

MIDWEST DIGEST

Heavy Rain Causes Flooding In Southeast SD

BROOKINGS (AP) — Heavy rain this week has caused flooding in southeast South Dakota and forced some evacuations in Brookings and Flandreau.

Officials evacuated more than a dozen homes, two mobile home parks and a few apartment complexes in Brookings Thursday morning because of flooding in the northwest part of the city. A handful of homes on the east side of Flandreau were also evacuated.

More than 4 inches of rain fell in the Brookings area on Wednesday and Thursday, causing the flooding. The flood water began falling Friday, but officials believe it could take several days to recede.

William Baxter told KELO-TV he and his wife probably lost everything when their trailer home flooded because they didn't have much time to gather belongings.

SD State Fair Revenue Up Nearly 10 Percent

PIERRE (AP) — The South Dakota State Fair generated nearly 10 percent more tax revenue this year.

The state Department of Revenue said Friday that preliminary figures show the five-day fair generated \$114,906 in tax revenue this year. That's up from last year's \$104,938.

The 125th edition of the annual event in Huron wrapped up on Sept. 6.

Fair officials have said the event benefitted from great weather and excellent entertainment this year.

Neb. Man Sues Wal-Mart Over Fall At Store

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A Dakota City man is suing Wal-Mart Stores Inc. over a fall last year at its South Sioux City location that he says left him with serious injuries.

Larry Noragon says in the lawsuit filed Friday in U.S. District Court in Omaha that he tripped over a portable sign while leaving the store in October. He says he suffered permanent injuries and has amassed \$415,000 in medical bills.

Noragon accuses Wal-Mart of negligence. His lawsuit says the sign was placed in line with the store's exit and customers weren't warned, among other things.

Wal-Mart spokesman Greg Rossiter says the safety and security of the company's customers is important, but he wouldn't comment directly on the lawsuit.

Noragon is seeking unspecified monetary compensation.

Neb. Man Charged In 4 Motorcyclists' Deaths

LITTLE SIOUX, Iowa (AP) — Prosecutors charged a Nebraska man Friday with four counts of vehicular homicide, after police said he drunkenly swerved into oncoming traffic along an Iowa highway and struck four motorcyclists, killing them.

Andrew Schlichtemeier, 21, of Murray, Neb., had a blood-alcohol level of 0.373 percent, or more than four times the state's legal limit of 0.08 percent, after the Aug. 9 crash along Interstate 29 near Little Sioux, police said. He also had traces of marijuana in his system, they said.

In an affidavit accompanying the charges, Iowa State Patrol trooper L.M. Olesen said he interviewed eyewitnesses who saw Schlichtemeier's pickup truck cross the highway's center line and collide head on with the motorcyclists.

Attorney Steve Lefler, of Omaha, Neb., said Schlichtemeier was with family on Friday and that he was making arrangements for Schlichtemeier to turn himself in. He said he was hopeful to get a bond set over the weekend or on Monday.

"We've been waiting for this. I don't want to say we're glad it came, but we knew it was coming and it's time to move on," he said.

Little Sioux is about 50 miles north of Omaha, Neb.

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3 Nebraska Lakes Still Under Algae Health Alerts

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska officials are continuing health warnings at three lakes because high levels of toxic blue-green algae have been found.

The state Department of Health and Human Services maintained health alerts Friday for Merritt Reservoir in Cherry County, Kirkman's Cove near Humboldt and Willow Creek Lake near Pierce.

Warnings were lifted for Swan Creek Lake 5A near Tobias and Red Willow Reservoir near McCook.

Some types of toxic blue-green algae can produce dangerous toxins.

People can still camp, fish and boat on lakes under an alert but should not have full-body contact with the water.

Dry Day Gives Flood Fighters Break In Minn., Wis.

BY CHRIS WILLIAMS AND TODD RICHMOND Associated Press Writers

OWATONNA, Minn. — Cindy Dorsey has lived near the Straight River in southern Minnesota for 15 years and never laid a sandbag before Friday.

But the river's swift rise from heavy rain forced Dorsey to learn quickly and, after rising at dawn, she had placed at least 200 of the bags outside her Owatonna home to protect it.

"It's going to be one heck of a cleanup," said Dorsey as she watched water lap against the sandbags. "Let's hope it's just getting rid of the sandbags."

Several towns across southern Minnesota and southwest Wisconsin grappled with a flood threat brought on by a powerful storm system that dumped almost a half-foot of rain on the region a day earlier. Hundreds of homes were evacuated, including 70 in Owatonna, a town of 24,000 about 65 miles south of Minneapolis.

Friday was dry for much of the region, giving a respite to emergency workers dealing with the flooding. But rain was back in the regional forecast for Saturday, though not nearly as much as Thursday's downpours.

In the Wisconsin town of Arcadia, about 90 minutes east of Owatonna, water was receding from downtown Friday. Businesses were open and drawing crowds. A day after emergency officials evacuated 343 homes, some residents were returning as the creeks that flooded downtown dipped.

But other parts of the com-

munity of about 2,400 were dealing with rising water. About 20 people were evacuated Friday morning from a senior housing complex in Arcadia.

People living in homes just northwest of the Trempealeau River were asked to leave as the river rose near the top of Arcadia's two main bridges. Residents gathered on the swollen river's banks, snapping pictures and shaking their heads.

"I'm not freaking out," said Andrew Drouillard, who stood on the sidewalk in front of his River Street home, about a half-block from the river. "We're in a swamp. That's all it is."

Drouillard watched brown water fill the street. The 56-year-old handyman said he had 4 feet of water in his basement. He moved his belongings off his floor and packed his truck with essentials in case he had to leave.

"Just watch and wait, said Drouillard's neighbor, Jerrod Skilling, 21, a roofer. "Hope for the best."

Skilling sat on his front porch with a case of beer, watching his girlfriend's 4-year-old daughter, Serenity Apicella, frolic in the curb-high water.

The National Weather Service said Friday afternoon that the Trempealeau River had begun to recede.

Meanwhile, in southeast Minnesota, more than a dozen homes near a dam in the small town of Oronoco were evacuated Friday for fear that torrential rains had weakened the dam. Not far away, all of Zumbro Falls' 180 residents were evacuated as rising floodwaters threatened

access. At least 10 school districts canceled classes.

North of Owatonna, the north-flowing Straight River's high water was headed for other towns. Medford, which has about 1,000 residents, was sandbagging along the river and Northfield was dealing with flooding in its public safety building.

Many highways and county roads throughout southern and southeast Minnesota were flooded and barricaded.

In Wisconsin, flood warnings were issued in more than a dozen counties across the western and north-central parts of the state. Officials working the Hatfield Dam in Clark County issued a "red alert condition," warning that all gates were open. Eighty homes in Black River Falls and seven in the village of Marathon City were evacuated.

Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty toured flood-damaged areas Friday, a day after he and Wisconsin Gov. Jim Doyle declared emergencies in portions of their states.

Pawlenty, who praised those dealing with the water, said he would work with legislative leaders for a possible special session to approve money for the flood damage.

"These communities may be physically damaged, but their spirit is strong," Pawlenty said.

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Brookings County Emergency Management Director Todd Struwe said about 50 people were out of their homes Friday evening in the city of Brookings. Some smaller creeks already have crested, but the Big Sioux River continues rising, Struwe said.

In Owatonna, officials said the Straight River was cresting Friday, dispelling worries that two more neighborhoods would have to evacuate. The high water did wash out high school homecoming festivities.

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