

Drug Offenses, Sex Crimes Rise In SD

PIERRE (AP) — Arrests for drug offenses, sex crimes and assaults all increased in South Dakota last year, according to a report released Monday.

Attorney General Marty Jackley said the annual crime report for 2012 shows a 2.5 percent increase in assaults over the year, a 9 percent rise in sex offenses and a 17 percent jump in drug arrests. Total criminal offenses rose 11 percent from 2011, to more than 62,000.

There were 17 arrests for homicide or negligent manslaughter last year, and thefts totaled more than \$20 million worth of property loss.

"Our criminal statistics reflect that over all South Dakota remains a relatively safe place to live as a result of law enforcement efforts, strong community involvement, and a supportive legislature," Jackley said in a statement. "However, experiencing an increase in criminal activity justifies the need to examine further strengthening crime prevention and enforcement efforts especially in the sex offense and violent crime areas."

Man Gets Probation In Fraud Case

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — An eastern Nebraska man has been sentenced to five years of probation and ordered to pay more than \$18,000 in restitution after pleading guilty to a federal charge of bankruptcy fraud.

The U.S. Attorney's Office says U.S. District Court Judge John Gerrard sentenced 57-year-old Ross Boydston, of Creston, on Monday.

In March, Boydston pleaded guilty to bankruptcy fraud after being accused of selling livestock that had been pledged as collateral to American Mortgage Company without notifying the company of the sales and without remitting the proceeds to AMC. He also lied about the sales after filing for bankruptcy.

Besides probation, Boydston must pay restitution of \$18,044.

Woman Killed In SD Storm Identified

SIoux FALLS (AP) — Authorities have identified a woman who was killed during a storm at Lake Poinsett in eastern South Dakota.

The Hamlin County Sheriff's Office says 63-year-old Deborah Larson, of Sioux Falls, died Friday night when winds lifted the mobile home she was in and dropped it to the ground. Larson had sought shelter in the home's bathtub.

The storm damaged or destroyed numerous trees and homes throughout the area.

SE Neb. Crash Victim's Name Released

BRADSHAW, Neb. (AP) — Authorities have released the name of a driver killed in a crash off U.S. Highway 34 in southeast Nebraska.

The York News-Times says the York County Sheriff's Department identified him as Steve Opfer, of Polk.

Firefighters from Bradshaw had been sent to what was reported as a cornfield fire after 12 a.m. Saturday. They soon found that a car was aflame in a field.

The accident occurred a half mile east of the Hamilton/York County line.

South Dakota

Berget Execution Date Set

BY KRISTI EATON
 Associated Press

SIoux FALLS — A South Dakota inmate convicted of killing a prison guard during a botched escape attempt will have his execution scheduled for the week of Jan. 12, the state's attorney general announced Monday.

Attorney General Marty Jackley said the warrant of execution for Rodney Berget was issued and Berget's execution will be scheduled between Jan. 12 and Jan. 18. The warden of the South Dakota State Penitentiary will select the exact day and time.

Berget, 51, pleaded guilty to killing prison guard Ronald Johnson on Johnson's 63rd birthday in April 2011. A

judge sentenced Berget to death, but the South Dakota Supreme Court overturned the sentence, ruling that Circuit Judge Brad Zell improperly considered a statement Berget made to a psychiatrist. Berget then sought a new sentencing hearing in front of a jury.

Zell denied that request and resented him to death in May.

Berget's lawyer did not immediately return a message seeking comment.

Berget was serving life sentences for attempted murder and kidnapping when he tried to escape with Eric Robert, who was serving 80 years for a kidnapping conviction.

The two men attacked Johnson while he was alone in the prison in an area where inmates work on uphol-

stery, signs, custom furniture and other projects. Robert put on Johnson's uniform and tried to move a large box, which Berget was inside, toward the prison gate. But the inmates were caught before leaving the prison.

Robert pleaded guilty to the killing and was executed in October.

A third inmate was sentenced to life in prison for his involvement in the escape attempt.

The prison made more than a dozen procedural changes after Johnson's death to improve security and safety. Johnson's widow, Lynette Johnson, has filed a wrongful death lawsuit against the state, the Department of Corrections and several DOC officials.

Storm Knocks Out Power To Thousands In Omaha Area

BY JOSH FUNK
 Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — A thunderstorm that intensified just as it reached Omaha Monday morning knocked out power to more than 50,000 and caused widespread tree damage in the area, officials said.

The storm generated winds around 70 mph as it moved through Omaha and into western Iowa where the winds topped out at 75 mph near Harlan. It knocked down numerous tree limbs and damaged homes and farm buildings, but the storm didn't cause any significant injuries.

Initially, roughly 52,000 utility customers in Omaha and more than 6,000 in Council Bluffs, Iowa, lost power in the storm.

The Omaha Public Power District said 30,340 utility customers lacked power Monday afternoon as crews continued making repairs. MidAmerican Energy said 4,520 customers lacked power in Council Bluffs.

National Weather Service forecaster Brian

Smith said the storm strengthened right after it passed his office in Valley, Neb., making it difficult to provide much warning to residents of west Omaha.

"Unfortunately, sometimes Mother Nature has a mind of its own," Smith said.

In north-central Omaha, a fallen tree crushed the back half of a full-size white Ford van, but no one was inside the van at the time. Police said the van's driver had just parked the vehicle shortly before it was crushed.

Metropolitan Community College had to close its Fort Street campus in northeast Omaha on Monday because of extensive tree damage there. But the campus was able to reopen for classes Monday evening after workers cleaned up tree limbs all day.

In western Iowa, several farm buildings were damaged by the winds.

In Audubon, Iowa, the wind knocked over a grain dryer at the West Central Coop and broke a gas line. So the Audubon County Sheriff's office closed Highway 71 and evacuated nearby buildings for a couple hours.

Man Hurt When Train Hits Car Near Homer

HOMER, Neb. (AP) — A northeast Nebraska man was injured when a train hit his car in Dakota County.

Dakota County Sheriff Chris Kleinberg told the *Sioux City Journal* the crash happened a little after noon Sunday at a crossing just north of Homer.

The driver of the car was Tony C. Josta, of rural Homer.

Kleinberg says he was flown by helicopter to a Sioux City hospital.

Investigators don't know why Josta's car was on the tracks.

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