

Neb. Farmer Thankful To Be Safe After Twister

SHICKLEY, Neb. (AP) — A farmstead in south-central Nebraska suffered extensive damage when a tornado touched down Wednesday night, but owner Randy Williams said he doesn't care about the needed repairs or lost and broken belongings.

He's thankful that he and his wife, Penny, made it through the storm unharmed.

"I thought God protected us," Williams told the *Hastings Tribune*. "We're safe. The rest of it can all be replaced."

The Williamses rode out Wednesday night's storm in a concrete-lined shelter under their porch. They, along with their dog and cat, were unscathed.

"The first thing we noticed was a big pressure drop," Williams said. "It was enough to make our ears hurt, and that carried on for probably 30 or 40 seconds. ... After the pressure dropped, we started hearing damage — things like windows going, things breaking off the house and hitting the house."

The tornado that swept through was an EF-1, with wind speeds of about 105 mph, according to Fillmore County emergency management director Donna Mainwaring, who'd been in contact with the National Weather Service.

Most of the damage from the twister was confined to the Williams farmstead. The house sustained structural damage and lost part of its roof, and five outbuildings were destroyed. A top-pled grain bin knocked out a transformer.

About 20 volunteers and a local construction crew turned out Thursday morning to help with repairs.

"I have friends and neighbors from all over this area," William said. "It's great the community has come together like this."

Reduction Likely For Black Hills Deer Season

CUSTER (AP) — South Dakota's Game, Fish and Parks Commission is proposing another reduction in Black Hills deer-hunting licenses this fall. The goal is to rebuild a deer herd that is one-third the size it used to be.

The *Rapid City Journal* reports commissioners are proposing 3,618 licenses for a November rifle deer-hunting season in the Black Hills. That is down more than 900 permits from last year and far below the 8,000-9,000 permits authorized annually between 2006 and 2008, when the Black Hills herd was estimated at 60,000 deer. It is now down to 40,000.

Wildlife officials say hunting pressure is the main reason for the herd decline. Some hunters think mountain lions are the main factor.

The commission could approve the season proposal at its meeting in Pierre next month.

Nearly 5,400 lbs Of Medicine Collected In Neb.

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — The Nebraska State Patrol and the Nebraska Attorney General's Office say nearly 5,400 pounds of medication was collected statewide on Prescription Drug Take-Back Day.

The federal Drug Enforcement Administration says this past Saturday's event gave people a chance to help prevent pill abuse and theft by getting rid of potentially dangerous expired, unused and unwanted medications.

Federal authorities say that since 2000, more than half of the nation's poisoning death victims between the ages of 15 to 19 have overdosed on prescription drugs.

Safe Stolen In Sioux Falls Casino Burglary

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — Sioux Falls police are investigating a casino burglary in which a safe was stolen.

Police spokesman Sam Clemens tells the *Argus Leader* that a man used a hammer to break a window at Ken's Korner about 2:30 a.m. Thursday. The suspect put the safe in the back of a pickup truck he had backed up near the window. The truck had been stolen and was later found a few blocks away.

Clemens did not have details on the size and weight of the safe, which contained an undisclosed amount of cash.

Man Pleads Guilty In S.D. Robbery Attempts

RAPID CITY (AP) — A man accused of trying to rob two Rapid City convenience stores with a BB gun in the same night has reached a plea agreement with prosecutors.

KEVN-TV reports that 26-year-old Robert White Plume Janis pleaded guilty to one count of attempted robbery and prosecutors dropped a separate robbery count.

Authorities said Janis robbed a Loaf-N-Jug and then tried to rob a Corner Pantry on Jan. 13. He was arrested after a police chase in Nebraska five days later.

Sentencing is scheduled for June 7.

Storms Bring High Winds, Rain, Hail To Iowa

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Storms rolling across the Upper Midwest are bringing strong winds, rain, hail and the threat of tornadoes to northern Iowa.

The National Weather Service says a funnel cloud was reported Friday afternoon about 3 miles west of Algona. It reached the ground, but no debris was seen and no damage was reported. Winds of 65 mph were reported in Estherville, with hail near Armstrong and Lone Rock.

A tornado warning was issued late Friday afternoon for parts of Hancock, Humboldt and Kossuth counties. A severe thunderstorm watch was in effect into Friday night for northern and central Iowa.

Nebraska Attorney General:

Ordinances Protecting Gays Illegal

BY TIMBERLY ROSS
Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Nebraska cities can't adopt ordinances protecting people from discrimination for being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender because the state's anti-discrimination laws don't extend to sexual orientation, the state attorney general's office said in a legal opinion issued Friday.

Voters can approve changes to city charters to extend protections to groups not covered by state law, but local governments lack the authority, the opinion said.

"Nebraska statutes do not authorize political subdivisions in Nebraska, including municipalities, to expand protected classifications beyond the scope of the civil rights classifications created in state statute," Attorney General Jon Bruning said in a statement after the release.

The opinion, which critics predicted would get shot down in court, was issued in response to a request by conservative state Sen. Beau McCoy, of Omaha, who introduced legislation this year that would have barred counties and cities from adopting anti-discrimination ordinances that go beyond statewide rules. The bill didn't advance out of committee.

McCoy said the opinion frees him of having to introduce the measure again next year.

"I believe that it not only backs up and

supports what I have said for almost eight months now, but it probably goes further in outlining why civil rights and discrimination measures are state issues," he said.

Neither state nor federal laws expressly protect people from discrimination for being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.

Omaha, Nebraska's most populous city, narrowly adopted an ordinance in March employers, employment agencies, job training programs, labor groups, public accommodations and businesses that contract with the city from discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation. It provides exemptions for religious organizations.

Omaha city attorney Paul Kratz said the city's legal team disagrees with the opinion, and he doesn't think it will have any effect on the new ordinance.

"If somebody sues us, we'll deal with it in court," he said.

The city council in Lincoln, the state's second biggest city, will vote on a similar ordinance on May 14, Mayor Chris Beutler said at a news conference Friday.

"The basic issue here is fairness. No one should fear losing their job because of sexual orientation," Beutler said.

He cited the state motto, "equality before the law," and said, "it's time to make those words ring true for everybody."

Jonathan Benjamin-Alvarado, a political science professor at the University of Ne-

braska at Omaha who joined with Equal Omaha in advocating for the ordinance, said the opinion is disingenuous given the protections that are starting to be granted to gay and transgender people under federal law.

"I don't believe his ruling, per se, would withstand further constitutional scrutiny," he said, suggesting the Republican attorney general is trying to rally conservative support for his U.S. Senate run.

Meredith Bacon, a transgender professor in the political science department, said she hopes the ordinance is taken to court, where she predicts it will prevail.

"Dozens, if not hundreds, of cities in the United States have done exactly what Attorney General Bruning says is not possible in Nebraska," she said.

Rev. Al Riskowski, executive director of the Nebraska Family Council, said "it affirms what we've been saying all along — that this should be a state issue."

His group has spoken against the two cities' efforts to pass the ordinances.

Riskowski said cities shouldn't be creating protected classes because there are no state standards for doing so, which leaves the door open for any group to become a protected class.

"Your imagination is your only limit," he said.

Neb. High Court Denies
New Trial For Ex-CSI Chief

BY MARGERY A. BECK
Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — The Nebraska Supreme Court on Friday upheld the conviction of a former top crime scene investigator sent to prison for evidence tampering in a double murder case.

Former CSI chief David Kofoed had asked the state's high court to grant him a new trial, arguing among other things that Cass County District Judge Randall Rehmeier should have recused himself from the case. Kofoed said he did not know until after his trial that the judge's cousin is a sheriff's deputy who supported a Douglas County employee critical of Kofoed.

But the high court said Friday that "no reasonable person would have questioned the trial judge's impartiality under these circumstances."

Kofoed also argued the trial court had erred in allowing evidence indicating Kofoed had tampered with DNA evidence in an earlier case.

The Supreme Court, however, backed the trial court's determination that there were similarities between the 2006 double murder investigation for which Kofoed was convicted and the investigation of the 2003 murder of 4-year-old Brendan Gonzalez. In both cases, there were confessions by the suspects and a lack of physical evidence to corroborate them until Kofoed found a speck of blood that previously had been overlooked.

"Simply stated, Kofoed, as the primary custodian, was the fox guarding the chicken coop," the high court wrote. "We conclude that the trial court did not err in concluding that the state's evidence was sufficient to prove that in 2003, Kofoed falsified evidence during the Gonzalez

murder investigation."

Kofoed was sentenced in 2010 to between 20 months and four years in prison for tampering with evidence in the case of two men wrongly charged in the 2006 shotgun slayings of Wayne and Sharon Stock of rural Murdock. The men, Matthew Livers and Nicholas Sampson, spent several months in jail before they were cleared. Prosecutors said Kofoed planted some of Wayne Stock's blood in a car linked to Livers and Nicholas.

Livers initially confessed to the killings but quickly recanted, and his attorney has said the confession was coerced. Prosecutors said Kofoed found the blood evidence after Livers recanted his confession.

The blood was the only physical evidence that tied the two men to the slayings. A man and woman from Wisconsin eventually pleaded guilty to murdering the couple and are each serving life in prison.

Kofoed had maintained during his trial that accidental contamination was likely to blame, but allowed that someone else could have planted the evidence. The Supreme Court also said the trial court correctly denied Kofoed's motion for a new trial based on that argument.

"The car had already been thoroughly and unsuccessfully examined for DNA evidence, and no officer had requested further testing," the high court's opinion read. "So no one but Kofoed would have known that Kofoed would nonetheless search for, and find, a DNA sample in an obscure location of the car."

Kofoed's attorney, Steve Lefler of Omaha, said Friday that Kofoed has little recourse for clearing his name following the high court's opinion, other than filing a post-conviction motion claiming his lawyer was ineffective.

Top S.D. Republican Party
Officials Embrace Romney

BY CHET BROKAW
Associated Press

PIERRE — The three top officials in the South Dakota Republican Party have begun to shed their earlier neutrality now that Mitt Romney is the party's presumed presidential nominee.

South Dakota Republican Party Chairman Tim Rave of Baltic, National Committeeman Dana Randall of Aberdeen and National Committeewoman Mary Jean Jensen of Lemmon are automatic delegates to the party's national convention as members of the Republican National Convention.

They declined to endorse anyone earlier in the year, saying they would support the candidate who won South Dakota's June 5 primary, which will choose the state's other 25 delegates to the Republican National Convention.

But Randall and Jensen said they pledged their support to Romney after meeting him recently. And Rave said he supports Romney, but if one of the other candidates on the primary ballot happens to win, Rave would still vote for the victor at the convention.

"I certainly at this point am a

Romney supporter personally," Rave said Friday.

Randall also said if someone other than Romney wins the state primary, he would vote for the primary winner. Romney, though, won his support after the former Massachusetts governor said he would seek unity with the candidates he defeated for the presidential nomination.

"That's when I said it's time to join with him and move forward," Randall said.

Jensen said she believes Romney can solve the nation's economic problems.

"I told him I was on board," she said.

Romney, Ron Paul, Rick Santorum and Newt Gingrich are on South Dakota's Republican primary ballot, which was set before Santorum and Gingrich dropped out of the race. Delegates will be awarded according to the primary vote, but only those candidates who get more than 20 percent of the popular vote will win any of the 25 delegate positions at stake.

South Dakota has no Democratic primary because President Barack Obama was the only Democratic candidate certified in the state.

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