

Council Bluffs Halts Siren Tests During Flooding

COUNCIL BLUFFS, Iowa (AP) — Council Bluffs has halted testing of its tornado sirens amid Missouri River flooding.

The city's public information officer, Don Gross, says the sirens were to have been tested July 10 but officials decided to hold off. He says there's concern residents would think there was a flood-related emergency, such as a levee break or forced evacuations.

The Army Corps of Engineers is releasing massive amounts of water into the river from dams upstream. Those releases will keep the river above flood stage in western Iowa and eastern Nebraska at least into August.

Flood Problems Will Increase Stress For People

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Flooding along the Missouri River is expected to continue until at least August, but the emotional stress from dealing with the flooding could last even longer.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension educator LaDonna Werth says people who experience losses in the flooding should talk about their feelings with friends, family and neighbors.

Children might especially need help to regain a sense of security. Or they have trouble dealing with having to throw away belongings damaged by the flood.

Couples who are facing loss may find that each spouse copes differently with the stress. Werth says the important thing is to keep talking things over and to show love toward each other.

Small Plane Crashes In S.D., Kills 3

WATERTOWN (AP) — The Hamlin County sheriff says a single-engine plane hit a power line and crashed Saturday in eastern South Dakota, killing all three people on board.

Sheriff Dan Mack tells KWAT Radio that the crash happened about 9:15 p.m. near Hayti. The sheriff says the plane was flying at a low altitude when it hit the power line and crashed into a field.

All three occupants were dead at the scene. The pilot was identified as 45-year-old Clark Kopman of rural Bryant. Also on board were Kopman's 11-year-old son, Sawyer, and his 11-year-old nephew, Stefen Kempainen.

Fire Guts Home West Of Dell Rapids

DELL RAPIDS — Authorities are investigating a fire that gutted a home west of Dell Rapids.

Crews responding to the blaze in northern Minnehaha County around 10 p.m. Sunday found the home fully engulfed in flames.

KELO-TV reports that the roof caved in and the walls are losing ground.

The Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office says the house was empty at the time, and no one was injured.

The cause of the fire is under investigation.

Johanns Concerned About FEMA Funds

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — U.S. Sen. Mike Johanns says he's concerned about how long it could take for Omaha to get federal aid for its flood fight.

The Nebraska Republican surveyed the city's flood situation on Saturday.

Johanns says he's talked to the Federal Emergency Management Agency about getting funding for communities dealing with Missouri River flooding but it can sometimes take years for money to start flowing. He's asking FEMA to make the aid a priority.

Digital Divide Narrowing In Rural Nebraska

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A new state-sponsored poll shows that rural Nebraska has made significant gains in its use cell phones, the Internet and other digital technology.

Researchers at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln say the remaining divide is now mostly caused by socio-economic differences in various parts of the state, rather than the availability of technology.

UNL public policy specialist Bradley Lubben says the state's digital divide is more about demographics and socio-economics than it is about the technology. Lubben says the distinction is important, because further efforts to close the divide based solely on technology will be less likely to succeed.

The annual poll, conducted in March and April, found that 91 percent of rural Nebraskans own a cell phone. Three-quarters of poll takers said they use the Internet or email from home.

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Congested Mo. River Threatens Tributaries

BY GRANT SCHULTE
 Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — In a season of flooding by some of the nation's biggest rivers, it's streams most Americans have never heard of that could cause some of the worst problems in the Midwest.

Hundreds of tributaries that feed the congested Missouri River face a greater-than-normal flood risk this summer because of water levels that have kept them from draining. The Missouri is expected to remain near historic highs for months, which means the threat will remain through summer — a season when the Midwest often is beset with thunderstorms that can quickly dump heavy rain.

University of Iowa engineering professor Witold Krajewski, director of the Iowa Flood Center, compared the situation to a "traffic jam" of water. It started with the sustained release of massive amounts of water from dams on the upper Missouri, caused by spring rain and a heavy Rocky Mountain snowpack that filled reservoirs.

"It's like a football game and

baseball game getting out at the same time," Krajewski said. "There are all these cars trying to move. It doesn't take long before drivers can't get out of the side streets."

Backed-up tributaries in South Dakota and Missouri have already submerged streets and threatened homes near the point where they reach the surging river. In Hamburg, Iowa, work crews are keeping close watch on changing levels of the Nishnabotna River to their east, as they try to hold off the Missouri River from the west.

Some tributaries, such as the Nodaway and Big Sioux, are so backed up with high water in the larger river that local officials worry that a well-placed downpour could suddenly pose a new flooding threat.

Nebraska State Climatologist Al Dutcher said the problem won't end soon.

"We're probably going to see the tributaries be problematic all year," Dutcher said. "If we get a monster storm that drops 3 to 4 inches of rain into a basin, all that water has to be evacuated. As it goes out toward the Missouri River, it's going to back up."

Bob Anderson, a spokesman for

the Army Corps of Engineer in Vicksburg, Miss., said similar problems could have happened during spring flooding along the Mississippi River, but heavy rainstorms didn't occur at key times and tributaries didn't swell beyond their normal size.

The flooding along the Souris River that has devastated Minot, N.D. is due to heavy rains, not a tributary backup.

In southwest Iowa, crews in Hamburg have devoted most of their time to building a temporary levee to stop the Missouri, but officials said there is little they can do to protect against flooding by the Nishnabotna if an intense rainstorm hits the area.

In northwest Missouri, the Nodaway River is so clogged with water as it approaches the Missouri River that water is running backward nearly three miles upstream, said Andrew County Emergency Management Director Roger Latham. The township of Nodaway, a tiny community of about 25 people, has evacuated amid fears that the tributary will swell and swamp the area.

"If you want to drop a rubber ducky in the river, you can watch it

float upstream," Latham said. "The Missouri River probably will not affect the township. But if we get any significant rainfall, the Nodaway's got nowhere to go but sideways."

One resident, Gary Nold, said his riverside cabin has taken nearly 3 feet of water from the tributary — the most he's seen since massive flooding in 1993. Dirty water from the Nodaway, filled with corn stalks and tree limbs, crept over its banks and forced the final holdouts in the area to seek dryer ground.

Nold said the cabin, about three-quarters of a mile upstream of where the Nodaway and Missouri rivers meet, has flooded several times before. But the 75-year-old retiree said all the past floods have come from intense rain upstream, not backed-up water.

"I was smart this time," he said. "I took everything out ahead of time. It's getting old, and I'm upset I'll have to clean it. But I'll be back."

The tributary threat comes in the thick of the region's rainiest season. Iowa, Missouri and eastern Nebraska traditionally receive their heaviest rain during the summer.

Nebraska City Helps With Sewage Disposal Amid Flooding

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — The city of Lincoln has been helping private sewage disposal services in Omaha and Plattsmouth dispose of their waste amid Missouri River flooding.

Steve Masters, who's in charge of special projects development for Lincoln Public Works, told the Journal Star that trucks carrying organic waste from septic tanks on farms, industrial sites and other areas have started dumping the sewage into one of the city's wastewater treatment plants.

Those trucks usually dump the waste at plants in Omaha and Plattsmouth, but those facilities have been overwhelmed by the Missouri River and need to cut down the number of loads they take in. Plants are dumping raw sewage into the river in those communities.

"We like to be helpful and as accommodating as we can be in working with other communities," Masters said.

There is a charge to dump sewage at the Lincoln plant but, Masters said, the extra loads

won't bring in a lot of extra money. There have only been a few loads so far, he said.

Lincoln also loaned one of its big pumps to Plattsmouth to help it pump sewage. The city has promised to send others if needed.

Meanwhile, some of Lincoln's road and drainage projects have

been affected by flooding. Some of the city's contractors are sending staff and equipment to eastern Nebraska to help with flood-related projects, Masters said.

"So far," he said, "I don't see that it will necessarily affect completion dates."

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