

Shoppers, Travelers Could See Snow In Midwest

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Holiday shoppers and travelers could see a blanket of snow across parts of Nebraska and Iowa this weekend.

The National Weather Service says a storm system is heading toward the region and a band of moderate to heavy snow will develop Saturday from Colorado through Nebraska into northwest Iowa and southern Minnesota.

Four to 7 inches of snow are possible in the heaviest bands, and travel could be hazardous.

The storm is expected to bring rain Friday night before the snow.

Winter weather advisories and winter storm watches have been issued for parts of Nebraska and Iowa. Just how much snow and where it will fall will depend on the storm's track.

The snow should taper off Saturday night, with sunny to partly cloudy skies on Sunday.

Xcel Plans Interim Rate Hike For S.D.

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Xcel Energy Inc. plans to increase rates for South Dakota customers while state regulators decide on the company's earlier request to charge more for electricity.

Xcel officials say rates will go up by 8 percent on Jan. 2. That would increase the monthly bill of an average customer by about \$6.

The company filed a request with the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission in June for about a 9 percent increase.

Xcel says if the commission approves final rates that are less than interim rates, customers will receive refunds with interest.

Prominent S.D. Politician, Attorney Sentenced

HURON (AP) — A prominent South Dakota politician and defense attorney has been sentenced on a misdemeanor simple assault charge.

KOKK radio reports that Ron Volesky of Huron on Friday admitted striking an adult friend with a belt while drinking in his home in July. Authorities say the beating left bruises on the victim's back and face.

Volesky was given three days in jail and fined \$500.

Volesky is a former state lawmaker who earlier this year unsuccessfully sought an appointment to the state Supreme Court. He also ran unsuccessfully for state attorney general in 2002, 2006 and 2010. He also briefly ran for governor last year.

Global Group Pulls Funding For Youth Center

RAPID CITY (AP) — A group that works to help impoverished youth around the world has yanked funding for after-school programs and other activities at a Rapid City youth center.

Child Fund International spokeswoman Cynthia Price says the decision was made because of "some concerns over the use of the funds" for the Youth Development Program at the Oyate Center. She didn't elaborate, but she says the Richmond, Va., group will seek a new partner.

The *Rapid City Journal* reports that Child Fund International provided the center with \$118,000 in the fiscal year that ended June 30. Since July 1, the center has received another \$48,000.

Fugitive Cow On The Loose In Plattsmouth

PLATTSMOUTH, Neb. (AP) — Residents in Plattsmouth are being warned to be on the alert for a 1,500 pound cow that is on the loose.

KETV-TV reported that animal control officers have been trying for three months to track down the cow.

Residents who have seen the cow says it only comes out at night. And because it's black, it's hard to see at night and resident Pat Jones says it's scary because you can't see it until it's right in front of you.

Animal control office Sue Baker says she believes the cow fell off a cattle truck.

In the meantime, farmer Jessica Vallery says she's using one of her own calves as bait to try and attract the rogue cow.

Neb. High Court Upholds Killer's Conviction

BY MARGERY A. BECK
Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — The conviction and sentence of a man serving 45 years-to-life for murdering his girlfriend in their Overton home in 2000 was upheld Friday for a second time by the Nebraska Supreme Court.

Timmy Timmens, 39, argued in his latest appeal that his trial lawyer was not effective because he failed to raise the defense that Timmens was too drunk to make a decision to kill 35-year-old Tracy Giugler. Timmens also claimed his appellate attorney was ineffective for failing to argue that the trial attorney should have raised the issue of intoxication.

The Nebraska Supreme Court rejected Timmens' latest arguments, saying his trial attorney had taken steps to set an intoxication defense in motion, but that Timmens refused that effort, saying repeatedly that he did not kill his girlfriend.

"Given Timmens' insistence that he did not kill Giugler, counsel could hardly mount a defense premised on the notion that Timmens killed her unintentionally while in a state of intoxication," state Supreme Court Judge Kenneth Stephan wrote in the opinion.

The state's high court also upheld Timmens' conviction in 2002. In that appeal, Timmens had argued that a lower court erred by allowing the jury to hear testimony about how Timmens did not show up for a meeting with police investigating the killing.

Investigators looking into Giugler's death had said she was beaten so severely that all her ribs were broken and some had punctured her lungs, contributing to her death. An autopsy said Giugler died of blunt trauma to the head, chest, abdomen, arms and legs. There also was internal hemorrhaging.

Her body was found in the home she shared with Timmens a day after she failed to appear at a family wedding in which Timmens took part.

After the wedding, Timmens' sister drove him to meet with police, who wanted to search his house, but Timmens jumped out of the car and fled before they arrived at police headquarters. He was found two days later hiding in an out-building in Kearney.

Neb. Scientists Helping With Next Census

BY GRANT SCHULTE
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Researchers at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln are helping the federal government plan its effort to offer the next U.S. census online.

Scientists are looking at ways to make the once-a-decade head count more accurate and cost-effective. The U.S. Census Bureau plans to offer its questionnaire online for the first time in 2020, along with the traditional mail-in surveys and in-person visits.

University of Nebraska statistics professor Allan McCutcheon said offering the census online is more complicated than it seems, because people often interpret census questions differently. This may lead to confusion and inaccurate answers, he said. In other cases, users may grow impatient with online questions and quit early.

"We're looking for patterns," McCutcheon said. "When might people lose interest? When might they start to become confused? Should we create a drop-down screen to say you might have a problem here, how we can help?"

The United States is the only industrial-

ized nation that doesn't use the Internet at all for its census operation, McCutcheon said. Canada and South Korea performed their most recent censuses and received high response rates, said Frank Vitrano, associate director of the 2020 Census. Japan conducted one that was limited to Tokyo.

"We definitely plan to offer the census online," Vitrano said. "The main hurdle is developing and testing strategies that work. We definitely want to convey this to the public in a way that maximizes the use of it."

Vitrano said the research will help decide how the Census Bureau proceeds.

Offering the questionnaire online could improve responses, he said, but promoting it too heavily to the wrong demographic groups could backfire. If large numbers of elderly Americans ignore the online questionnaire, for instance, the Census Bureau would have to send more hired census-takers to their doors. Counting a household in person during the 2010 census cost \$57, compared to the cost of a stamp for a mail-in questionnaire.

Vitrano said the census officials considered offering the questionnaires online in 2010, but decided against it because they did-

n't want to rush and create confusion or safety risks.

"Even four or five years ago, there wasn't really any cost-benefit advantage of doing this," he said. Some respondents would have answered the question online, "but the percentage was so small that it wouldn't have had a major impact."

The Nebraska scientists have received a \$2.7 million research grant from the National Science Foundation. University scientists are working with two survey and research firms, Gallup and Abt SRBI.

Grants totaling \$20 million for the census project went to Carnegie-Mellon University, Cornell University, Duke University, the University of Michigan, the University of Missouri, the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, the University of Colorado at Boulder and Northwestern.

Each university will look at a different aspect. Carnegie Mellon will explore ways to improve response rates and online safety. Missouri will examine better ways to interpret and use the data. National Science Foundation spokesman Bobbie Mixon said the researchers are working under a five-year time window to see what techniques work.

S.D. Panel Urges Improved Use Of Court Interpreters

BY CHET BROKAW
Associated Press

PIERRE — A study committee recommended Friday that South Dakota move quickly to improve the use of interpreters and translators in the state's courtrooms, which are dealing with an increasing number of immigrants with limited knowledge of English.

The court system needs to make sure people who are not fluent in English or have impaired hearing understand what is happening when they wind up in court, said Circuit Judge Bradley Zell of Sioux Falls, chairman of the committee.

"It's a necessity to provide this service to our ever-changing population," Zell said.

The committee, appointed by the South Dakota Supreme Court more than two years ago, recommended that the Supreme Court consider rules and procedures to set qualifications for interpreters and translators, establish a uniform system for using them in court proceedings, and develop a statewide list of those qualified to interpret or translate.

The panel also recommended that those who need interpreters or translators should not be charged for those services. The state could fund such services from state general tax funds, federal grants, or

charges added to all fines and court filing fees, the report said.

State economic development funds also could be used to help pay for court interpreters and translators because people who need those services often move to South Dakota to work, which means they boost the state economy, Zell said.

The cost of the proposed system for interpreters and translators is not known, according to the report. A survey done earlier indicated counties across the state have spent up to \$108,000 a year for interpreters in some recent years.

Greg Sattizahn, the judicial system's chief legal counsel, said the Supreme Court will study the report and then decide whether to formally propose rules. Some of the committee's recommendations also could be put in place by changes in procedure that do not require new rules, he said.

The report notes that South Dakota's court system currently has no established basic qualifications for interpreters, does not keep a list of qualified interpreters and has no standards for paying or training them. The circuit that covers Sioux Falls, the state's largest city, has set up a system, but courts in more rural areas handle translators and interpreters on a case-by-case basis because they use them less frequently.

S. Dakota Police Use Beanbags To Subdue Man With Swords

BY AMBER HUNT
Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS — Police in western South Dakota brought beanbags to a sword fight — and won.

Rapid City Lt. Dan Rud on Friday described the showdown between a 48-year-old man accused of wielding two samurai-style swords and four officers responding to a disturbance call in the city near the Black Hills.

It began after police got a 911 call around 5 p.m. Thursday from the Alpine Inn about an intoxicated man with swords. When officers arrived, the suspect greeted them from the

motel office, Rud said.

"He had two ninja-type swords," Rud told The Associated Press. One of the swords' blades measured 22 1/2 inches long; the other, 30 inches, Rud said.

He said the man refused to comply with officers' commands to drop the weapons.

That's when one officer turned to beanbags.

The compact ammunition — fired from what's dubbed a less-lethal shotgun — is aimed to shock and hurt, but not kill. The other officers kept aim on the suspect with lethal weapons in case the beanbags didn't work.

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