

### S.D. Man Arrested After High-Speed Chase

SIoux FALLS (AP) — Authorities have charged a man arrested Friday morning in Sioux Falls after a high-speed pursuit that started in Lennox when a bank security alarm sounded. The South Dakota Highway Patrol says 25-year-old John Robert Graham is charged with aggravated eluding. The patrol says additional charges may be considered. Patrol Capt. Kevin Joffer tells *the Argus Leader* that the chase began after initial reports of shots fired at the bank. Joffer says the suspect stole a pickup truck in the Lennox area and led authorities on a chase that lasted about 30 minutes before troopers collided with the truck and arrested the suspect. Joffer says it's unknown if the suspect tried to rob the bank but law enforcement is looking for a second vehicle that was near the bank.

### Woman Dies In Watertown House Fire

WATERTOWN (AP) — Authorities have identified a woman who died in a Friday morning house fire in Watertown. The Codington County Sheriff's office says 48-year-old Valerie Voelsch died of smoke inhalation. Authorities say crews responded to a 911 call at about 3 a.m. There was smoke in the house and the victim was unresponsive. Investigators say the likely cause of the fire was a lit cigarette on a piece of furniture.

### K.C. Man Gets 10 Years For Sioux City Shooting

SIoux CITY, Iowa (AP) — A Kansas City, Kan., man has been sentenced to 10 years in prison in connection with a shooting in downtown Sioux City earlier this year. The U.S. attorney's office says 29-year-old Michael Johnson was sentenced earlier this month in U.S. District Court in Sioux City. He pleaded guilty in July to being a felon in possession of a firearm and ammunition. The charges stem from an April 22 incident in which Johnson shot at a car driven by a man with whom he had an ongoing dispute, shattering the car's windows. The car's driver escaped. Police found Johnson with a loaded .40 caliber handgun that was used in the shooting when he was arrested in June. He was sentenced Dec. 15.

### City Ready To Give Up On Red Light Cameras

SIoux FALLS (AP) — Sioux Falls officials say they're ready to dump the idea of placing cameras at intersections to deter drivers from running red lights. The city council plans to consider next month whether to eliminate the ordinance that established red light cameras. The cameras have not been used for more than a year after a judge ruled that the city's practice of issuing civil fines to the owners of cars conflicted with state law. State law stipulates that running a red light is a criminal offense. Mayor Mike Huether tells *the Argus Leader* he would like to have the cameras and believes the practice has made one key intersection safer. But he says the legal fight is "too steep of a hurdle."

## Nebraska Supreme Court Rules For Gaming Company

BY GRANT SCHULTE  
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Nebraska regulators can't ban a barroom video game that offers cash payouts despite allegations players are using the machine to illegally gamble, the state Supreme Court ruled Friday. The ruling was a victory for the Nebraska-based companies that built and distributed Bank Shot. They sued the state after officials started confiscating the games.

To win Bank Shot, players must create a winning "tic-tac-toe" combination of like-colored pool balls in a three-by-three grid. The court said with modifications made by American Amusements Co., the video game is primarily a game of skill, not chance, and therefore can't be banned.

"To be successful at Bankshot — assuming success is defined as making money — a player must exert considerable patience while waiting for the 'winning' puzzles to appear," the court said in the 18-page opinion. The reconfigured game "is more controlled by the player than not, and thus it is predominantly a game of skill."

Phone calls to the companies, their lawyers and state officials weren't immediately returned.

As many 430 Bank Shot games were placed in 143 different Nebraska cities when it debuted in 2008, according to the ruling, Nebraska State Patrol troopers seized two of the consoles in early 2009 for testing to confirm that the games were skill-based. The tests showed the games in compliance with the law. State officials confiscated two more in September 2009, and the companies sued.

Bank Shot offers jackpots as high as \$17,000. As of February 2010, the game had been played 65.6 million times and awarded 50 jackpot prizes.

The Omaha-based Greater American Distributing Co., which distributes the game, reprogrammed it shortly after a Lancaster County District Court judge declared some of the game settings illegal in 2010. Judge Steven Burns ruled that one of the three ways the game could be played was legal, because the outcome depended more on skill than chance. Friday's ruling affirmed his decision.

Nebraska Attorney General Jon Bruning and state Sen. Tony Fulton of Lincoln introduced a proposal in 2010 to discourage such games by barring cash payouts and setting a \$10 value limit on prizes awarded for each game play. Had it passed, the proposal would have put Bank Shot in the same league as recreational pizza-parlor games like Pop-A-

Shot. Instead, the measure died in committee. Critics say Bank Shot and similar games straddle a line between illegal games of chance and lawful games of skill. Game opponents say skilled programmers can blur the line with game designs that rely on both skill and chance.

# Northern U.S. To Have Brown Christmas

BY JOHN FLESHER  
Associated Press

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. — Dreams of a white Christmas are hanging by a thread in the North, where unusually mild weather has left the ground bare in many places — a welcome reprieve for people who don't like shoveling, but a lump of coal in the stockings of outdoor sports buffs who miss their winter wonderland.

From New England to the Dakotas and even parts of the Northern Rockies and Pacific Northwest, snowfall has been well below normal through the fall and early winter with cold air bottled up over Canada. Golf courses were open this week in Minneapolis, which a year ago were digging out from a storm that dumped more than 17 inches of snow and collapsed the Metrodome roof. Many downhill ski resorts are making snow to compensate for nature's stinginess.

"It's been an amazingly slow start to the winter for everybody," said Mike Boguth, a National Weather Service forecaster in Gaylord, Mich., a resort town that has had only about 2 inches of natural snow this year.

La Nina, the cooling of the equatorial Pacific Ocean that affects weather worldwide, has nudged the jet stream farther north. Air pressure over the northern Atlantic has steered storm systems away from the East Coast.

The trends have resulted in the least snow New England has seen in November and December since the late 1990s, said Eric Evenson, a weather service meteorologist in Burlington, Vt. Snow totals across the region are 4 to 14 inches below normal, he said.

Williston, N.D., where more than 5 inches would have accumulated by now in a typical

December, has gotten nothing. A couple of inches fell farther south in Bismarck but melted. Montana's mountain snowpack is about 30 percent below average. Ski resorts in Washington state have gotten little snow since Thanksgiving.

Even snowy Michigan is feeling the pinch. Parts of the state regularly get more than 100 inches a year as clouds suck up moisture from the Great Lakes and deposit it over land. It's been sparse this year, although light snow fell Friday and forecasters said sections of Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota might get the 1 inch required to qualify as a white Christmas.

Light flurries and temperatures around 30 degrees are expected Christmas Day in Green Bay, Wis., where the Packers will host the Chicago Bears. That's downright balmy for Lambeau Field, the notorious "frozen tundra" that has hosted a fair share of NFL games in bitter cold and pelting snow.

A storm system moving up from the Gulf coast may sprinkle up to 3 inches of snow in sections of the Northeast by Christmas, but it probably won't last long, Evenson said.

Along with painting the landscape in dreary shades of brown and gray instead of the usual white, the abnormally mild winter has affected the economy.

Local governments have spent less on plowing and salting roads. Gogebic County, in the snow belt of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, is about \$100,000 better off than at this time a year ago, although road commission manager Darren Pionk said the savings might be short-lived.

"One or two bad months, and it can disappear pretty quickly," he said.

Some businesses geared toward the winter are having a hard time. Mike Pobuda of

Empire, Mich., keeps busy plowing residential and commercial driveways in a typical winter. These days, the phone isn't ringing. He's working at a convenience store to help pay the bills.

"It was already tight out there and now it's tighter," Pobuda said.

In Sioux Falls, S.D., hardware store owner Dallas Vanden Bos said it's taken all season to sell as many bags of snow and ice melting materials as customers usually buy in one day.

The outdoor recreation industry is making the best of things. Sugarbush Resort in Warren, Vt., installed about 40 high-efficiency snowmaking machines this year and immediately put them to work making 18 of the property's 111 trails suitable for skiing and snowboarding, president and majority owner Win Smith said.

But smaller operations that can't afford snowmaking may suffer if the snow shortage lasts much longer, said Lisa Marshall, spokeswoman for the Wisconsin Department of Tourism.

"It could be make-or-break for them," she said.

Not everyone regrets that snow has been mostly a no-show, especially people who hate driving on slick roads and shoveling walks and driveways.

In Minneapolis, more than 100 people braved borderline freezing temperatures this week for a rare opportunity to play golf in December. Mike Schneider, a 70-year-old retiree, carried a handful of tees he had whittled to needle-sharp points so they would penetrate the frosty turf at Parkview Golf Club.

A fellow golfer, Jim Jorgensen, said there were advantages to playing in the cold. For one thing, freezing eliminates water hazards.

"It just skips across," Jorgensen said. "You don't have to worry about losing the ball."

The Granddaughters have arrived to help Grandpa this last week of Great Sales!

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good news  
of great JOY  
which shall be for  
all the people."

— Luke 2:10

As we proclaim the  
good news of our Savior's birth,  
we wish you many blessings,  
good health and love this holiday season.

Merry Christmas from Avera

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