

MIDWEST DIGEST

Train Derails In Downtown Belle Fourche

BELLE FOURCHE (AP) — A DM&E freight train has derailed in downtown Belle Fourche late Sunday night. KBFS-AM radio reports that the derailment blocked two of the city's four intersections Monday morning. No injuries were reported. Officials did not immediately know how long it would take to clear the derailed cars.

State Fair Attendance Increases 9 Percent

HURON (AP) — Attendance at the South Dakota State Fair increased 9 percent over last year. State Fair Manager Jerome Hertel told the *Huron Plainsman* that 177,770 people attended the fair this year, up from about 163,000 in 2009. The 125th edition of the annual event in Huron wrapped up on Sept. 6. Hertel says about 157,000 attended the fair in 2008 and 151,000 walked through the gates in 2007. Hertel says the strong attendance numbers this year came despite rain on Labor Day, the fair's last day.

Heavy Loads Cause S.D. Bridge Collapse

HURON (AP) — Officials say heavy loads caused a bridge to collapse in eastern South Dakota. The *Huron Plainsman* reports that the small bridge spanning Foster Creek northwest of Lake Byron was in poor condition and had been scheduled for replacement this year. But the work was delayed because bids came in too high. Beadle County officials say the wood and steel bridge collapsed Friday morning, not long after a school bus had gone over it. The state had called for bids for the bridge work this year but they came in more than \$100,000 over the estimate. Construction isn't expected to begin until next spring.

Lincoln Schools Getting Tougher On Texting

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — High schools in Lincoln are trying to get a handle on texting. At East High, if you're caught once texting in class, the cell phone is confiscated and a parent or guardian must pick it up. A second offense earns the miscreant a day of in-school suspension; a third offense draws a day of suspension of campus. At Northeast, use of electronic devices is banned totally while kids are at school. Northeast Principal Kurt Glathar told the *Lincoln Journal Star* that cell phone and other electronic messages devices don't contribute to the learning and instructional environment. Southeast Principal Pat Hunter-Pirtle says texting is "the reality of our society. But it's got to be managed or it's just out of control."

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Grand Island Renews Its Terrorism Rider

GRAND ISLAND, Neb. (AP) — The Grand Island City Council has decided to continue a terrorism rider on the city insurance again next year. Utilities director Gary Mader said the city's general policy doesn't cover terrorism, so the rider had to be added. It will cost nearly \$22,000, up from \$20,000 this year — the first year the city has purchased such coverage. The Grand Island City Council rejected such coverage in 2003, when terrorism riders first became available. Last week the council votes to buy a rider for a second straight year. Coverage has been available since a federal program passed in 2002, after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, D.C. According to The Grand Independent, Mader said the question facing people, businesses and government entities is how to define terrorism. He said a number of groups might be classified as terrorist. Some are internationally based, others are based in the United States. Mader said he doesn't think a central Nebraska city such as Grand Island would be a terrorist target, but if it were, the financial losses could soar. For example, the city's power plants are valued at about \$300 million.

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WISCONSIN

Neighborhood Now Island As Levee Weakens

BY TODD RICHMOND
Associated Press Writer

PORTAGE, Wis. — Flooding waters from the burgeoning Wisconsin River turned a rural neighborhood into a virtual island Monday, cutting off dozens of homes from the outside world. The river was seeping through and surging around a levee protecting the Blackhawk Park neighborhood in the town of Caledonia just southeast of Portage. The only road in was covered by nearly a foot of rust-colored water.

A few homes in the neighborhood's low-lying areas were surrounded by water, but most of the houses stood on high ground and remained untouched Monday afternoon.

Emergency workers asked people to leave on Sunday as the river began to rise after last week's heavy rains overwhelmed rivers. Some 300 people live in the neighborhood, and Columbia County Emergency Management director Pat Beghin said about 25 homes remained occupied.

Beghin said the worst-case scenario was water could wash away the access road, stranding those residents for up to a week. A century-old earthen dike,

part of a 14-mile berm, separates Portage and the neighborhood from the river. But the river rose so high and so forcefully it surged around the dike and poured into the bottom lands around the neighborhood, said Steve Miller, director of the state Department of Natural Resources Bureau of Facilities and Lands.

The rising water chipped away at portions of the berm system Monday afternoon. Much of the levee protects forest and farmland, but a breach in the Blackhawk Park portion could make matters far worse for the neighborhood by potentially washing away the access road.

DNR workers patrolled the length of the berm Monday, using sandbags to control the seepage. Spokesman Greg Matthews said the effort seemed to be working, although he had no estimate on how long the levee might hold.

The woods around Forest Travis' fishing camp were a bog on Monday. Water rushed across the gravel service road a few steps from his camp, but Travis, a 53-year-old part-time construction worker, said he spent Sunday night at the camp and didn't have any plans to go anywhere.

"I'm not worried about it," Travis said. "It would have to get a

lot higher to get where we're standing." Diana O'Neill, 56, a retired De Forest police officer, evacuated on Sunday. On Monday, she inched her truck along the access road, creating a wake, to get back to her house.

Her place was still dry when she arrived. She grabbed three dozen eggs and her Chicago Bears shirt for the big Green Bay Packers-Chicago Bears game on Monday Night Football and inched her way back out. The water was easily an inch higher than when she drove in.

"I'm kind of a risk-taker," she said. "If it wasn't for the road being overrun I would have stayed here. I've got stuff to get done."

The Wisconsin River runs along the outskirts of Portage, a city of about 10,000 people some 40 miles north of Madison that touts itself as "Where the North Begins." The river had overflowed its banks by dozens of feet, pouring onto low-lying roads.

Residents ventured to the water's edge to watch as the river surged by.

Staring at the churning water, Shawn Schweitzer, 39, of Portage, said that usually at this time of the year the water is so low you can nearly drive across the river bottom.

"Now it would be bye, bye," he said as he watched the current swirl and eddy. "I've never seen it move this fast."

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