

Lincoln, Other Cities Setting No-Snow Records

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Lincoln and other Midwest cities are setting records for the lack of snow. Thursday in Lincoln is the 297th in a row without measurable snow. The former record was 295 snow-free days in 2004. The National Weather Service says the 285 snowless days as of Wednesday in Omaha breaks the record 284 days that ended Dec. 30, 2006. The Des Moines, Iowa, record of 277 days set in 1889 is being matched on Thursday. Elsewhere in the Midwest, Chicago and Milwaukee have yet to have their first measurable snow of the season. But good news may be ahead for winter wonderland fans: The service says snow is in the forecasts for Saturday night or Sunday in Nebraska and Iowa, the next day in Chicago.

South Dakota Murder Trial Delayed Until Spring

ABERDEEN (AP) — The trial of a Waubay man accused of killing his 2-year-old daughter by shaking her has been delayed until mid-April in federal court in Aberdeen. Mario Contreras has pleaded not guilty to murder and other charges. The *American News* reports that he was to go on trial this fall but his attorneys requested more time to prepare. Authorities say 2-year-old Aleeya Cook of Sisseton died Jan. 11 after being violently shaken. Investigators say Contreras told them the toddler fell and hit her head while he was caring for her, but doctors said the girl's injuries were consistent with a shaken baby syndrome. Contreras could face life in prison if convicted on the murder charge.

Drought Conditions Unchanged In The Dakotas

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — Drought conditions have not changed in the Dakotas over the week. The latest U.S. Drought Monitor map shows all of South Dakota remaining in some form of drought and just short of two-thirds of the state in the two worst categories, extreme and exceptional. North Dakota has nothing worse than severe drought. About one-third of the state is in that category. About 91 percent of the state is rated as abnormally dry or in some form of drought.

Horse Deaths Near Aberdeen Being Investigated

ABERDEEN (AP) — Law officers and a state official are investigating the deaths of two horses near Aberdeen that might have died from starvation. Brown County Sheriff's Chief Deputy Tom Schmitt tells the *American News* officers who went to Foote Creek Stables on Nov. 9 found nine horses that were not properly fed. He says two later died. The other seven were seized. Schmitt says a person who had individually contracted with the owners of the nine horses to care for them is being investigated. The person is not an employee of the stables. Schmitt says other people at the stables are properly caring for six other horses housed there. Schmitt says the state veterinarian will be compiling a report to be given to prosecutors who are deciding whether to file charges.

Alleged Diaz Confession To S.D. High Court

PIERRE (AP) — Prosecutors are asking the South Dakota Supreme Court to overturn a lower judge's decision to toss out the alleged confession of an 18-year-old girl charged in the killing of a South Dakota teenager. Judge Tim Bjorkman ruled in August that police had failed to properly inform Maricela Diaz of her right to remain silent while questioning her in the November 2009 death of 16-year-old Jasmine Guevara of Mitchell. Diaz was 15 at the time. Prosecutors argue that Diaz voluntarily waived her Miranda rights and say "the inappropriate suppression (her) statements significantly damages the state's case." The *Daily Republic* reports the defense has until Friday to respond to the appeal. Diaz's boyfriend, Alexander Salgado, pleaded guilty to murder in the case in 2010 and is serving life in prison.

Sioux Falls Store Robbed At Butcher Knife-Point

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — A convenience store in Sioux Falls has been robbed by a suspect with a butcher knife for the second time in less than a month. Authorities say a male with a bandanna covering his face walked into a Casey's General Store shortly after 5 a.m. Thursday, waved the butcher knife at the clerk and motioned for her to open the till. The suspect put the cash drawer from the till inside a backpack and fled. The clerk was not hurt. The *Argus Leader* newspaper reports that the same store was robbed on Nov. 11 by a male with a butcher knife.

S.D. Sees Minimal Effects From Citigroup Cuts

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — Few of Citigroup's 2,800 employees in South Dakota will be laid off as part of the company's plans to cut 11,000 jobs. The banking giant announced this week that it is laying off about 4 percent of its global workforce. Spokeswoman Janis Tarter tells the *Argus Leader* newspaper that the cuts will affect fewer than two dozen workers at the company's credit card operations center in Sioux Falls and at One Main Financial branches across the state. Citi said it expects the 11,000 job cuts to save the company \$900 million next year, and more in the following years.

New Jail On South Dakota Reservation To Open In January

BY KRISTI EATON
Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS — A new \$25 million jail will open on the Rosebud Indian Reservation next month that provides for the cultural and spiritual wellness of tribal members who have been charged with crimes. The Rosebud Sioux Tribe Adult Correctional Facility near Mission will house up to 160 male and female inmates, and will include a courtroom for arraignments, classroom space and space for traditional ceremonies, said facility administrator Melissa Eagle Bear. It replaces a smaller facility that doesn't meet safety standards, Eagle Bear said. Anyone charged in tribal court with offenses such as underage drinking, domestic assault and robbery could end up at the facility. It will also house those arrested for federal crimes waiting to be picked up by federal

officials. Alcohol or drug charges, assaults against adults and domestic abuse were the three most common offenses tried in Rosebud Sioux Tribal Court in 2010. Participation in traditional Lakota ceremonies while in custody is not mandatory but could provide important support and guidance, Eagle Bear said. "When you're in jail, you've obviously done something wrong or maybe that you shouldn't have, so you're in a place ... a lot of times it's the first time (an inmate is) sober so their mind is a little more clear," Eagle Bear said. "It's a huge reminder of who they are, and a lot of respect comes from the ceremonies." She said she has seen inmates cry when they lit sage, prayed or heard Indian songs. "Everything about us is different than the western society. We live a different life," Eagle Bear said.

The 67,500-square-foot facility, funded by federal stimulus money, is set to open Jan. 17. A wellness team will provide services aimed at preventing the inmates from returning to crime. One program will be headed by the White Buffalo Calf Women's Society, a nonprofit organization that provides shelter and advocacy for domestic violence victims on the reservation. The 26-week class, available for anyone charged with domestic violence, examines why they turned to domestic violence and aims to encourage healthy relationships, said LeToy Lunderman, victim services director. "Domestic violence is a learned behavior," Lunderman said. "You're not just born to be this way, it's a learned behavior, so they have those individuals in the class kind of acknowledge that and look into their past and maybe something that happened to them."

S.D. Officials Want Wind Energy Tax Credit Extended

BY CODY WINCHESTER
Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS — Time is short for a tax credit seen as crucial to the wind energy industry. The Production Tax Credit — which offers a 2.2-cent tax break for every kilowatt-hour of electricity produced from utility-scale turbines — expires Dec. 31, and uncertainty about whether and how it will be extended has sent ripples through the industry. "The bad news is the wind industry is really going to contract this year — severely," said Ron Rebenitsch, executive director of the South Dakota Wind Energy Association. "We went from a boom to a bust." Low natural gas prices and a longstanding transmission bottleneck haven't done the industry any favors, either. And the stress is starting to show. At the Molded Fiber Glass blade plant in Aberdeen, 92 workers were laid off earlier this year as equipment orders slowed. These are just a few of the thousands of jobs lost in recent

months in the wind-rich Great Plains, Rebenitsch said. "Development has pretty much shut down," he said. Last year, 75 megawatts of new wind power came online in South Dakota. This year: zero. "Every day, I get another phone call from one of my wind friends looking for a job," said Steve Wegman, Rebenitsch's predecessor and an analyst at the South Dakota Renewable Energy Association. "At the rate we're going, we're truly cannibalizing the industry." But with the presidential election settled and the congressional balance of power relatively unchanged, there is a renewed push to include an extension of the Production Tax Credit in a larger deal on taxes and spending. But first it must rise above the many other issues to be considered in the lame-duck session. South Dakota's delegation supports an extension, but they — and lawmakers from other windy states — will have to persuade their colleagues to vote it through at a time when Congress

is looking for expenditures to cut. "This is a difficult time to extend any tax credit that is regarded as a subsidy," said Sen. Tim Johnson, D-S.D. Extending the Production Tax Credit for one year will cost taxpayers \$5 billion, but proponents cite an industry estimate that the credit creates three times that amount in annual private investment. As part of the tax extenders bill that cleared the Senate Finance Committee in August, Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., voted to extend the credit — with a phase-out provision. "I am hopeful that a proposal of this nature will be included in a larger fiscal cliff/tax package by the end of the year," Thune said in a statement. But Johnson said the bill will come up for a vote after negotiations on the so-called fiscal cliff between the White House and House Speaker John Boehner shake out. "The credit might also be included in a unique bargain the administration and Congress

reach on the debt," said Johnson, who favors a multiyear extension. The House, meanwhile, is working on its version of the tax extender bill. A Production Tax Credit extension easily could be folded into that, said Rep. Kristi Noem, R-S.D., who has co-sponsored legislation to extend the credit for four years. If allowed to lapse, there is always the chance the tax credit extension could be included in a broader tax reform bill expected to be taken up next year. "We need comprehensive tax reform, and it makes sense to include this as well," Noem said. Given the long production cycle — seven to nine years from planning to startup — the industry needs more than one year, Wegman said. "The one-year extension is a safe bet, but it doesn't do much for the industry," Wegman said. "You're giving a one-time blood transfusion to a patient with two amputated legs. It's a tourniquet. You keep the thing alive, kind of, but it's not viable."

Flood

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governor, logging more than 26,000 miles and visiting 71 Nebraska communities. In the days after announcing he was running for governor, Flood emphasized his record as both a fiscal and social conservative who worked closely with fellow lawmakers in the unicameral Legislature. Flood said the decision to withdraw was a joint decision between him and his wife, whom he married in 2003. She was raised in Columbus and has worked as a teacher in Albion and Norfolk. The couple has two sons, 6-year-old Brendan and 3-year-old Blake. "This was just the right decision," Flood said, his foot shaking behind him as he tried to keep his composure. "You hear about people every day that go through this, but until it touches your

family, you just have a lot of — these are easy questions to answer. This is a joint decision." Words of support poured in shortly after Flood made the announcement. "Mike and Mandi are personal friends, and my support and prayers go to their entire family as they face this challenge," Heineman said in a statement. "The success of facing challenges, in some part, relies on one's structure of support and friendship; and (first lady) Sally (Ganem) and I continue to offer ours." Sheehy said he was saddened by the news, and considers Mike and Mandi Flood friends. "I've always appreciated working with Mike for the betterment of our state, and look forward to doing so again in the future," he said.

U.S. Sen.-elect Deb Fischer, a Republican who was elected to the Legislature the same year as Flood, said she and her husband, Bruce Fischer, were praying for the Floods. "We know their strong faith will be a comfort and help them as they make the necessary decisions in the coming days," she said. Flood said he believes his wife's doctors in Norfolk have a good plan for her treatment. He said he and his family are leaving tomorrow morning for a trip to Disney World. "We're going to just enjoy ourselves, and we're going to come back next week and take whatever steps we need to take," he said. "And we're going to be fine."

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