

Dakotas Enjoy Record April Fool's Day Heat

STIOUX FALLS (AP) — Hot weather was no April Fools' joke in the Dakotas.

Many cities in the two states set record-high temperatures on Sunday, with the mercury soaring into the 70s, 80s, and even 90s. The city of Menno in southeast South Dakota hit 93 degrees, and Pierre and Yankton both hit 91, according to National Weather Service reports.

The North Dakota capital of Bismarck broke two temperature records. The high of 79 broke a record that had stood for 36 years, and the low of 50 was a new record-warm low for the date. The previous record had stood for 113 years.

The hot start to April followed a month of March that was unseasonably warm in both states, with numerous temperature records falling in many cities.

In Rapid City, where the temperature hit 87 on Sunday, Armadillo's Ice Cream Shoppe downtown has been selling hundreds of ice cream cones each day for weeks, with better sales recently than on most summer days, manager Lindsey Hahn told the *Rapid City Journal*.

"It hasn't slowed down at all. We usually can't get a break," Hahn said.

Weather service meteorologist Katie Ewy in Rapid City said that area could see snow this weekend with an incoming cold spell.

"(Sunday) doesn't really indicate what's going to happen the rest of the spring or summer. It's just one of those unusually warm days, I guess," Ewy said. "I wouldn't rule out snow quite yet."

Sales Tax Bill For Neb. Cities Clears 2nd Vote

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska lawmakers have granted second-round approval to a bill that would give voters the option to set city sales tax rates as high as 2 percent, up from the current 1.5 percent maximum.

Lawmakers advanced a rewritten version of the bill Monday, 29-14. The proposal was introduced by Omaha Sen. Brad Ashford as a way to help cities pay for property tax relief, highway and bridge projects, and other needs.

The bill would require at least 70 percent approval from a city council or other local government before any proposed increase could appear on a local ballot. The city of Omaha would have use part of its increase to offset other taxes.

Ashford says the bill will give voters the opportunity to engage in local tax policy.

Reduction Nixed In Attempted Murder Case

PIERRE (AP) — A South Dakota judge has refused to reduce bond for a Pierre man charged with attempted murder.

Thirty-two-year-old Derek Boe is being held on a \$50,000 cash bond after being accused of shooting out a window in a vehicle occupied by a 24-year-old woman on Jan. 22. The woman, Tabetha Key, told the judge she was not worried about her safety if Boe is released on bond.

But KCCR-Radio reports that Circuit Judge John Brown refused to reduce the bond after saying Boe's criminal past makes him a danger to the community.

Boe has pleaded not guilty to attempted first-degree murder and alternate counts of aggravated assault domestic violence, discharge of a firearm at an occupied vehicle, and possession of a firearm by a prohibited person.

EPA Closer On Ethanol Approval

BY DAVID PITT

Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — The federal government announced Monday it has taken a step toward wide distribution of gasoline mixed with 15 percent ethanol by allowing manufacturers to register as suppliers.

While the EPA is moving the process forward by allowing the registration, E15 still must clear another set of federal tests and become a registered fuel in individual states. Ethanol makers then must convince petroleum marketers to sell it at gas stations.

Most ethanol fuel sold for passenger cars and pickups today is 10 percent ethanol and 90 percent gas. The new blend that boosts ethanol to 15 percent would only be sold for use in 2001 and newer vehicles.

The 20 ethanol makers that have registered to sell E15 so far include large corn ethanol manufacturers like Archer Daniels Midland Co., based in Decatur, Ill., and Cargill Inc., which has headquarters in Wayzata, Minn. Four corn ethanol makers in Iowa, the nation's leading corn producing state, also registered.

Others are based in Colorado, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota, Texas, and Wisconsin.

The industry trade group Renewable Fuels Association said the EPA's move is the most significant in a three-year effort to get E15 approved for the market and Midwestern states that have started the regulatory process could see E15 for sale as early as this summer.

"Our nation needs E15 to reduce our dependence on foreign oil — it will keep gas prices down at the pump and help to end the extreme fluctuations in gas prices caused by

our reliance on fuel from unstable parts of the world," said Tom Buis, CEO of Growth Energy, another ethanol industry trade group.

The American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers has challenged the government's efforts to offer E15 in court, and president Charles Drevna issued a statement saying with a lawsuit pending, the EPA should not rush E15 to market.

Drevna also said hasty introduction of E15 could endanger American consumers and damage their vehicles and gasoline-powered equipment.

Fuel with higher ethanol content can damage engines not equipped with upgraded rubber parts, gaskets and other fittings. Many opponents worry that although E15 would not be approved for older vehicles, boats, lawnmowers and other small engines, consumers may mistakenly use it.

Branstad Seeks Congressional Probe On 'Pink Slime'

BY MIKE GLOVER

Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad called Monday for a Congressional investigation into how what he called "a smear campaign" against the meat product commonly called "pink slime" got started.

The company that makes the product, South Dakota-based Beef Products Inc., announced last week that it would stop production at plants in Iowa, Kansas and Texas amid public outcry. There are no precise numbers on how prevalent the product known in the industry as lean, finely textured beef is, but past estimates have ranged as high as 70 percent; one industry official estimated it was in at least half of the ground meat and burgers in the United States.

The phrase "pink slime," coined by a federal microbiologist, has ap-

peared in the media at least since a critical 2009 *New York Times* report. Celebrity chef Jamie Oliver has railed against it, and it made headlines after McDonald's and other major chains discontinued their use last year.

But a recent piece by *The Daily* on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's purchase of meat that included "pink slime" for school lunches touched a nerve with Houston resident Bettina Siegel, whose blog "The Lunch Tray" focuses on kids' food. She started an online petition asking Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to halt use of "pink slime" in school food, and the USDA announced last month that starting in the fall it would give schools the option of choosing ground beef that doesn't contain it.

"We have a smear campaign going on against a product that is healthy and safe," Branstad said at

his weekly news conference. "If they get by with this, what other food products are they going to attack next?"

The governor said he suggested an inquiry to U.S. Reps. Steve King and Leonard Boswell and raised the issue with Vilsack, a former Iowa governor. King and Boswell did not immediately return messages left Monday requesting comment.

Lean, finely textured beef is made by heating fatty bits of meat left over from other cuts to about 100 F and spinning it to remove most of the fat. The lean mix is then compressed into blocks for use in ground meat

and treated with ammonium hydroxide gas to kill bacteria, such as E. coli and salmonella.

"It's clear this is a safe product," Branstad said. "It's a lean product, it helps reduce obesity and there is a spurious attack being levied against it by some groups. You can suspect who they might be. They are people who do not like meat."

Branstad went on the offense last week, discussing the issue at a news conference and touring a Nebraska processing plant with governors from Kansas and Texas and lieutenant governors from Nebraska and South Dakota.

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