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2 Die In Omaha Blast

10 Reported
Seriously
Injured After
Industrial
Accident

BY JOSH FUNK
Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — An explosion that brought down part of an animal feed processing plant in Omaha on Monday morning killed 2 people and seriously injured 10 others, authorities said.

The search for bodies in the crippled International Nutrition plant progressed slowly Monday and had to be suspended in the evening. Omaha Police Lt. Darci Tierney said all 38 of the workers who were in the building at the time had been accounted for, so the death toll wasn't expected to grow.

Through much of the day, authorities declined to say how many died while they sorted out what happened. In

total, officials said two died, 10 were hospitalized and seven were hurt but refused treatment. The other 19 workers escaped.

Authorities said late Monday that Keith Everett, 53, of Omaha, was one of the victims. The other victim's name hasn't been released.

Search-and-rescue experts worked into Monday evening to stabilize the building and removed one victim.

But the combination of strong winds, cold temperatures and a dangerous building forced rescuers to suspend operations before the second victim could be recovered, Omaha Interim Fire Chief Bernie Kanger said.

That search effort and investigation will resume Tues-

OMAHA | PAGE 12

INSIDE



**V-H Girls Top
Freeman • 8**

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South Dakota Partial Medicaid Expansion Possible

BY CHET BROKAW
Associated Press

PIERRE — Republican leaders in the South Dakota Legislature say they hope federal officials will grant the state a waiver allowing expansion of the Medicaid program to provide medical services only to those people most in need.

Senate Republican Leader Tim Rave of Baltic said he doubts the Legislature would expand Medicaid to the full extent envisioned in the federal health care overhaul, but that lawmakers will likely talk about seeking federal approval to extend coverage to a smaller group of low-income people.

The federal government has so far refused to give South Dakota that flexibility, but House Republican Leader David Lust of Rapid City said he hopes federal officials will change their minds.

"I do think we could craft a resolution that is appropriate and effective for our situation in South Dakota," Lust said.

Leader of the Democratic minority have said they will continue to push for a Medicaid expansion, despite resistance from Republican Gov. Dennis Daugaard.

Senate Democratic Leader Jason Frerichs of Wilmot said he's pleased that Republicans haven't completely rejected a Medicaid expansion.

Daugaard says he's not recommending the Medicaid expansion — available to states as an option under the federal health care overhaul — in next year's state budget, but that he's not ruling it out altogether. He said the federal government is having trouble putting the overhaul into effect and wonders whether it can meet its promise to pay most of the cost of the Medicaid expansion.

MEDICAID | PAGE 12

Thune Talks DC Policy In Tyndall

BY ROB NIELSEN
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TYNDALL. — Using a break in the congressional schedule, Sen. John Thune told a meeting of the Tyndall Rotary Club Monday that one of his goals is to make sure policymaking benefits rural communities and allows people to prosper in them.

"What I want to do in Washington is make sure we are putting policies in place that are conducive to growing the economy, creating jobs and making this a better place to live and raise our families," Thune said. "You think of all of our small towns across South Dakota — of course, I grew up in one out in Murdo — it's hard to keep our population in our smaller communities. The things that enable us to do that: You've got to have quality healthcare to keep people there, you've got to have jobs for young people and you've got to have a good system of education. Those are some of the things that as I do my job in Washington, I really try and stay focused on."

Dominating the conversation today were the issues surrounding the Farm Bill and domestic energy policy.

The Republican said the Farm Bill is key to livelihoods within the state.

"We've been working on it for about three years now," he said. "Our farmers and ranchers need certainty, however that bill ends up. There are things about it I don't like and a lot of things I got included in there, but in terms of our economy here in South Dakota, we need to make sure the farmers and ranchers who make their livings in production agriculture at least know what the policy is going to be."

Thune told the *Press & Dakotan* that he believes a conclusion to this piece of legislation is around the corner.

"(The Farm Bill) is still being debated in the conference committee," he said. "The differences are narrowing. I think we're getting closer all the time and I'm hopeful that — if not next week, then the first week or two in February — we'll get a bill on the House and Senate floors that we can pass and get on the president's desk. It's been a long, drawn out, way-too-

THUNE | PAGE 12



ROB NIELSEN/P&D

Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.) speaks to a meeting of the Tyndall Rotary Club Monday. Thune fielded questions on a number of issues and updated the audience on the status of the Farm Bill currently being debated in Congress.

YHS Students Learn From Senator

BY DEREK BARTOS
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"Say what you mean, and mean what you say," Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.) told a group of Yankton High School students.

The remark came during a discussion with government classes about the importance of honesty in politics — one of several topics that arose during his visit to the school Monday. The senator spoke with students about a variety of issues, focusing primarily on his experiences in Congress and the local economy.

Thune said that the nation's mistrust in politicians is at an all-time high, pointing to Congress' latest approval rating of 13 percent.

"I think what really hurts the credibility of elected officials is examples of politicians who say one thing and do another," he said. "There's a real resistance in America today to politicians who are not authentic. People want candor, they want truth, they want honesty — even if they dis-



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

Government students at Yankton High School listen to Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.) discuss Washington and politics Monday at YHS.

agree with it."

That trust and confidence in politicians need to be restored, Thune said.

"The way to fix that is to demonstrate you can govern,

demonstrate you can get things done," he said. "And be honest with the American people. I think they'll respect that."

YHS | PAGE 11



211 Call Service Nearly Set To Go

Program Will Serve Bon Homme And Yankton Counties

BY NATHAN JOHNSON
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A new call service in Bon Homme and Yankton counties that will assist residents with finding community resources could be operational as soon as Feb. 3.

By calling 211, residents will be able to obtain information from the Helpline Center in Sioux Falls about community resources, volunteer services, child care resources, suicide and crisis support, and military and family support.

The 211 service originally served

the Sioux Falls metropolitan area, and it was expanded to six counties in the Black Hills in 2005.

Helpline Center Director Janet Kittams-Lalley spoke to various Yankton service providers last week to familiarize them with 211 and obtain their assistance.

In order to make the Helpline Center effective, Kittams-Lalley said her organization needs information for its database.

"There are approximately 500 agencies and organizations that we've identified that provide non-profit and government services in Bon Homme and Yankton counties," she stated. "(Obtaining information from them is) the focus here

"A lot of people have questions, and I think people are learning that it is a partnership. It's only going to benefit your program by being in this database."

LAUREN HANSON

in these first weeks of January."

Area organizations can complete agency intake forms and program intake forms at

211 | PAGE 12