

Interstate 80 Lanes To Be Restricted In Neb.

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Construction work on Interstate 80 will force lane restrictions on a stretch west of the Milford exit in eastern Nebraska.

The Nebraska Roads Department says the work will begin next week on the nine-mile portion.

Work includes bridge and pavement repairs and asphalt resurfacing.

There will be single-lane closures in both directions during the day and at night.

The work is expected to be finished in June, if weather allows.

Man Sent To Prison For Child Sexual Assault

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A Nebraska man has been sentenced to up to 120 years in prison for sexually assaulting a 6-year-old boy repeatedly over several months.

The attorney general's office says Wednesday that 29-year-old Michael Stephens, of Sutton, was sentenced on three counts of first-degree sexual assault of a child.

Stephens was sentenced to 15 to 40 years in prison on each count, to be served consecutively, or a total term of 45 to 120 years in prison. Stephens was convicted in January.

Lawmakers Advance Updated Nebraska Budget

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska lawmakers have advanced a new state spending plan that includes an additional \$41 million for child welfare services, disaster aid and other priorities.

The budget-adjustment bill won first-round approval Wednesday in the Legislature. The measure updates the state's \$7 billion, two-year budget that passed last year.

The proposal includes \$24 million for child care subsidies, and \$18.5 million to reduce the caseloads and address other problems within the state's child welfare system.

It also would increase the reimbursement paid to doctors, hospitals and nursing homes that serve Medicaid patients. The partial rate increase would cost \$9.6 million, to offset a rate cut that lawmakers approved last year.

The plan adds nearly \$9 million to the governor's emergency program to help cover a recent increase in natural disasters.

Three Arrested In Attempted S. Falls Robbery

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — Sioux Falls police have arrested three suspects in an attempted robbery at a Get-N-Go convenience store.

Authorities say two of the men assaulted the clerk early Wednesday and made an unsuccessful attempt to break into the cash register, while the third man stood outside the store as a lookout.

The three were arrested on robbery and assault charges. The suspects are 22, 25 and 34 years old, and all from Sioux Falls.

Neb. Man Gets Probation For Naked Joyride

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A Nebraska man caught driving drunk while he and some friends were on a naked joyride near Lincoln last winter has been sentenced to six months in jail on a third charge of driving under the influence.

Nickolus Borgman, of Denton, was sentenced on Wednesday in Lancaster County District Court. He lost his driver's license for 15 years and was given five years of probation.

A deputy investigating a suspicious vehicle stopped Borgman's pickup truck in February 2011. He found Borgman and three others naked inside the cab and clothes and empty beer cans in the bed of the truck.

Borgman was arrested. The others weren't cited.

Borgman's two previous DUI convictions and the high level of alcohol in his system made the incident a felony.

Skeletal Remains Found Deadwood Yard

BY JACI CONRAD PEARSON
Black Hills Pioneer

DEADWOOD — For the second time, the ghost of cemeteries past has visited the house at 66 Taylor Ave. in Deadwood.

When the digging for a retaining wall commenced Monday morning that appeared to be century-old skeletal remains were unearthed for the second time in the last 10 years.

The home is situated on the former site of Deadwood's first cemetery — the Ingleside Cemetery used from 1876 to 1878.

"They started digging at around 10 a.m. and I got the call saying they'd found skeletal remains at 3:06 later that afternoon and I came up here immediately," said Deadwood Historic Preservation Officer Kevin Kuchenbecker. "We have a map that shows the approximate boundaries of the former cemetery, so whenever we excavate in this area, we require a qualified archaeologist to be onsite."

Katie Lamie, archaeologist and repository manager with the South Dakota State Historical Society Archaeological Research Center, said that her crew almost had the whole retaining wall trench dug before the scoop that revealed skeletal remains was exhumed.

"There were no artifacts in the soil,

nothing there around it, which is very unusual," Lamie said. "Normally, we're sifting through debris and artifacts of some sort. Now we're just sifting through dirt for the skeletal remains, which, right now, is skull fragments and vertebrae, and we do have some coffin nails. The tree roots really disturbed the site a lot."

The same address revealed skeletal remains that were later interred at Mt. Moriah Cemetery in 2006. Ingleside Cemetery was in use from 1876 to 1878, when an effort was made to move all the bodies there to Mount Moriah for interment.

Evidently, a clean sweep did not ensue, as once again, six years later, the same official procedures were required to be followed.

"The sheriff and Mike (Runge), our archivist, came up there with me. We then contacted the coroner, the state archivist and the proper protocol was followed," Kuchenbecker said. "There is nothing to indicate foul play and it appears evident that the remains date back a century or more."

The residents of the home are overjoyed at the find, feeling that it validates their suspicions of spirits living among them.

"I think it's awesome," said Kelly Forward, who rents the house from owner Mike Hall of Sioux Falls. "There's paranormal activity in

this house all over the place. My nephew's heard footsteps in the basement. I've heard people walking around. It's great. I think it's cool."

Lamie said that once the remains are exhumed, they will go back to the state archaeological research center in Rapid City for initial inventory and diagnostics by a forensic anthropologist, which will answer such questions as which bones, age, gender, heritage.

Archaeologists will also try to find out the identity of the individual and if there are any descendants in the area. That process will take approximately 12 months. If no one lays claim to the body and no descendants are found, the remains will be buried at Mt. Moriah right alongside the last set of remains that were recovered from the property in 2006.

"We've set aside an area right above Mt. Moriah and below Seth Bullock's grave," Kuchenbecker said.

Kuchenbecker said that the project to be completed is the replacement of a retaining wall on the upper side of 66 Taylor Ave. The wall is failing and moving toward the residence, which is a contributing historical structure on the historic register.

"The wall will be replaced to protect the resource," Kuchenbecker said.

Gov. Says Plains Snowpack Must Be Monitored

BY CHET BROKAW
Associated Press

PIERRE — South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard said Wednesday a better system for predicting snowmelt from Plains states should be put in place quickly to help avoid a repeat of last summer's Missouri River flooding.

An expanded Plains snowpack monitoring system needs to be set up while memories of the floods are fresh and everyone is willing to spend the money, Daugaard told top officials of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which manages the 2,341-mile-long river that flows from Montana through North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa and Missouri.

"There is some urgency to that. The further we get away from the flooding, the less willingness there is to remember how bad it was," Daugaard said.

The governor met with Brig. Gen. John McMahon, commander of the corps' Northwestern Division, and Col. Robert Ruch, commander of the agency's Omaha District. The two, along with other

corps staff, are spending the week looking at the six dams in Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota.

McMahon said the corps is working with other agencies to determine how to create and fund an expanded plains snowpack monitoring system, one of the recommendations made by an expert panel that studied last summer's flooding. A more extensive system is already in place for monitoring the snowpack in the northern Rocky Mountains, he said.

A drier winter has substantially lessened the chance of flooding this year, but the corps is reviewing many aspects of managing the system, McMahon said.

"Even though the pressure is off, so to speak in the immediate time frame, we can't get complacent here," McMahon said.

Last summer, the corps had to release unprecedented amounts of water through the Missouri River dams to get rid of water from heavier than normal snowmelt in the mountains and Plains, as well as record rainfall in the spring and early summer

in the upper Missouri River basin.

The corps and cities along the river put up temporary levees that held back the floodwaters, but some South Dakota homes in Pierre, Fort Pierre and Dakota Dunes were damaged by rising groundwater.

Many residents criticized the corps for not recognizing more quickly that a heavy Plains snowpack would increase runoff. Critics said flood damage could have been limited, at least somewhat, if the agency had released more water from the dams earlier.

The review — issued in December — said the flood was caused by record runoff and that the corps did what it could. However, the panel also said management changes, including better monitoring of snow on the plains, could help avoid a repeat.

The governor said corps

officials learned last year that they needed to communicate more and help states deal with flood problems. He said he learned how the upstream and downstream parts of the river work together as a system.

"I have a better big-picture view now than I did," Daugaard said.

McMahon said the corps has worked to repair levees and infrastructure around dams since the flood water receded last fall. He said the corps also realizes it must improve the way it tells the public how the river is being managed.

McMahon and Ruch are leaving their posts soon; McMahon is retiring and Ruch is being transferred to another district. Daugaard said he was disappointed to learn that news Wednesday, as he has developed a good relationship with them.

Dakotas Experiencing Record Heat, High Fire Danger

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Record heat is blanketing the Dakotas as winter comes to a close, making wildfires, rather than flooding, the main concern this spring.

National Weather Service said nearly a dozen cities set high-temperature records on Tuesday, from 59 degrees at Grand Forks in northeastern North Dakota to 75 degrees in Rapid City in southwestern South Dakota. Some South Dakota cities including Pierre, Mitchell and Yankton made it into the 80s on Tuesday.

The weather service forecast temperatures in the two states in the 50s, 60s and 70s for the rest of the week, with more record highs possible.

Overly wet conditions last spring led to widespread flooding in the Dakotas. This year's warm, dry weather heading into the start of spring next week has increased the wildfire danger in the two states. Several counties have implemented burn bans, and officials are cautioning that the fire danger at Black Hills National Forest in western South Dakota is "very high."

Forest management officer Todd Pechota said in a statement that the previous two years of wet weather has resulted in an above-normal amount of forest material to feed wildfires.

"That, coupled with this winter's below-average snowfall and recent warm, dry windy weather, presents significant challenges to firefighting personnel," he said.

Fires already are cropping up in the two states: three blazes burned at least 1,000 acres in south central North Dakota on Monday; and a Tuesday blaze scorched about 20 acres near

Badlands National park in southwestern South Dakota. Fire officials are urging the public to be cautious.

"Grasses are extremely dry and fire will spread rapidly from even a spark," Jay Esperance, director of the South Dakota Wildland Fire Division, said in a statement.

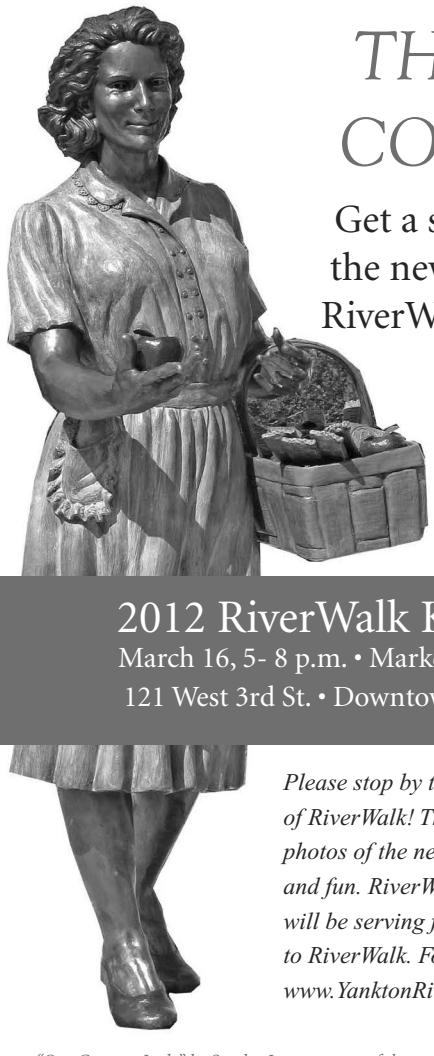
Mary Senger, emergency manager in North Dakota's Burleigh County, said wildfires will continue until the region gets moisture.

"It's dry out there and with a lot of vegetation to fuel the fire,"

she told The Bismarck Tribune. "It's compounded by high winds."

Another worry is rapidly deteriorating ice conditions on lakes. The deadline in North Dakota for winter anglers to get fish houses off lakes is Thursday, but state wildlife officials last week urged anglers to remove them early.

Some people did not heed the thin ice warning: vehicles have fallen through the ice this week on Pipestem Lake and Devils Lake in eastern North Dakota. No injuries were reported.



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"Our Canteen Lady" by Sondra Jonson — one of the new 2012 RiverWalk sculptures.

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