

Pierre Reels From Shooting

BY CHET BROKAW
Associated Press

PIERRE — Residents of South Dakota's small capital city struggled Thursday to comprehend how the lives of three families were torn apart when a 16-year-old boy was fatally shot by a classmate, the community's first homicide in more than a year.

Braiden McCahren made his first court appearance Thursday after being charged as an adult with first-degree murder. Authorities allege he shot his friend, Dalton Williams, with a semi-automatic shotgun on Tuesday after an apparent argument that involved a third boy at McCahren's home. All three boys were 16.

About two dozen people sat in the courtroom as McCahren, the son of a well-known local attorney, appeared through a video link from the county jail. Circuit Judge John Brown told the teen his rights and explained the charge against him. His attorney did not ask for bond.

The judge told him he could try to move the case to juvenile court. McCahren's lawyer, Brad Schreiber, said it was too early to say whether he would make the request.

McCahren would face a mandatory sentence of life in prison without parole if convicted of first-degree murder in adult court. If the case is moved to juvenile court, the state could only hold him until he turns 21.

He will enter a formal plea at a later hearing. Williams' funeral is scheduled for Saturday at Faith Lutheran Church, where the Rev. Brad Urbach said Williams' family was devastated and not ready to talk publicly about the shooting.

"They're leaning on each other, trying to de-

rive strength from one another. When one of them is having a time of being really down, it seems like they're able to pick each other up," said Urbach, who will preside at the funeral.

Area residents have heavy hearts, he said, particularly since the shooting happened in the week before Christmas and so soon after the Connecticut elementary school shooting that killed 20 children and six educators.

The slain boy's family said he had a big heart, the pastor said. "Dalton, by everything I'm hearing from others and the family, was a very caring and loving son, very respectful, a good brother and a good grandson," Urbach said.

Slayings are rare in South Dakota — just 21 murders and non-negligent homicides were reported in 2011 by the FBI — and rarer still in Pierre. The city of 13,860 last had a slaying in 2010, when a woman shot her husband and later pleaded guilty to manslaughter.

"Here in the small city of Pierre, I'm a little surprised it happened," said longtime Pierre resident Rosanne Summerside, who lives near two of the boys' families.

"I know the whole community and the kids are of mixed emotions, confused about what they should be feeling and doing," said Summerside, who has a 17-year-old son. "Everybody I talk to is just stunned it happened."

The 17-year-old teen, described by police as a witness, told detectives that he and McCahren began to wrestle around jokingly after arguing about a paintball game. He said McCahren then got a semi-automatic shotgun, walked into the kitchen area and pointed it at him, according to the arrest affidavit filed by a detective.

The witness said he heard the gun click, then saw McCahren take a shotgun shell out of a drawer, load the gun and point it at him again. The teen said he then heard another click.

The witness told police he was trying to leave the house through a sliding glass door when Williams stepped between him and McCahren. He said the gun fired, and Williams was hit.

Pierre Police Chief Bob Grandpre confirmed the argument and the wrestling occurred between the witness and McCahren.

Grandpre said the department had an extra officer at Riggs High School on Wednesday and Thursday, more to answer students' and teachers' questions than to provide extra security.

Some officers know the teenagers involved because the boys were involved in anti-drug programs run by the department, Grandpre said.

"It's a real close-knit community. It's a smaller community, so we feel these things pretty deeply," Grandpre said.

Pierre School Superintendent Kelly Glodt said school counselors and others were available to talk with students, but classes went surprisingly well Wednesday and Thursday. School officials appeared to succeed in keeping school activities as normal as possible, he said.

However, students who were close to the three boys involved in the shooting are having a tougher time dealing with the incident than other students, Glodt said.

"This is not something that's going to go away immediately. We're going to be dealing with it for quite some time," the superintendent said.

Midwest Blizzard Turns Deadly

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — The first widespread snowstorm of the season crawled across the Midwest on Thursday, with whiteout conditions stranding holiday travelers and sending drivers sliding over slick roads — including into a fatal 25-vehicle pileup in Iowa.

The storm, which dumped a foot of snow in parts of Iowa and Wisconsin, was part of a system that began in the Rockies earlier in the week before trekking into the Midwest. It was expected to move across the Great Lakes overnight before moving into Canada.

The storm led airlines to cancel about 1,000 flights ahead of the Christmas holiday — relatively few compared to past big storms, though the number was climbing.

On the southern edge of the system, tornadoes destroyed several homes in Arkansas and peeled the roofs from buildings, toppled trucks and blew down oak trees and limbs Alabama.

In Iowa, drivers were blinded by blowing snow and didn't see vehicles that had slowed or stopped on Interstate 35 about 60 miles north of Des Moines, state police said. A chain reaction of crashes involving semitrailers and passenger cars closed down a section of the highway. Officials said two people were killed and seven injured.

"It's time to listen to warnings and get off the road," said Iowa State Patrol Col. David Garrison.

Thomas Shubert, a clerk at a store in Gretna near Omaha, Neb., said his brother drove him to work in his truck, but some of his neighbors weren't so fortunate.

"I saw some people in my neighborhood trying to get out. They made it a few feet, and that was about it," Shubert said.

Along with Thursday's fatal accident in Iowa, the storm was blamed for traffic deaths in Nebraska, Kansas and Wisconsin. In southeastern Utah, a woman who tried to walk for help after her car became stuck in snow died Tuesday night.

The heavy, wet snow made some unplowed streets in Des Moines nearly impossible to navigate in anything other than a four-wheel drive vehicle. Even streets that had been plowed were snow-packed and slippery.

The storm made travel difficult from Kansas to Wisconsin, forcing road closures, including a 120-mile stretch of Interstate 35 from Ames, Iowa through Albert Lea, Minn. Sections of Interstate 80 in Nebraska and Interstate 29 in Missouri that had been closed were reopened Thursday afternoon. Iowa and Wisconsin activated National Guard troops to help rescue stranded drivers.

Those who planned to fly before the Christmas holiday didn't fare much better.

Shanna Tinsley, 17, and Nicole Latimer, 20, were both headed to the Kansas City area to see their families for the holiday when their



DAVID EULITT/KANSAS CITY STAR/MCT
Kansas City (Mo.) city workers examine a fallen tree that landed on a telephone wire during snow and windstorm Thursday.

flight Thursday morning out of Milwaukee's General Mitchell International Airport was canceled. Neither cared about a white Christmas, and were hoping to get on another flight later in the day.

"It would be cool I guess, but I'd rather be there than stuck without family with a white Christmas," Latimer said.

Added Tinsley, "Wisconsin is full of snow, you see it all the time."

In Chicago, commuters began Thursday with heavy fog and cold, driving rain, and forecasters said snow would hit by mid-afternoon.

Airlines delayed and canceled hundreds of flights out of Chicago's O'Hare and Midway international airports. Southwest Airlines canceled all of its flights at its Midway hub that were scheduled for after 4:30 p.m., and American Airlines said it was shutting down its O'Hare operations after 8 p.m.

Airlines were waiving fees for customers impacted by the storm who wanted to change their flights. They were monitoring the storm throughout the night to determine if more cancellations would be necessary on Friday.

The cancellations were getting a lot of attention because the storm came just a few days before Christmas. But Daniel Baker, CEO of flight tracking service FlightAware.com called it "a relatively minor event in the overall scheme of things."

By comparison, airlines canceled more than 13,000 flights over a two-day period during a February 2011 snowstorm that hit the Midwest. And more than 20,000 flights were canceled during Superstorm Sandy.

Before the storm, several cities in the Midwest had broken records for the number of consecutive days without measurable snow. In the Des Moines suburb of Ur-

bandale, Kristin Isenhardt, 38, said her three kids, ages 9, 5 and 3, were asking about going outside to play after school was canceled for the day.

"They are thrilled that it snowed," she said. "They've asked several times to go outside, and I might bundle them up and let them go."

As far as the region's drought, meteorologists said the storm wouldn't make much of a dent. It takes a foot or more of snow to equal an inch of water, said Brian Fuchs, a climatologist at the National Drought Mitigation Center.

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