

### 9 Neb. Counties Presidential Disaster Areas

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — President Barack Obama has signed disaster declarations for nine counties in Nebraska because of flooding. The move on Friday allows federal aid to help in state and local recovery efforts in Boyd, Burt, Cass, Dakota, Dixon, Douglas, Knox, Sarpy and Washington counties and covers flooding from May 24 to Aug. 1. The aid include grants for temporary housing and home repairs to low-cost loans for uninsured property losses. Federal funding is also available to state and eligible local governments and certain private nonprofit groups in 12 counties — Burt, Cass, Dakota, Douglas, Garden, Knox, Lincoln, Otoe, Sarpy, Scotts Bluff, Thurston, and Washington. Assistance is available for emergency protective measures for Nemaha and Richardson counties.

### Neb. Reports 1st 2011 Case Of West Nile

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A Dawson County man has been diagnosed as the state's first human case of West Nile virus reported this year, Nebraska health officials said Friday. The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services said the man is in his 20s and was not hospitalized. The department gave no other information about him. "It's well-understood that West Nile virus is part of our landscape now," said Dr. Joann Schaefer, the state's chief medical officer. "If mosquitoes are around, assume West Nile is around and take precautions." The precautions include applying a mosquito repellent that includes DEET and wearing loose, long-sleeved shirts, plus pants, shoes and socks when outdoors. Health expert say people should avoid outdoor activity around dawn and dusk, when mosquitoes are most active, and should remove standing water or report it to their area health departments for treatment. The state said Friday that pools of mosquitoes in six counties and one dead bird have tested positive for West Nile so far this year.

## 1 Killed, 4 Injured Battling South Dakota Forest Fire

BY DIRK LAMMERS  
Associated Press

SIoux FALLS — A 23-year-old firefighter was killed and four others were injured fighting a lightning-sparked blaze on U.S. Forest Service land in western South Dakota's Black Hills, officials said Friday. Trampus Haskvitz of Hot Springs died Thursday after heat generated from 14- to 20-foot flames proved too great for the firefighters' protective fire shelters, which are backpacks that unfold into what look like aluminum foil one-person tents, said Joe Lowe, director of South Dakota Wildland Fire Suppression. The heat was so intense it also melted their engine, Lowe said.

Crews continued fighting the 150-acre fire nine miles north of Edgemont on Friday. "I can tell you this, we will send this fire back to hell where it belongs," Lowe said. "We will do that, because it's taken one of ours and become very personal at this time." A weather front had just moved through the area, and strong erratic winds from a downburst of unstable air spread the fire. The firefighters were on a midslope road when the fire spotted below them, Lowe said. "At that point, they became trapped between two bodies of fire," he said. "They could not get the spot fire. It gained in size that quickly and ran uphill." Two 20-year-old firefighters from Hot Springs were injured. Austin Whitney, who suffered burns to his arms and third-degree

burns to his hands and neck, has been transferred to a certified burn center in Greeley, Colo. Kevin Fees suffered minor burns to the back of his hands and neck and some singed hair. He was treated at Rapid City Regional Hospital and released. Two U.S. Forest Service firefighters, one from Hot Springs and one from Custer, also were treated for injuries at the hospital and released, said Dennis Jaeger, deputy supervisor for the Forest Service. Jaeger said firefighters from different agencies might wear different uniforms, but it's "one team, one fight" when they're on the fire line. "We'll be conducting an investigation to make sure this doesn't happen again and to find out exactly what happened," he said.

## Appeals Court Upholds Moeller's South Dakota Murder Conviction

CHET BROKAW  
Associated Press

PIERRE — A federal appeals court Friday upheld Donald Moeller's conviction and death sentence for the 1990 murder of a 9-year-old Sioux Falls girl. A three-judge panel of the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld previous rulings by a federal judge and the South Dakota Supreme Court on all issues raised in Moeller's appeal. Moeller's appeal focused on an

argument that the jury that sentenced him to death for the rape and murder of Becky O'Connell should have been told he would have been ineligible for parole had jurors instead sentenced him to life in prison. Jurors might have given Moeller the death penalty because they falsely thought Moeller could eventually be released on parole if given a life sentence, his appeal said. But the federal appeals panel rejected Moeller's arguments, noting that the verdict form gave the

jury a choice of "death" or "life imprisonment without parole." Moeller was convicted of abducting O'Connell from a Sioux Falls convenience store, driving her to a secluded area, then raping and killing her. Her body was found the next day. Her throat had been slashed and she had been stabbed several times. Moeller, now 59, was first convicted in 1992 and sentenced to death for the slaying. The South Dakota Supreme Court overturned that conviction, ruling that im-

proper evidence was used at trial. He was convicted again in 1997 and again sentenced to death. The state Supreme Court upheld that conviction and sentence in two appeals. Moeller's attorneys then went to federal court for a habeas corpus claim, a secondary appeal that argues he is being held illegally because his constitutional rights were violated in his trial. A federal judge denied that claim, and the case went to the federal appeals court.



# School's Starting... Send Your Kids Back To School Safely

## Commuting & Travel Safety Tips for Parents and Students

### Tips for School Bus Riders

- Line up facing the bus, not along side it.
- Do not play in the street while waiting for the bus.
- Carry all loose belongings in a bag or backpack.
- Never reach under the school bus to get anything that has rolled or fallen beneath it. The bus driver may be sitting too high up to see you.
- After getting off the bus, move immediately onto the sidewalk and out of traffic. If there is no sidewalk, try to stay as far to the side of the road as possible.
- Wait for a signal from the bus driver before crossing the street.
- Walk at least 10 steps away from the front of the bus so the driver can see you.
- Never cross the street or play behind the school bus.

### Tips for Pedestrians or Bike Riders

- Never walk alone — always travel with a buddy.
- Pay attention to all traffic signals and crossing guards along the way. Never cross the street against a stop light.
- Always wear a helmet when riding a bicycle.
- Avoid ill-fitting clothing that could get caught in spokes, pedals or restrict movements, and wear reflective colors and material to be more visible to street traffic.
- Walk your bicycle across all intersections.

### Tips for Car Drivers and Passengers

- Everyone in the car should wear a seatbelt, as they lower the risk of injury in the event of a crash by 45 percent.
- Make sure babies and young children are in safety seats at all times, and that the safety seats have been properly installed.
- Read your car's manual for safety precautions specifically relating to the car and its airbags.
- Remind teenagers to take extra precautions if they are driving to school or riding with another teenager driver.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 24 million students nationwide start their school day with a trip on the school bus. Although NHTSA reports that riding on a school bus is nearly eight times safer than riding in a passenger vehicle, an average of 11 school-aged pedestrians are killed by school transportation vehicles each year.

Whether they walk, ride the bus or travel by car, teach your kids these few tips to ensure they get to and from school safely.

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