

South Dakota Sees First Flu Death Of Season

PIERRE (AP) — South Dakota health officials have reported the state's first flu death of the season.

The Pennington County resident age 90-99 had influenza B and was hospitalized.

South Dakota year to date has reported 156 laboratory-confirmed cases of flu and 28 flu-related hospitalizations.

State Epidemiologist Dr. Lon Kightlinger says the death is a reminder that flu can be a very serious illness, particularly for elderly individuals. He says annual vaccination is the single best way to protect against the flu, and annual vaccination is recommended particularly for people over 50.

Also at higher risk are pregnant women, people with chronic medical conditions, health-care workers and household contacts of high risk populations. Children are another high risk group.

Neb. Officials Warn Of Dry Conditions In River

HASTINGS, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska officials are continuing to prepare for dry conditions in the Republican River Basin next year.

The state Department of Natural Resources said Friday that it's updating and refining its forecast for conservation measures. That includes reassigning staff resources.

The agency also says it's looking into possibly reregulating flows in the Harlan County Reservoir that would otherwise be required to pass downstream into Kansas.

The agency forecasts that approximately 20,000 acre-feet of water will need to be put into streams in the basin to prevent potential overuse.

The final forecast for the river is due out at the end of the year.

Man Sentenced For Shooting From Car On I-80

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A 23-year-old Lincoln man has been given 20 months behind bars for firing a gun while riding in a car on Interstate 80.

The *Lincoln Journal Star* reports that Jonathan West also was given five years of probation when he was sentenced Thursday in Lancaster County District Court. West had pleaded no contest to a weapons charge and one for terroristic threats.

A court affidavit says West was the front-seat passenger in a car pulled over April 8 by a trooper investigating a report about a shooting along Interstate 80 in north Lincoln. The affidavit says West acknowledged firing a pistol shot into the air to scare off the driver of another vehicle that had nearly run the car West was in off the road.

No injuries were reported.

S.D. Man Sentenced In Counterfeit Goods Case

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — A Sioux Falls man accused of trafficking in counterfeit goods has been put on federal probation for three years and fined \$3,000.

Fifty-two-year-old Senad Sacipovic was accused of selling fake designer-brand women's apparel at his store in Sioux Falls. U.S. Attorney Brendan Johnson says Homeland Security agents seized thousands of dollars' worth of bogus merchandise and the Venecci Boutique was closed in October 2011.

Sacipovic was indicted last March and pleaded guilty in September.

Parts Of The Dakotas In For A Snowy Weekend

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — Parts of the Dakotas are in for a snowy weekend.

The National Weather Service has posted a winter weather advisory for central and east central South Dakota through Friday, and a winter storm watch for the north central and northeast parts of the state Saturday afternoon through Sunday morning.

KELO-TV reported Friday morning that some roads in western South Dakota already were getting slick, and KCCR radio reported that as much as 5 inches of snow had already been reported in parts of central South Dakota

The weather service says accumulating snow and blowing snow also are possible throughout North Dakota this weekend, and wind chills in the region could plummet to as low as 30 degrees below zero.

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Reps. Seek Foster Care Summit

BY KRISTI EATON
Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS — Two Democratic congressmen sent a letter Friday to the head of the U.S. Department of Interior's Office of Indian Affairs questioning why the government has not yet held a summit about Native American children in foster care in South Dakota.

Reps. Ed Markey of Massachusetts and Ben Ray Lujan of New Mexico wrote to Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Kevin Washburn asking about the agency's failure to hold a summit examining South Dakota's foster care system and the Indian Child Welfare Act. The federal law requires that Native American children removed from homes be placed with relatives or put in foster care with other Native American families except in unusual circumstances.

Federal officials had told mem-

bers of Congress they would hold a summit with state, federal and tribal officials following a story by National Public Radio that said South Dakota routinely breaks the federal law by taking too many Native American children out of their homes.

"Fourteen months have passed since our initial inquiry and it appears that a summit, or stakeholder meeting of any kind, has yet to materialize," wrote Markey, a ranking member of the Natural Resources Committee, which has jurisdiction over federal Indian affairs, and Lujan, a ranking member of the subcommittee on Indian and Alaska Native Affairs.

A spokeswoman for the Office of Indian Affairs did not immediately return a message seeking comment from The Associated Press. Phone messages also were left with South Dakota's two senators and congresswoman.

NPR reported that 90 percent of

the Native American children removed from their homes in South Dakota each year are sent to foster care in non-Native American homes or group homes, and that Native American children are placed in South Dakota's foster care system at a disproportionate rate than other children.

The report also suggested that the state's motive for removing Native American children from their home might be for financial reasons, because the state receives money for each child removed from his or her home.

The NPR piece was found credible in a report recently approved by six of the nine Indian Child Welfare Act directors representing each of the nine tribes in South Dakota.

The directors' report found circumstantial evidence that state officials may take high numbers of Native American foster children into custody to stimulate South

Dakota's economy, because the state gets millions of dollars a year to subsidize foster care programs. The state also receives additional money for every special needs child who is adopted. The directors plan to send the report to Congress soon.

State officials have acknowledged that a disproportionate number of Native American children are involved in the child welfare system. But they said that is because they receive more referrals for alleged abuse involving Native American children, and that leads to more investigations and removals from homes for those children.

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Nebraska

Charges Avoided In Wrestler Abuse Case

BY MARGERY A. BECK
Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Three western Nebraska school officials accused of failing to report allegations that high school wrestlers sexually assaulted a young teammate at a summer wrestling camp will not face charges, an attorney for two of the officials said Friday.

Bob Lindemeier, a North Platte attorney who represents Maxwell Public Schools Superintendent Danny Twarling and high school principal Aubrey Boucher, said that the school board and Lincoln County Attorney Rebecca Harling agreed Monday that the officials wouldn't be charged and that district staff would undergo training to better understand the laws regarding student abuse and neglect.

Twarling, Boucher and wrestling coach Ryan Jones were cited by the Nebraska State Patrol in September on suspicion of failure to report child abuse or neglect, a misdemeanor.

None of the teens who were alleged to have taken part in the assault have been charged. Nebraska State Patrol investigators have turned over their findings about the alleged abuse at the Kearney wrestling camp to the Buffalo County prosecutor, who will determine whether charges should be filed, patrol spokeswoman Deb Collins said.

Buffalo County Attorney Shawn Eatherton did not immediately re-

spond to a phone message Friday enquiring whether he plans to bring charges in the case.

Neither the alleged victim nor his parents are named in court documents, and authorities did not respond to requests for their identities to give them an opportunity to react to the agreement between prosecutors and school administrators. There was no answer at Maxwell Public Schools on Friday afternoon.

Patrol investigators have said the three school officials were told that members of the wrestling team held down a team member and sodomized him with a bottle while at camp in the summer of 2011. An investigator said the mother of a friend of the alleged victim said she asked the boy whether he had reported the incident to his coach, and the boy said he had but that the coach told him, "What happens in wrestling, stays in wrestling." The teen also told a State Patrol investigator that Boucher called him a liar and "a rumor spreader" after learning of the reported assault.

School officials told investigators that they conducted their own investigation and determined that the accusations were unfounded.

State law requires teachers, administrators, medical professionals and others in positions of authority to report cases of suspected child abuse or neglect to law enforcement.

"In retrospect, perhaps the

school should have forwarded all information and allegations to law enforcement and/or the Department of Health and Human Services," Lindemeier and Harling said in a joint written statement. "In the future, the school is committed to revising necessary policies and/or procedures to aid school officials in understanding when and where to report."

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