

SD Conducts Statewide Tornado Drill Today

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — South Dakota is preparing for the upcoming storm season.
 A 30-minute statewide tornado drill is scheduled to begin at 10 a.m. CDT Wednesday. Residents will see and hear the actual alerts used during tornadoes.
 The National Weather Service says outdoor warning sirens will go off in many areas. The drill will also include the activation of the Emergency Alert System, which will interrupt local media broadcasts.
 Schools may schedule safety drills and local emergency responders may also practice the response procedures they follow during severe weather events.
 The Weather Service says residents should treat the drill as a real emergency and put their tornado safety plan to the test.
 The tornado drill is part of the Severe Weather Preparedness Week sponsored by the Weather Service and state emergency management officials.

Sixth SD Farm Confirmed With Bird Flu

REDFIELD (AP) — A bird flu strain that's led to the deaths of more than 6.7 million birds in the Midwest has been confirmed at a sixth commercial turkey farm in South Dakota.
 The U.S. Department of Agriculture has confirmed the H5N2 strain of avian influenza in a flock of 33,300 birds in Spink County. The confirmation means the virus will have led to the deaths of about 289,000 birds in South Dakota since it appeared in the state last month.
 State Veterinarian Dustin Oedekoven says infected birds at the first five farms where the virus has been detected have been euthanized and work is underway at the farm in Spink County.
 Oedekoven says it'll be probably another month before any of the farms that were initially infected can begin producing turkeys again.

Law Bars EB-5 Firm's Liability Disclosure

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — The Revenue Department says state law prohibits it from disclosing whether the department decides to pursue back taxes from a company set up to recruit foreign investors in an investment-for-visa program that became entangled in scandal.
 A spokesman said Tuesday the Revenue Department is examining whether it can retroactively collect the bank taxes from SDRC Inc., the private firm founded by Joop Bollen.
 But Jason Evans, a department official, says state law bars the department from making public whether it decides to pursue those taxes. He says that's confidential tax information.
 Tom Fischbach is a commissioner in Brown County, where SDRC is based. He says the public should learn whether the department collects the taxes.
 The EB-5 visa program recruits wealthy immigrant investors for projects in exchange for green cards.

Neb. Woman Charged In Fatal Collision

NORTH PLATTE, Neb. (AP) — A 59-year-old woman has been arrested and charged in connection with a collision that killed her daughter and severely injured her 3-year-old granddaughter in November.
 The *North Platte Telegraph* reports Vicky Allen turned herself in to authorities Monday. She is accused of motor vehicle homicide, driving under the influence of drugs and causing serious bodily injury and possession of a controlled substance.
 Toxicology reports show Allen's blood tested positive for a combination of drugs that officials say produce impairment similar to intoxication.
 The crash occurred when Allen was driving to North Platte when the van crossed the center line and rammed into a semitrailer. Her daughter Michelle Heisz was pronounced dead at the scene. Her granddaughter Anjeljycka Heisz sustained severe injuries and spent over a month in the hospital.

Neb. Senators Move Bill Allowing Rides

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Ride-hailing services such as Uber and Lyft could operate legally in Nebraska under a bill that won first-round approval in the Legislature.
 Senators voted 39-1 Tuesday to advance a measure that would outline regulations for app-based transportation network companies.
 The companies have been operating unregulated in Nebraska for about a year despite warnings from the Department of Insurance and Department of Motor Vehicles.
 Proponents say the companies provide a new transportation alternative in a state with limited and expensive options. But some worry the bill does not require proper insurance coverage for everyone involved.
 The bill's sponsor, Sen. Heath Mello of Omaha, says he is open to placing additional disclosure requirements in the bill.

S. Dakota Artifact On Display At Museum

PIERRE (AP) — People visiting one of New York City's world-renowned museums can now catch a glimpse of an artifact that belongs to South Dakota's Cultural Heritage Center.
 South Dakota's Sioux Horse Effigy is being showcased at the Metropolitan Museum of Art as part of an exhibition of Plains Indians masterworks.
 "The Plains Indians: Artists of Earth and Sky" includes more than 130 works of art from 57 European, Canadian and American institutions as well as private collections. Featured works range from a 2,000-year-old human-effigy stone pipe to contemporary paintings, photographs and a video-installation piece.
 The exhibit, which was previously displayed in Paris, will be in New York City through May 10.
 The effigy is expected to return to the Heritage Center in Pierre in October.

South Dakota

Transgender Athletic Issue Heats Up Again

BY BOB MERCER
 State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — Conservative legislators and lobbyists called Tuesday for repealing South Dakota's policy allowing transgender students to participate in high school sports as members of teams of the opposite sex.
 The board of directors for the South Dakota High School Activities Association listened to an hour of comments, largely from opponents of the policy.
 The directors, when they adopted the policy one year ago, hadn't received any opposition comments at the two meetings where the policy was first considered and then approved.
 But the policy turned into what Sen. Brock Greenfield, R-Clark, described Tuesday as a "battle royale" during the 2015 session of the Legislature.
 Greenfield repeated his assertion that the policy couldn't have received approval from the Legislature.
 Opponents want to restrict athletic

participation to the gender on a student's birth certificate.
 The directors didn't indicate Tuesday whether they might take any specific action to modify or rescind the policy.
 "We're reviewing this," said director Rick Weber, the board's chairman. He is the Flandreau schools superintendent.
 Terry Nebelsick, the Huron schools superintendent and a former SDHSAA director, suggested the board survey all schools whether they prefer a state policy or a local policy.
 Nebelsick said Huron's preference is a state policy. He said that if the statewide results are 50-50, the state policy probably isn't worth the heartache to continue with it.
 The board gave private schools the opportunity to opt-out of the policy. But that hasn't satisfied opponents.
 Julie Hewitt, principal at Rapid City Christian School, asked that the policy be reconsidered.
 She questioned how the host school

would receive "a warning" that the visiting opponent had a transgender athlete, such as a boy on a girls team or vice versa, and what ramifications the host school could face if the choice was to forfeit rather than compete.
 Hewitt recalled seeking to send a quartet to the SDHSAA singing competition. The quartet had three boys and one girl. The SDHSAA didn't allow the mixed quartet.
 She was disappointed, she said. "But I was thankful we had a board that held traditional values," she said.
 Jeff Danielsen, superintendent of West Central school district, speaking for himself, said he appreciates that it's a state policy rather than an issue for 151 different school board meetings.
 He agreed with Nebelsick's suggestion to ask the member schools for their preference.
 "This was known when it was adopted," Danielsen said. "I think you're being very gracious to reconsider at this point."

Nebraska Senators Advance Package To Help Craft Breweries

BY ANNA GRONEWOLD
 Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Craft breweries, cider drinkers and beer aficionados could benefit from alcohol legislation that cleared first-round debate Tuesday in the Nebraska Legislature.
 Senators voted 32-3 to advance a measure that would provide a tax credit for brewers who use Nebraska-grown hops and barley; would redefine hard cider as beer, rather than wine; and would allow more restaurants and bars to sell growlers—refillable large bottles — of craft beers to customers for off-site consumption.
 The bill includes liquor initiatives from a handful of senators in what sponsor Sen. Tyson Larson of O'Neill called a perennial update to the Nebraska Liquor Control Act. But this year, the bill is more than housekeeping procedure, said Nebraska Liquor Control Commission Executive Director Hobert Rupe.
 "It's a little more interesting," Rupe said.
 Redefining cider as beer would allow it to be taxed at a lower rate.
 The tax credits for in-state and out-of-state brewers that use Nebraska-grown hops and barley would be for the first 20,000 barrels of beer. If 10 to 40 percent of the barley and hops used were Nebraska-grown, the credit would be 15 percent. Forty to 70 percent Nebraska crops would receive a 25 percent tax credit, and manufacturers using more than 70 percent would receive a 35 percent tax credit.
 Nebraska has 38 breweries with licenses or license requests, but the state had just 12 acres of hops last year, said Shad Rhynalds, former president of the Nebraska Hop Growers Association. Rhynalds grows about an acre of hops with his father and brother near

Prague and has worked with Lincoln-based Blue Blood Brewing Company to create locally sourced beers.
 At 31 cents per gallon, Nebraska has the highest beer tax of its surrounding neighbors. Brewers are looking for locally sourced products, and Nebraska farmers need a reason to grow more hops.
 "I don't see why Nebraska couldn't do it. There's so much land out here," Rhynalds said. "It's been proven that local crops sell quick."
 Bruce Wiles, a soybean farmer who also co-owns Midwest Hops near Plattsmouth, said certain kinds of hops, specifically the cascade variety, do well in Nebraska soil.
 "They're no different

than any other crop," Wiles said. "Got to give them a lot of TLC to get the highest return."
 Midwest Hops is planning to plant five to seven more acres of the crop this year.
 The state has already lowered taxes for Nebraska wineries that source 75 percent of their products from within the state.
 Larson's original bill would also have given the Liquor Control Commission jurisdiction over powdered alcohol, an issue that soared to the forefront of debate.
 Sen. Mark Kolterman of Seward added an amendment Tuesday to ban the substance completely, saying he became concerned when the U.S. Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau

approved the product in March. Six other states have already banned powdered alcohol.
 Larson fought the amendment, saying the state Liquor Control Commission should have the ability to approve or deny product licenses as it sees fit.
 But senators said the effects of powdered alcohol have not been tested and the Legislature has a responsibility to protect residents from potentially harmful substances. The bill advanced with the ban penalizing possession, sale or use of powdered alcohol with up to one year in prison or a \$1,000 fine.



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