oil current crop — \$24.10 cwt.
- Confection — no bid
- Pinto beans — \$28
- (Markets by Scouler Grain, Sun Opta, Frontier Ag and 21st Century Bean. These may not be closing figures.)

## inside today



More local news, views from your Goodland Star-News



## Top sports stories of 2012

Softball, girls golf and local hall of famers help round out the bottom half of the top 10 sports stories of 2012.

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## Guard unit home for the holidays

After serving a year in Kuwait, about 65 Kansas National Guard soldiers of the 170th Support Maintenance Company a northwest Kansas unit, returned home Sunday. A ceremony was held in Building 600 at the Salina Airport.

"To have these soldiers coming home just in time for Christmas is a wonderful present for their families," said Maj. Gen. Lee Tafanelli, state adjutant general.

The 170th includes Pfc. Matthew Bryce and Spc. Donald Lucas of Goodland. Former Goodland resident Capt. Scott Weber is the unit's commander. Weber told the Goodland Star-News before the deployment that he was excited and his troops were extremely motivated.

In Kuwait, the unit operated a security detail mission for visiting dignitaries, American citizens and contractors, as well as supporting base security as required. This was the first deployment for the 170th since Operation Desert Storm.

## Church puts on Christmas show



The Fugleberg family provided some of the special music at the Christmas Eve service at Harvest Evangelical Free Church, 521 E. Hwy. 24. They performed "Do You Hear What I Hear." Other music was provided by the Redlin family and Julia McCurry. Photo by Pat Schiefen/The Goodland Star-News

# Gas leak, election begin top story list

*Was 2012 a year of great change? Or a year of the same-old same-old? A little bit of both as it turned out. The Goodland Star-News staff has voted on the top 10 local news stories of 2012. Stories 10 through six appear below. Check back on Tuesday, Jan. 1, to see what we think are the top five stories of the year.*

**10** One story that had local and national implications was the 2012 General Election.

It began with the Primary Election in August. On the national level, it saw former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney get the Republican nomination for president over a slew of rivals. President Barack Obama was unchallenged in the Democratic primary.

On the local level there were several contested races. Goodland farmer and former mayor Rick Billinger was defeated by St. Francis school principal Ward Cassidy for the Republican nomination to the Kansas House of Representatives. The two were both incumbents, but the legislative redistricting had thrown them into one district.

Grinnell farmer Ralph Ostmeyer defeated Norton County Commissioner John Miller for the nomination to the Kansas Senate. Ostmeyer, the incumbent, won every county and ended up with a landslide.

In Sherman County, two races were contested. Burton Pianalto defeated incumbent Sheriff Kevin Butts. Ken Klemm won the primary for County Commissioner

District 2 over Lowell Coon and Paul Flanders.

The General Election in November saw President Obama re-elected and despite many new senators and representatives, the majorities in both houses stayed the same, with Democrats in control of the Senate and Republicans in control of the House.

Ostmeyer defeated Democrat Allen Schmidt from Hays. Schmidt had been another incumbent placed in a different district. The overall balance of the Senate swung towards conservative Republicans. The 2012 session had been marked by conflict between the conservative and moderate wings of the party.

Sheriff Kevin Butts mounted a write-in campaign, but was again beaten by challenger Burton Pianalto by about 600 votes. Democrat Steve Evert beat Republican Larry Witt for County Commissioner District 3.

Because it was a presidential year, county voter turnout got up to nearly 70 percent.

**9** At the beginning of 2012, the consolidation of the city and county fire departments seemed almost a certainty. City Fire Chief Brian James had been hired as county fire chief, cross training was being done and contracts and agreements were being drafted.

Then the talks broke down.

In early January, the Sherman Rural Fire District 1 board brought a resolution for consolidation to



City workers, firefighters, law enforcement and crews from Black Hills Energy worked late into the night on the gas leak in October. The leak forced the evacuation of about six blocks.

the city commission. It created a High Plains Fire District, which would cover the city and most of the county. Board member Daryl Cloyd told the commission the new district would be able to sell an excess rescue truck, have lower administration costs and a larger pool of firefighters.

Commissioner Bill Finley expressed concern that there was not enough cost savings as well as expenses down the road, such as a new fire station. The rural fire department didn't have room for all its trucks and would need a new facility regardless of consolidation.

The county later said it would pay for the fire station regardless. Mayor John Garcia echoed those concerns, saying at the time that he would rather have a cooperative agreement than full consolidation.

Talks continued back and forth at the county and city. Sticking points included the structure of what would have been a new fire board, excess funds, taxes and city/county control. Several agreements and contracts were rejected. The county commission and fire board remained in favor of full consolidation. Commissioner Cynthia Strnad told the city commission that they had gone through the same situation with consolidating dispatch about 15 years ago, but are today seeing the benefits.

Finley and Garcia said citizens were concerned about the proposed consolidation, especially about keeping taxes low. City Commissioner Annette Fairbanks said the benefits of cooperation between the departments were already apparent, but that unknown costs frightened people.

The city's final proposal ended up on a smaller scale than full consolidation. Both entities would retain ownership of their equipment and responsibility for its personnel, but it would share the services of the fire chief. The fire board said the issue may be brought up again in the future.

**8** On Oct. 17, About six blocks of central Goodland were evacuated due to a ruptured gas line in the alley behind First National Bank. The strong winds aided emergency personnel by helping to disperse the gas. Luckily there were no explosions or fires.

The call came in about 3 p.m. of a major gas leak. A work crew using a boring machine had struck a gas line. First National and the post office were immediately evacuated along with homes on the other side



Former state representative Rick Billinger spoke at a town hall earlier this year. Billinger was defeated in the primary.

of the alley. Police and city crews helped close off the streets.

Fire Chief Brian James set up a command post at 11th Street and Broadway Avenue. The Sherman County Sheriff's Office provided their mobile command center, which was parked at the post office.

Crews from Black Hills Energy worked to reduce the danger from the leak, including installation of a pipe to divert the gas higher into the air.

The Fire Department evacuated about six blocks, from 10th to 12th Streets between Main and Caldwell Avenues. Evacuees were sent to United Methodist Church. Several residents were escorted to and from their homes for emergency needs.

Emergency responders also blocked off the roads one block south of the evacuation area. Central Elementary School was not evacuated, but school administrators were told to make sure children didn't enter the area when they were released



At the Sherman County Republican Presidential Caucus in March, Darren Way spoke on behalf of candidate Ron Paul. Candidate Rick Santorum won the caucus, but failed to get the nomination.