

Body Found In Burned Home Near Aberdeen

ABERDEEN (AP) — Authorities are investigating the death of a 20-year-old man whose body was found in a burned home north of Aberdeen.

The *Aberdeen American News* on Monday identified the victim as Evan Odde.

He had been living in the Aberdeen home of his grandparents, Greg and Nancy Odde.

The newspaper quoted Greg Odde as saying that Evan Odde committed suicide, "and in the circumstances surrounding that, the fire got started."

The fire was reported at about 7 p.m. Sunday.

Greg Odde is the owner of the Aberdeen Wings hockey team.

Brown County Sheriff Mark Milbrandt says his office and the state Department of Criminal Investigation are working on the death investigation. Aberdeen Rural Fire Chief Derwin Kampa says the fire department is investigating what caused the fire.

Men Plead Guilty In Onida Farmstead Shooting

ONIDA (AP) — Two farmhands have pleaded guilty to attempted aggravated assault in the shooting of another man at a party last November.

Zane Van Der Merwe and Stephan Van Der Berg will be sentenced July 9. They both face a maximum penalty of 7 1/2 years in prison and a \$15,000 fine.

KCCR Radio reports the two men were accused of shooting Gregorio Garcia during a party south of Onida. Onida is about 25 miles northeast of Pierre in central South Dakota.

Van Der Merwe and Van Der Berg are farmhands from South Africa. Prosecutors say when Garcia showed up at the party, the two men took shotguns outside to try to force him to leave. Van Der Merwe and Garcia fought and Garcia was wounded when the shotgun went off.

Trial Reset For Neb. Man In Passenger's Death

SCOTTSBLUFF, Neb. (AP) — Trial is reset for a Nebraska Panhandle man charged with vehicular homicide and manslaughter in the death of his passenger who officials say stuck his head out the window and a hit a road sign.

KNEB radio in Scottsbluff says the bench trial of 19-year-old Bryan Bloom, of Henry, which had been set for later this month, is now scheduled for June.

Authorities say Bloom was driving a van to Torrington, Wyo., in June 2011 when his passenger, 18-year-old Johrdan Stone, was killed.

Bloom told police he didn't know Scott had been hurt until they arrived at a home in Torrington. Stone died of neck and head injuries.

Officials say Bloom was driving drunk. Court documents show Stone also had been drinking.

Madison Residents Eye Changes After Flooding

MADISON (AP) — Madison residents continue to clean up a week after a storm dropped six inches of rain that caused flash flooding, and some want to ensure it never happens again.

They plan to ask city leaders to consider building a water retention area north of the city to keep heavy rains from flooding Memorial Creek, KELO-TV reported. Heather Roling said she also plans to advocate the creation of a telephone notification system to alert residents of impending bad weather.

Roling said she lost many personal items when her basement filled with four feet of water during the overnight storm May 5-6.

"All my baby pictures are gone. The stuff can be replaced, the memories can't and it is heartbreaking for all of us," she said. "It's not just me. It's the entire community going through this."

Kelli Stout is due to give birth any day, and she and her family have been forced to live with relatives because their own home is uninhabitable after a basement wall collapsed.

The storm damaged about 100 homes and businesses in the eastern South Dakota city of about 6,500 people. It also led to one death, when an Alabama man visiting family drowned in the creek.

USDA To Collect Crop Info From Nebraska

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — The U.S. Department of Agriculture will be fanning out across Nebraska next month to collect crop information on this year's harvest.

The USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) will spend the first two weeks of June surveying thousands of Nebraska farmers to peg the number of acres, what crops have been planted and are in storage.

The agriculture survey is done online, by mail or by phone. The area survey involves randomly selected tracts of land and interviews with farmers and ranchers.

Dan Groskurth is director of the NASS Nebraska Field Office. He says the information is a critical part of several national reports, including the annual acreage report and a quarterly grain stocks report to be released on June 29.

South Dakota

Oil, Gas Development Studied

BY CHET BROKAW

Associated Press

PIERRE — Gov. Dennis Daugaard and state lawmakers will conduct coordinated studies of what South Dakota should do to prepare for a possible boom in oil and gas drilling, officials said Monday.

Jason Glodd, a policy advisor to the governor, said Daugaard has set up two working groups to study what will happen if the oil boom in western North Dakota spreads south. One will predict the size and location of possible exploration and production, and the other will look at what roads, water systems, housing, schools and other facilities and services will be needed to handle an influx of people and oil rigs.

South Dakota will seek to learn from what has happened in North Dakota, but South Dakota is unlikely to experience as big a boom as its neighbor to the north, Glodd said.

"Realistically, the development will likely be much less than that," he told a legislative panel.

The Legislature's Executive Board last month decided to create a special committee that will study the expected benefits and problems that would be caused by an oil and gas boom.

The board, which handles management and administrative matters for the Legislature, decided Monday that the special committee should focus on taxes and the problems caused when the land and the oil beneath it are owned by different people.

Surface landowners often don't own the



Daugaard

After North Dakota's oil industry began to boom in the past decade, South Dakota started an effort to encourage more oil and gas exploration in the state. Part of that effort has been to put drilling and geological information online to help companies decide where to explore in South Dakota.

However, officials in North Dakota have advised South Dakota to begin preparing for both the benefits and problems that will accompany increased oil and gas development.

Increased drilling is expected to bring increased truck traffic, housing shortages, skyrocketing rents and the need for additional restaurants, truck stops and other services in western South Dakota. The influx of oil and gas workers will likely require additional law enforcement, firefighting and medical services, and small towns will be faced with demands that exceed their current water and sewer systems.

"There's maybe the prospect of additional revenue from the potential development. There's also the prospect of additional

headaches," said Fred Baatz, a research analyst for the Legislature.

Increased oil and gas drilling would boost tax collections for the state and counties, Baatz said. State law now imposes a tax, shared equally between the state and counties, equal to 4.5 percent of the market value of oil produced. And sales and construction taxes also would be applied to oil rigs and associated development, he said.

One of the biggest problems in encouraging oil and gas drilling is a state law that allows ownership of underlying oil and minerals to be severed from ownership of the land's surface. When many South Dakota farms and ranches were sold, the original owners kept rights to any minerals under that land.

Mineral interests passed down through several generations have been divided among many heirs, so companies will be reluctant to drill in areas where it's difficult to track down all the people who hold a share of those mineral rights, said Amanda Reiss, another legislative staffer.

One state law allows rights to minerals and oil to return to the surface owner if they are unused for 23 years, but that provision may be unconstitutional, Reiss said.

Another way to sort out ownership of oil underlying the land would be to have counties assess property taxes on those rights, Reiss said. If those taxes are not paid for a number of years, the oil rights could be sold to an easily identifiable owner, she said.

Nebraska

State Employee Insurance Costs Are High

BY GRANT SCHULTE

Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Nebraska taxpayers are paying far more than necessary into the state's health insurance program because of high administrative costs, poor oversight and a failure to monitor and control spending, State Auditor Mike Foley said Monday.

The Republican auditor said the cost of the most popular state employee coverage plan rose to more than \$27,000 per worker in 2011 — nearly \$12,000 more than the national average.

Foley said the family coverage plan was designed inefficiently and has led to nearly \$1.1 million in questionable or unallowable expenses, such as claims from people who are not eligible. His comments came as he released an audit highly critical of the state's health care costs.

Nebraska's health insurance program covers 29,000 state employees and dependents. The state pays 79 percent of the premium costs, while employees cover 21 percent.

"I'm sure (the Department of Administrative Services) will want to quibble with some of the details we have in this report," Foley said at a press conference. "The bottom line

is we have the highest-cost plan in the country. That needs to change."

The audit found that the most popular choice among state employees, the State BlueChoicePlan, had the highest premiums among the four available coverage options. The plan accounted for more than 5,700 of the 13,183 employees covered by the state in December 2011, according to the audit. But the number of employees participating in the plan has shrunk from nearly 8,400 in June 2010.

The audit shows the state paid \$9.3 million in administrative expenses in 2010, with 14,000 enrolled participants. The University of Nebraska, by contrast, spent \$4.4 million while covering fewer than 12,000 current and former employees. The plan charges a \$37.47 monthly administrative fee for each employee, more than the comparable plans in Kansas, Wyoming and Montana, the report says.

Auditors also questioned the need for so-called "stop loss" insurance designed to reduce the risk of significant claims made by a single participant. The audit said the program holds a \$65 million cash reserve, an amount large enough to cover five months of claims expenses. But the department "has not performed an analysis to determine whether stop-loss insurance

has been beneficial to the state," the report says.

Foley said he wasn't sure whether a recently announced switch to United Health Care would lower the state's costs. The Department of Administrative Services has estimated the move will save taxpayers and state employees a combined \$8 million a year, but the state's longtime provider, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, is challenging the decision in court.

Foley said many of the doctors that state employees use are not part of the United Health Care network.

Carlos Castillo, Nebraska's director of Administrative Services, disputed the audit's findings.

"We have big disagreements over the facts as reported in the performance audit," Castillo said. "There are a lot of things that we contend are not portrayed accurately."

Castillo said the audit focused on the most expensive coverage available to state employees, and noted that the proportion of participants has shrunk in recent years.

One part of the audit says the state has improperly allowed Nebraska State Credit Union employees to participate in the plan, which generated \$147,500 in costs but only \$62,175 in premiums paid into the plan. Castillo said the Nebraska Attorney General's office has issued an opinion saying the state could fall victim to a legal challenge if those employees were excluded.

"There's some disagreement over how he defines eligible and how we define eligible," Castillo said.

Omaha Sen. Bob Krist, a member of the Legislature's Performance Audit Committee, said lawmakers will "take every action necessary to resolve this situation."

Memorial Day Deadlines

The Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan will be closed Monday, May 28th, for the Memorial Day holiday.

The following deadlines will apply:

Out On The Town — Wednesday, May 23

Tuesday, May 29 newspaper — 5 p.m., Wednesday, May 23

Wednesday, May 30 newspaper — 5 p.m., Thursday, May 24

Thursday, May 31 newspaper — 5 p.m., Friday, May 25

There will be no newspaper on Monday, May 28, 2012.

YANKTON DAILY

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 7:40 am Safe Boating Week
 (Larry Hintgen)
 8:15 am Hy-Vee Dietician
 (Rachel Pinos)
 8:45 am Dakota Territorial Museum
 (Crystal Nelson)
Wednesday, May 16
 7:40 am Servant Hearts Clinic
 (Dr. Mark Mabree)
 8:15 am Hy-Vee Foods
 (Chef Staci)
 8:45 am Historic Downtown Yankton
 (Hanna Sitting Crow)

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