

Groton Daily Independent

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Thursday, June 18

Senior Menu: Lasagna rotini, tossed salad with dressing, ambrosia fruit salad, oatmeal spice cookie, whole wheat bread.

Birthdays: Nick Strom, Halie Yarborough, Jason Pullan, Ryan Quiggle, Doug Swanson.

8:00am: Elementary Library open

5:30pm: U10 Blue at Webster (Sisseton 1 at 5:30, Webster at 6:45)

5:30pm: U10 Red host Milbank (DH)

5:30pm: U8 Red PW at Milbank (Milbank Red at 5:30, Milbank Green at 6:30)

6:00pm: Jr. Teeners host Webster (DH)

6:00pm: T-Ball Gold and Black host Webster

6:30pm: U8 Blue PW at Webster - play Sisseton-1 at 6:30 and Webster at 7:30

Friday, June 19

Jr. Teeners at Milbank Tourney

Legion at Brookings Tourney

Senior Menu: Roast beef, mashed potatoes and gravy, peas and carrots, peach cobbler, whole wheat bread.

Anniversary: Garrett-Sindi Heitmann.

Birthday: Pat Dahlquist.

Hoops Reunion

The John and Mary Hoops family reunion will be held on June 28th at the Groton Community Center. The pot-luck dinner is at 12:30, with chicken and drinks being provided.

Open: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave.

**OPEN HOUSE
BRIDAL SHOWER**
In Honor of
Jen Steen
Future Bride of Tim Hauer
Daughter of Jeff & LuAnn Steen
Saturday, June 20th
9:30 – 11:30
SEAS Catholic Church - Groton
The couple is registered at
Target & Herbergers

The cardboard/paper
recycling trailer at the school is **Open**



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Worship Resumes at Trinity Historic Church

Worship service will resume June 21 at the Trinity Historic Church in Groton at Third Ave. and Third Street. Service will be held at 5 p.m. Sunday. The service usually lasts about half an hour. You are invited to the service in the historic setting. Offering will be used to help maintain the church and to pay for insurance.

South Dakota students named to NDSU dean's list

Fargo— Area South Dakota students were among the 3,387 North Dakota State University students to be placed on the Spring 2015 dean's list.

A student must earn a 3.50 grade point average or higher and be enrolled in at least 12 class credits to qualify.

Those being named to the Dean's List are Madison L. Cutler, Claremont, majoring in exercise science; Craig W. Karjalainen, Frederick, majoring in nursing; Abby J. Sumption, Frederick, majoring in crop and weed sciences; and Kristen L. Erickson, Langford, majoring in veterinary technology.

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Bevitized: The Retail Truth



by Beverly Patterson

As I raised my smoked turkey sandwich dangerously close to my mouth trap, I caught sight of one of my co-workers running into the break room and she said, in a rather exasperated tone, "I need a second before I go back out there!" I would compare her demeanor to that of a person that had just been chased by a ferocious dog. She explained that she had just helped several customers that were destined to drive her completely crazy and that a little break from the action would give her attitude adjuster time to kick in. I told her I completely understood what she was saying and then I told her about one of the people I had helped earlier. I said, "Something happened today that I had never had happen here before. My customer almost made me cry." Immediately she displayed a shocked expression and said, "None of mine were that mean." and then I said, "No, that wasn't it, let me explain."

A very pleasant woman approached the counter with one bolt of baby blue flannel that had little white clouds and little yellow moons on it. I asked her how much she was going to need and she said, "Two yards." I asked what she was going to be making with this adorable flannel and nothing could have prepared me for what she was about to say. She took a breath and this is what followed:

"My daughter is pregnant with twins and only one of them is going to live. This fabric is going to be a blanket for the one that isn't going to survive. His brain didn't develop so his head is filled with cysts. In order to save his twin, my daughter has to carry him until his twin is ready to be born so in the meantime she is planning his funeral and asked if I could make a blue blanket for him that has clouds on it. I think this fabric will work out very well, don't you?" After swallowing the rather large lump that had formed in my throat I agreed and then said how sorry I was that her daughter had to be going through such a painful and life changing experience. We visited a bit longer and shared similar experiences of the miscarriages we went through in our younger days. We also both agreed that God has a reason for everything that happens and that it sometimes takes years to completely understand just what that reason is. Eventually she offered a pleasant smile, thanked me for helping her and walked away. I, on the other hand, slipped a bolt of baby blue flannel into the "items to be put away" cart knowing I would never look at those tiny little white clouds the same, ever again.

I might make it sound like working with people in a retail sense is one of the worst jobs a person can have but in reality I know the tough ones make me stronger, the funny ones make me laugh, the grouchy ones force me to brush up on my "kill 'em with kindness" techniques and the ones with heavy hearts give me a chance to deliver a bit of compassion where it's needed most.

Groton Transit would like to extend a huge

Thank You

**to the community of Groton in response
to the Annual Chamber B.B.Q. Fundraiser and the
Transit's 10 year Anniversary of Service.**

**A special thanks to the Chamber and
anyone that donated auction items and
worked at the BBQ. It was a great success and
we do appreciate your support!**

*Arlis Doeden and the
Groton Transit Board of Directors*

Brown County 4-H Horse Show Results

The 2015 Brown County 4-H Horse Show was held on Wednesday, June 11, 2015 at the Joe Akkerman Arena on the Brown County Fairgrounds. There were twenty-two competitors and the judge for the day was Jean Hommel from Watertown, S.D.

Western Showmanship: P, GC, Jazmine Hart-Crissman, Beginner, Aberdeen; P, RC, Faith Flihs, Beginner, Groton; P, Turner Thompson, Beginner, Groton; B, Jacob Craig, Beginner, Groton; B, Jack Podoll, Beginner, Aberdeen; P, GC, Cassandra Townsend, Junior, Andover; P, RC, Colin Sprinkel, Junior, Aberdeen; P, Dylan Krueger, Junior, Ferney; P, Dylan Schaunaman, Junior, Aberdeen; B, Lily Tobin, Junior, Aberdeen; R, Elizabeth Wanous, Junior, Mansfield; R, Hanna Miller, Junior, Claremont; R, Grace Malsam, Junior, Bath; P, GC, Adrienne Schaunaman, Senior, Aberdeen; P, RC, Trey Wright, Senior, Houghton; P, Letitia Smith, Senior, Aberdeen; P, Kaitlyn Ringgenberg, Senior, Columbia; B, Paige Snyder, Senior, Bath; B, Alexandra Stange, Senior, Groton; R, Megan Malsam, Senior, Bath; R, Joellen Gonsoir, Senior, Groton.

English Showmanship: P, GC, Cassandra Townsend, Junior, Andover; P, RC, Colin Sprinkel, Junior, Aberdeen; P, Grace Malsam, Junior, Bath; P, Lily Tobin, Junior, Aberdeen; P, Danielle Podoll, Junior, Aberdeen; P, GC, Adrienne Schaunaman, Senior, Aberdeen; P, RC, Joellen Gonsoir, Senior, Groton; P, Kaitlyn Ringgenberg, Senior, Columbia

Stock Seat: P, GC, Turner Thompson, Beginner, Groton; P, RC, Jazmine Hart-Crissman, Beginner, Aberdeen; P, Faith Flihs, Beginner, Groton; B, Jack Podoll, Beginner, Aberdeen; B, Jacob Craig, Beginner, Groton; P, GC, Cassandra Townsend, Junior, Andover; P, RC, Colin Sprinkel, Junior, Aberdeen; P, Grace Malsam, Junior, Bath; P, Danielle Podoll, Junior, Aberdeen; B, Lily Tobin, Junior, Aberdeen; B, Dylan Krueger, Junior, Ferney; R, Dylan Schaunaman, Junior, Aberdeen; R, Elizabeth Wanous, Junior, Mansfield; W, Hanna Miller, Junior, Claremont; P, GC, Joellen Gonsoir, Senior, Groton; P, RC, Kaitlyn Ringgenberg, Senior, Columbia; P, Trey Wright, Senior, Houghton; P, Megan Malsam, Senior, Bath; P, Adrienne Schaunaman, Senior, Aberdeen; B, Alexandra Stange, Senior, Groton; W, Paige Snyder, Senior, Bath

Hunt Seat: P, GC, Grace Malsam, Junior, Bath; P, RC, Cassandra Townsend, Junior, Andover; B, Danielle Podoll, Junior, Aberdeen; R, Lily, Tobin, Junior, Aberdeen; P, GC, Kaitlyn Ringgenberg, Senior, Columbia; P, RC, Adrienne Schaunaman, Senior, Aberdeen; P, Joellen, Gonsoir, Senior, Groton.

Hunter-Over Fences: P, GC, Danielle, Podoll, Junior, Aberdeen

Western Riding: R, Turner, Thompson, Junior, Groton; R, Grace Malsam, Junior, Bath; W, Danielle Podoll, Junior, Aberdeen; P, GC, Adrienne Schaunaman, Senior, Aberdeen; P, RC, Joellen Gonsoir, Senior, Groton; R, Megan Malsam, Senior, Bath.

Reining: P, GC, Reining Dylan Krueger, Junior, Ferney; P, GC, Turner Thompson, Junior, Groton; W, Danielle Podoll, Junior, Aberdeen; P, GC, Paige Snyder, Senior, Bath; P, RC, Joellen Gonsoir, Senior, Groton; P, Adrienne Schaunaman, Senior, Aberdeen

Trail: P, GC, Cassandra Townsend, Junior, Andover; B, Faith Flihs, Junior, Groton; W, Hanna Miller, Junior, Claremont; W, Grace Malsam, Junior, Bath; W, Turner Thompson, Junior, Groton; W, Jacob Craig, Junior, Groton; W, Dylan Krueger, Junior, Ferney; W, Elizabeth Wanous, Junior, Mansfield; W, Colin Sprinkel, Junior, Aberdeen; W, Lily Tobin, Junior, Aberdeen; P, GC, Kaitlyn Ringgenberg, Senior, Columbia; P, GC, Megan Malsam, Senior, Bath; P, Adrienne Schaunaman, Senior, Aberdeen; P, Joellen Gonsoir, Senior, Groton; B, Letitia Smith, Senior, Aberdeen; W, Alexandra Stange, Senior, Groton; W, Trey Wright, Senior, Houghton

Flag Race: P, GC, Turner Thompson, Beginner, Groton; B, Faith Flihs, Beginner, Groton; W, Jack Podoll, Beginner, Aberdeen

Barrel Racing: P, GC, Danielle Podoll, Junior, Aberdeen; P, RC, Jack Podoll, Junior, Aberdeen; P, Faith Flihs, Junior, Groton; P, Dylan Krueger, Junior, Ferney; B, Turner Thompson, Junior, Groton; B, Grace Malsam, Junior, Bath; R, Elizabeth Wanous, Junior, Mansfield; W, Dylan Schaunaman, Junior, Aberdeen; W, Hanna Miller, Junior, Claremont; P, GC, Paige Snyder, Senior, Bath; B, Adrienne Schaunaman, Senior, Aberdeen; B, Trey Wright, Senior, Houghton; R, Megan Malsam, Senior, Bath; R, Kaitlyn Ringgenberg, Senior, Columbia

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Pole Bending: P, GC, Jack Podoll, Junior, Aberdeen; P, RC, Dylan Krueger, Junior, Ferney; B, Turner Thompson, Junior, Groton; B, Grace Malsam, Junior, Bath; B, Danielle Podoll, Junior, Aberdeen; R, Elizabeth Wanous, Junior, Mansfield; W, Hanna Miller, Junior, Claremont; W, Faith Fliehs, Junior, Groton; W, Dylan Schaunaman, Junior, Aberdeen; P, GC, Trey Wright, Senior, Houghton; P, RC, Adrianne Schaunaman, Senior, Aberdeen; B, Paige Snyder, Senior, Bath; B, Megan Malsam, Senior, Bath; R, Kaitlyn Ringgenberg, Senior, Columbia; W, Alexandra Stange, Senior, Groton

Break Away: W, Trey Wright, Senior, Houghton

Tie-Down Calf: W, Joellen Gonsoir, Senior, Groton; W, Trey, Wright, Senior, Houghton

Dally-Team: W, Trey Wright, Senior, Houghton; W, Joellen Gonsoir, Senior, Groton

Demonstration: P, Cassandra Townsend, Junior, Andover



AAA: Most Drivers Get Better Gas Mileage than EPA Estimates

AAA South Dakota, June 17, 2015 – A new AAA survey reveals that eight out of 10 drivers report getting better fuel economy than the combined city and highway EPA mileage ratings for their vehicle.

AAA engineers conducted a comprehensive analysis of 37,000 records submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), representing more than 8,400 vehicle make, model and year combinations, to identify trends in real-world fuel economy. Additional findings include:

- Owners of vehicles equipped with manual transmissions reported 17 percent higher fuel economy than EPA ratings.

- Owners of diesel-fuel vehicles, including light trucks, reported 20 percent better fuel economy than EPA ratings.

- Truck owners with gasoline-fuel V-8 engines reported fuel economy five percent higher than EPA ratings, while owners of turbocharged V-6 engines reported fuel economy that was nine percent lower.

- Owners of sedans with V-6 engines reported a nine percent higher fuel economy than EPA ratings, while owners of turbocharged four cylinder engines reported fuel economy that was four percent lower.

- Minivan owners reported real-world fuel economy that was equal to or slightly lower than EPA ratings.

“The vast majority of drivers who submit their vehicle’s fuel economy to the EPA report mileage that beats the window sticker rating,” said John Nielsen, AAA’s managing director of Automotive Engineering and Repair. “Although self-reported data has limitations, it’s encouraging to see real-world fuel economy that more closely aligns with, or even exceeds, automaker promises.”

In addition, the survey showed that one-in-three Americans do not believe the EPA’s new vehicle window sticker accurately reflects the fuel economy they achieve when driving.

To assess the accuracy of this perception, AAA performed an analysis of data collected on the EPA’s FuelEconomy.gov website, along with laboratory and real-world vehicle testing, and found that driver behaviors and environmental conditions, rather than vehicle shortcomings, are likely responsible for most fuel economy variances.

“For years, we’ve heard drivers questioning whether the fuel economy ratings for their vehicles are accurate,” said Nielsen. “In the interest of our members, AAA aimed to address this issue with a multi-phase testing series designed to uncover the real reasons behind fuel economy variations.”

In the next phase of AAA’s fuel economy testing series, to be released in late 2015, researchers will measure the impact driving behaviors, such as acceleration rates and idle time, have on an individual driver’s fuel economy. In the meantime, AAA recommends drivers take a closer look at their driving habits to understand the role they play in the fuel efficiency of their vehicle.

“If you drive aggressively with quick acceleration, hard braking and high speed, your fuel economy is going to suffer,” said Nielsen. “Driving just five miles-per-hour above 50 is like paying an additional 19 cents per gallon for gasoline.”

To learn more about AAA’s vehicle testing series, designed to educate and inform AAA members, the automotive industry and the general public, visit NewsRoom.AAA.com. For daily gas price information and fuel cost estimates for road trips, visit FuelGaugeReport.AAA.com. To find the cheapest gas prices near you, download the AAA Mobile app at AAA.com/mobile.

The Life of Michael Neitzel

Michael Duane Neitzel, 59, of Gregory, SD, passed away peacefully in his sleep on June 15, 2015.

He was born in Aberdeen, SD, on October 21, 1955 to the late Burton and Bernice Neitzel. Michael was married to Anita (Woods) Neitzel on July 17, 1982, in Sioux Center, IA, where the family resided until 1989. As a young man, Mike left home to start working and was an over-the-road trucker for about 10 years, seeing all but 3 of the 50 US states. After moving to Dallas, SD in 1989, Mike worked many different jobs including farmer/rancher, truck driver, bartender, custom combiner, pheasant hunting guide and cook for South Fork Lodge, as well as working at the Dallas Elevator, for Lubbers Trucking in Gregory, and for Cenex. He was a member of the Gregory County Zoning Commission.



Mike was a generous, non-judgmental man who was very fond of motorcycles, and enjoyed racing, working on them, and going for rides with Anita and Matthew along with many others over his years. He also enjoyed hunting deer and pheasants with Tanya, Aaron, and Matthew, and trucking. He was always happiest when he was spending time with his children and grandchildren though.

Michael was preceded in death by his parents, Burton and Bernice Neitzel, brothers-in-law, Lonnie Brozik and Bob Linton, and parents-in-law, Charles and Peggy Kappelman.

He is survived by wife, Anita, children, Shawn (Casey) Neitzel, Tanya (Aaron) Krueger, Crystal (Nathan) Aldrich, Samantha Neitzel (John Wullstein), Matthew Neitzel (Sammi Cornemann), grandchildren Harper Neitzel, Devin, Kamryn, and Benson Krueger, Baby Girl Neitzel due in August, and Baby Boy Aldrich due in October, pet Sonny, siblings Dennis Neitzel, Ron Neitzel, Bill (Cheryl) Neitzel, Deb (Alan) Redman, Richard (Wendy) Neitzel, Sue Linton, in-laws Jan (Tom) Endes, Sue Brozik, Linda (Gary) Bowers, Dale (Regina) Woods, and many nieces and nephews who were very special to him.

A memorial service will be held Friday, June 19, 2015 at First Southern Baptist Church in Gregory with a lunch and fellowship time following at the Union Congregational Church.

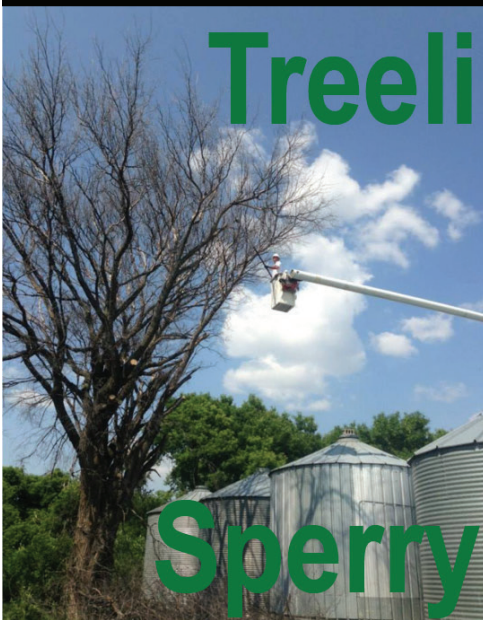
Treeline Tree Service

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**Tyler Sperry:
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Sperry Stump Removal



Today in Weather History

June 18, 1964: A tornado moved from SSW to NNE damaging three farmsteads between Hoven to 8 NNW of Bowdle. This tornado was estimate to have F2 strength. An estimated five inches of rain fell in three hours near Bowdle causing soil erosion just before the tornado hit.

Another storm moved from south to north and intensified as it moved northward. Winds were estimated between 50 and 100 mph. The greatest damage was in McPherson County where it was estimated 2 million dollars in crop damage occurred. Heavy rain was also observed on this day. Some storm total rain fall includes; 6.73 inches in Eureka, 4.28 in Roscoe, 3.75 in Leola, 2.68 in Shelby, 2.45 in Britton, and 2.31 inches in Ipswich.

June 18, 1991: Large hail up to 2 inches in diameter broke windows, and produced widespread tree damage in Watertown and vicinity. Extensive damage was caused to surrounding soybean and corn fields. Approximately 25,000 acres of crops were destroyed. Thunderstorm winds of 55 mph uprooted trees and downed power lines primarily on the Revillo area. Trees fell on cars and an apartment complex was damaged.

1875 - A severe coastal storm (or possible hurricane) struck the Atlantic coast from Cape Cod to Nova Scotia. Eastport ME reported wind gusts to 57 mph. (David Ludlum)

1958: Hailstones up to four inches in diameter killed livestock as a storm passed from Joliet to Belfry in Carbon County, Montana.

1970 - Wind and rain, and hail up to seven inches deep, caused more than five million dollars damage at Oberlin KS. (The Weather Channel)

1972: Hurricane Agnes was one of the largest June hurricanes on record. The system strengthened into a tropical storm during the night of the 15th and a hurricane on the 18th as it moved northward in the Gulf of Mexico








1987 - It was a hot day in the Upper Great Lakes Region. Nine cities in Michigan and Wisconsin reported record high temperatures for the date. The high of 90 degrees at Marquette, MI, marked their third straight day of record heat. Severe thunderstorm in the Northern and Central High Plains Region spawned half a dozen tornadoes in Wyoming and Colorado. Wheatridge, CO, was deluged with 2.5 inches of rain in one hour. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Severe thunderstorms in eastern North Dakota and northern Minnesota produced hail three inches in diameter and spawned four tornadoes in Steele County. Thunderstorms also produced wind gusts to 80 mph at Clearbrook MN. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Unseasonably hot weather prevailed in the southwestern U.S. In Arizona, afternoon highs of 103 degrees at Winslow, 113 degrees at Tucson, and 115 degrees at Phoenix were records for the date. (The National Weather Summary)

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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
						
Partly Sunny	Chance Thunderstorms	Chance Thunderstorms	Thunderstorms Likely	Mostly Sunny	Slight Chc Thunderstorms	Chance Thunderstorms
High: 73 °F	Low: 56 °F	High: 85 °F	Low: 64 °F	High: 84 °F	Low: 58 °F	High: 81 °F



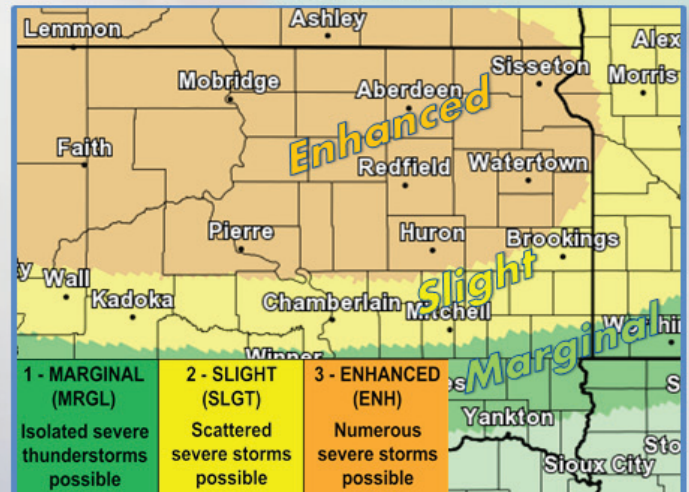
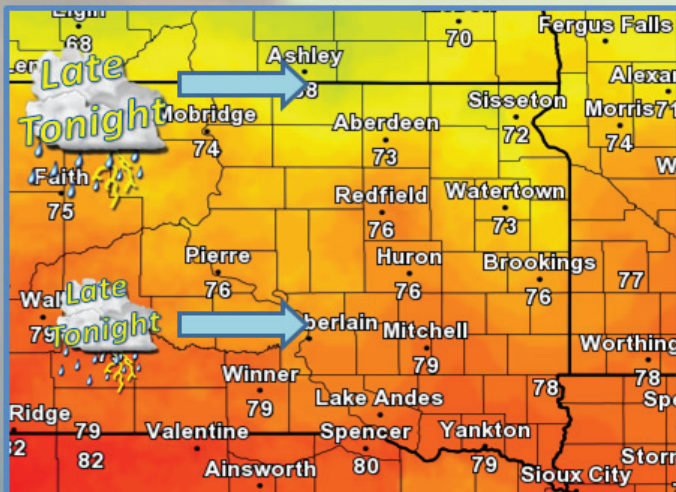
Storms Next Couple of Nights

Today & Tonight

- Mild & dry afternoon
- Storms possible late tonight, some may become strong
- Storms may linger across NE SD & west central MN into Friday morning

Friday & Fri Night

- Thunderstorms possible in the afternoon, but best chances are Friday night
- Severe storms are possible, with hail and damaging winds the main threats



National Weather Service – Aberdeen, SD

weather.gov/Aberdeen  National Weather Service Aberdeen  @NWSAberdeen | Updated: 6/18/2015 4:57 AM Central

Published on: 06/18/2015 at 5:01AM

Dry and mild conditions are expected this afternoon, however late night storms are possible. Storms may linger across northeast SD and west central MN into Friday morning. A low pressure system then moves into the region Friday and Friday night. While thunderstorms are possible Friday afternoon, the best chances exist Friday night. Severe storms are possible Friday and Friday night, with large hail and damaging winds the main threats.



MULTIPLYING LOVE

A mother had only one son. She loved him more than anything in the world. One day she introduced him to a friend and said, "This is my only son, and I love him dearly!"

He greeted him kindly and said, "I have eight sons and I love all of them dearly, too."

"Eight sons?" she exclaimed in disbelief. "I can't imagine that. I love him so much that I can't imagine dividing my love by eight."

"Ma'am," he replied. "I don't divide my love, I multiply it."

What a wonderful description of how God loves us! He never divides His love, He multiplies it and has enough for everyone and anyone who has ever lived or ever will live.

The central theme in God's Word is that He loves us. And not only does He love us but there is no one who loves us as much as He does. Furthermore, He loves each of us equally. He has no favorites.

God's love is so great that He freely, willingly and gladly gave His One and only Son for our salvation. It cost Him dearly and is far beyond our ability to understand. Yet, we do not need to understand it to accept it. It is ours if we accept it through faith in Christ. The offer comes from Him personally and it is our choice to receive it.

Prayer: Lord, we are amazed at such love – a love we cannot understand, but need and accept through Christ. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

News from the Associated Press

Suspect charged in injury hit and run in Sioux Falls

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sioux Falls police have arrested a suspect in an alleged hit and run that put a man in the hospital with life-threatening injuries.

Thirty-one-year-old Christopher Benson, of Sioux Falls, faces charges of assault and felony injury hit and run. He was jailed Wednesday on \$50,000 cash bond. It wasn't immediately clear if he had an attorney.

Authorities say a fight over money owed for drugs led to the incident shortly after midnight Monday. Police say a 34-year-old victim was knocked unconscious in the street and was run over by a vehicle. He was put in intensive care with facial fractures and bleeding on the brain.

About 400 SD firefighters expected to attend fire school

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — About 400 South Dakota firefighters are expected to attend the annual state fire school in Pierre this week.

The firefighters will choose from 26 classes in the training event that begins Thursday with an opening ceremony and runs through Saturday.

Fire Marshal Paul Merriman says this year's classes range "from firefighter tactics and strategies to department leadership and everything in between." The event will also include a trade show and a parade.

The classes will take place at Pierre Riggs High School. The fire school is hosted by the Pierre Volunteer Fire Department with the assistance of the South Dakota Firefighters Association, the South Dakota Firefighters Auxiliary and the South Dakota State Fire Marshal's Office.

New dorm at School of Mines to house 200 students

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A new student dormitory is going up on the campus of the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology.

The Rapid City university says enrollment has increased 35 percent over the last six years, which has led to a demand for more housing. The new dorm will be able to house 200 students.

The South Dakota Board of Regents last week approved the building that will be built west of campus. The regents require freshmen and sophomores to live on campus.

The six-story building will offer 51 suite-style units and is expected to be finished in time for fall semester in 2016.

Counterculture group mulling a gathering in Black Hills

JAMES NORD, Associated Press

BLACK HILLS NATIONAL FOREST, S.D. (AP) — A contingent of people affiliated with a counterculture group that annually brings together thousands of people for peace gatherings met in the Black Hills on Wednesday to begin discussing whether the group would convene in the area in July.

Members of the Rainbow Family of Living Light came together to debate whether the gathering — which could bring more than 5,000 people to the Black Hills — should be held there after some Native Americans pushed back against the event.

The Rainbow Family has no official leaders and no official website or member list. Its creed revolves around nonviolence, inclusiveness and praying for peace.

Roughly 50 people, many of whom have attended years of national and regional gatherings, formed a

circle in a clearing in the Black Hills National Forest to hash out the site of this year's prayers for peace and healing. After joining hands, the people of the so-called Spring Council passed a feather around the circle, its holder able to speak in turn, for about four hours. The discussions could continue for several days, said Charles Winslow, 64, who is usually known as Bajer.

Black Hills National Forest Supervisor Craig Bobzien said he held a meeting with members of the group and representatives from the Oglala Sioux and Rosebud Sioux tribes. He said they were unable to reach an agreement about the gathering.

"The tribes ... didn't feel a gathering of this size would preserve the sacred nature of the Black Hills," he said.

The gatherings have led to some safety and medical issues, Bobzien said, so there will be additional law enforcement resources on hand.

But Rainbow Family members who scouted the potential site in the Black Hills — they declined to share with the Spring Council its exact location — said they were welcomed in the area while they spent time studying the land. Winslow, who has been scouting sites for the gatherings since 1978, said the group looked as far as Vermont, but found the South Dakota site to be the most suitable.

Marc Constantine Alexander, 31, who goes by Novel, said that "there are always non-Rainbow folks who dissent against Rainbow." Alexander, who is part of a camp that provides free cigarettes at the Rainbow Gathering, said he trusts the scouts who say that the Black Hills area is the best spot to hold it.

Last year, the national event was held in the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest in Utah. It has convened every year since 1972.

"It's kind of like a gathering like no other," Bobzien said. "I've been in the business for over 30 years, and I've never had anything that closely resembles this (gathering), so there's clearly some challenges because it's novel to me."

Pine Ridge School gets \$218K to help prevent youth suicides

REGINA GARCIA CANO, Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Federal education officials have given Pine Ridge School in western South Dakota \$218,000 to help students and teachers in their recovery from a string of student suicides and attempted suicides in recent months on the Indian reservation where the school is located.

The White House on Wednesday announced the grant for the nearly 800-pupil school that serves the Oglala Sioux Tribe on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. The school requested federal assistance after seeing a significant increase in counseling referrals, people expressing they were thinking about ending their lives, and suicide attempts between August and April.

A series of seven suicides by adolescents in recent months has shaken the community and sent school officials seeking federal help as four of the youth who took their lives were Pine Ridge School students; two were in high school and the other two were of middle-school age.

"Children and youth need help in seeing that their lives have meaning and that they, too, have the power to create promising futures for themselves," Charles Roessel, director of the Bureau of Indian Education, said in a statement Wednesday. "No tribe can long endure the loss of its life blood, its children and youth, to suicide."

The grant from the U.S. Department of Education will allow the school to hire additional counselors and social workers to help students during the summer school session and the upcoming school year. It will also support the implementation of what federal officials are describing as a "multi-faceted and holistic approach to healing" based on traditional Lakota culture and relevant to students who have

dealt with the traumatic events.

On Dec. 12, a 14-year-old boy hanged himself at his home on the reservation. On Christmas Day, a 15-year-old girl was found dead, followed weeks later by a cheerleader from Pine Ridge School. Two more young people took their lives in February and two more in March, along with several more attempts. The youngest to die was 12.

Tribal leaders, school officials, students and parents point to a host of problems on the reservation as reasons for the surge of suicides and suicide attempts. The most common are bullying on social media and at school, troubled family lives and a sense of hopelessness due to lack of economic opportunities and high unemployment rates.

Pine Ridge School is located in the reservation's largest town and is operated by the Bureau of Indian Education. It offers kindergarten through high school and has a dormitory that houses about 150 students during the school year. A school principal was not immediately available to comment on the funding.

Somewhere between 16,000 and 40,000 members of the Oglala Sioux Tribe live on the impoverished reservation, which at over 2 million acres is among the nation's largest. The reservation has continually suffered from high rates of poor health, poor infrastructure, unemployment, and higher than average suicide rates in all age groups.

Report: Agency hindering energy development on tribal lands

FELICIA FONSECA, Associated Press

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — Native American reservations could produce much more of the country's solar and wind energy, but the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs largely has hindered energy development on tribal lands, the investigative arm of Congress has found.

The BIA often has the final say in approving documents that would clear the way for solar, wind, oil, gas and other projects on reservations, although a process is in places for tribes to take control.

But the agency has been slow to identify land and resource ownership, and lacks adequate staffing to review energy-related documents, the U.S. Government Accountability Office said in a report released this week. The study was requested by Republican Sen. John Barrasso of Wyoming, who chairs the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.

The delays cause tribes to miss out on opportunities to generate revenue, the report said.

"Unless BIA takes steps to address the factors we identified, these factors may continue to contribute to developers avoiding Indian energy resources in favor of developing non-Indian resources," the GAO wrote. "Further, these factors place the agency at risk of not fulfilling its trust responsibility to Indian tribes and their members."

The Southern Ute Tribe in Colorado estimated it has lost out on an estimated \$95 million in revenue from oil and gas severance taxes, permit fees and royalties as dozens of applications for easements waited years for BIA review. The Rosebud Sioux Tribe in South Dakota said the BIA took 18 months to review a wind lease, halting the project.

The GAO recommended that the BIA do a better job of tracking data, and review times so the process is transparent and moves forward without unnecessary delays. The BIA said it is getting ready to deploy a system nationally that would do so, and acknowledged it needs to give more guidance to tribes on how to take over certain federal responsibilities, according to the report. Agency spokeswoman Nedra Darling did not immediately respond Wednesday to a request for further comment.

A 2005 federal law allows tribes to enter into agreements with the federal government to approve

leases, business agreements and easements for energy development on tribal land, but no tribe has done so, the report said. Tribal officials interviewed by the GAO said the regulations were unclear, they lacked funding to pursue control, and the process was confusing and time-consuming.

Barrasso said he'll work with Congress to ensure the right steps are taken to allow tribe to develop their resources quicker.

According to the GAO report, tribal lands could produce 5 percent of the country's solar energy and more than 3 percent of electricity from wind.

USDA program promotes products such as plant-based bottles

DAVID PITT, Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — A program designed to promote ethanol and biodiesel fuels will be expanded to companies using plant-based plastic, rubber and fiber in manufacturing products such as bottles and packaging, the U.S. Agriculture Department said on Wednesday.

The USDA is proposing in a new agency rule to add manufacturers of these plant-based products to a loan guarantee program that has provided more than \$844 million for 10 biofuel projects since 2008. Loan guarantees allow companies building new plants to borrow money at lower interest rates. Under the proposed new rules loans of up to \$250 million will be offered to projects involving development of plant-based materials for manufacturing, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said.

The rule expanding the program, authorized in last year's farm bill, will become final on June 23.

It's part of a government program initiated by President Barack Obama designed to promote replacement of petroleum in plastic, rubber and fiber with plant-based materials.

A report released Wednesday by the USDA said the plant-based materials industry created four million jobs and contributed \$369 billion to the nation's economy in 2013.

From sugarcane-based plastic Coke bottles to soybean oil-derived Ford Mustang seat cushions, bio-based manufacturing has accelerated over the last decade.

The report, mandated in the 2014 farm bill and commissioned by the USDA was researched and written by professors at Duke University and North Carolina State University.

It details how the agency's BioPreferred program, created in the 2002 Farm Bill, has driven new development by requiring government agencies to use their purchasing power to buy when possible products made with plant-based materials. The program also has initiated a labeling program which identifies more than 2,200 products as USDA certified bio-based materials. The program was part of Obama's initiative to revitalize and modernize the rural economy, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said.

"This is, I think, the beginning of a very exciting opportunity for rural America, the beginning of an opportunity to attract manufacturing to rural communities, to add additional market opportunities for those who grow and raise crops and products in the U.S.," he said.

The report said the industry making products from plant-based materials has displaced 300 million gallons of petroleum a year, which Vilsack said is the equivalent from an emissions standpoint of removing 200,000 cars off the road.

Oil and natural gas industry trade group American Petroleum Institute declined to comment on the expansion of the program.

Patrick Michaels, a former environmental sciences professor, now a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, a libertarian public policy research said the government shouldn't be subsidizing the bio-based industry through guaranteed loans.

"I don't understand if these products are so wonderful why they need to be subsidized," he said. "I caution you that if the argument is that these result in fewer net emissions of greenhouse gases, that

proposition is pretty shaky.”

Some U.S. companies, embracing plant-based materials research, have been studying alternatives to petroleum based fibers, foams and rubbers for several years.

The Coca Cola Company is one example of a company that has researched and developed bio-based products. The company makes all of its bottles from a fully recyclable plastic, one-third of which is plant based. Earlier this year the company unveiled a bottle made entirely from bio-based materials and its ultimate goal is to have a 100 percent recyclable plant-based plastic bottle. The company currently uses Brazilian sugarcane and is researching other plant-based materials.

Since 2009 the company said it has distributed more than 30 billion PlantBottle packages in nearly 40 countries, saving more than 30 million gallons of gas and eliminating 270,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions, the equivalent to the amount emitted from burning more than 630,000 barrels of oil.

The Coke bottle material is used by Ford Motor Co. in the interior fabric of its Fusion Energi hybrid electric/gas engine car.

Ford also uses soybean-based oil to replace about 12 percent of petroleum-based materials used in the foam inserted in seat cushions. More than three million Ford vehicles have some soy foam in them, the company said.

Closer to the farm, tractor maker John Deere uses panels made of half soy oil and half corn ethanol in body components of combines and small agricultural tractors once made solely with petroleum-based polymers.

Watertown police: Man died as a result of accidental fall

WATERTOWN, S.D. (AP) — Police in Watertown have concluded that the death of a 22-year-old man whose body was found this morning was the result of an accidental fall while climbing on the exterior of a building.

Police officers responded to a report of an unresponsive man behind the Hubbard Feeds building in Watertown Wednesday morning. When they arrived to the scene, they found the body of Angel Montes DeOca with signs of trauma.

Police Chief Lee McPeck says DeOca was from Watertown.

The state Division of Criminal Investigation is helping with the probe.

Huge waterslide won't be coming to Sioux Falls, Rapid City

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Residents of South Dakota's two largest cities won't get a chance to go down a 1,000-foot waterslide this summer.

Organizers of Slide the City say they could not reach an agreement with officials in Rapid City and Sioux Falls to install the huge waterslide on city streets.

Minutes from the parks and recreation board in Sioux Falls show the city didn't support the event because of construction taking place near the area where the waterslide would have been installed. Other scheduled events in Sioux Falls also created a conflict.

Slide the City has scheduled dozens of events across the country this year. Organizers were encouraged to reapply for a permit in Sioux Falls for next year.

Officials at Black Hills VA delay release of impact study

HOT SPRINGS, S.D. (AP) — Officials with the Department of Veterans Affairs in western South Dakota say a study examining the impacts of reconfiguring the VA system in the Black Hills has been delayed.

The VA announced plans in early 2014 to study the environmental, social and economic effects of restructuring its services in the Black Hills. The department's plans include closing its facilities at the Hot Springs campus, which was built in the early 1900s.

The VA had initially planned to release a draft of their Environmental Impact Statement in late spring. Officials said Wednesday that the release has been delayed 90 days and will be available at the end of the summer.

Officials did not provide a reason for the delay.

The VA will hold public meeting after the draft is completed.

NDSU president named chairman of MVFB Presidents' Council

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — North Dakota State University President Dean Bresciani (bruh-SHAW'-nee) has been named chairman of the Missouri Valley Football Conference Presidents' Council.

The council helps provide leadership for the conference, which includes schools in the Dakotas, Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio.

Bresciani also is chairman of the Summit League's Presidents' Council and recently was named to the newly formed NCAA Division I Presidential Forum, the main presidential advisory body for the NCAA Division I Board of Directors.

Week of warm weather boosts new crops across South Dakota

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A week of warm weather has boosted newly planted crops across South Dakota.

The Agriculture Department says in its weekly crop report that the state saw its warmest temperatures of the season over the past week — from 2-8 degrees above average.

About 68 percent of the soybean crop is rated in good-to-excellent condition, and about 70 percent of the corn is in those two categories.

Pasture and range conditions are rated 58 percent good to excellent, and stock water supplies state-wide are rated 78 percent adequate to surplus.

10 Things to Know for Today

The Associated Press

Your daily look at late-breaking news, upcoming events and the stories that will be talked about today:

1. SOUTH CAROLINA CHURCH SHOOTING DESCRIBED AS HATE CRIME

A white man opens fire during a prayer meeting inside a historic black church in Charleston, killing nine people including a state senator who was also the pastor. The shooter is still on the loose.

2. IS CREATES NATION OF FEAR IN IRAQ, SYRIA

AP reporters find that inside the Islamic State's "caliphate," the paper testifying that you have "repented" from your heretical past must be carried at all times — it can be the difference between life and death.

3. WHAT POPE IS URGING TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE

Francis calls for a bold cultural revolution to correct what he calls the "structurally perverse" economic system of the rich exploiting the poor.

4. FBI REASSURES LAWMAKERS ON SURVEILLANCE

The agency assured Congress that its plane spy program is a by-the-books operation short on HD cameras and rarely tracks cellphones from the sky.

5. WHY U.S. BELIEVES CHINA RESPONSIBLE FOR HACKING

AP's Ted Bridis reports that none of the data has been credibly offered for sale on underground markets popular among identity thieves, signifying espionage as the motive.

6. WHAT A PRIEST FOUND AMONG IRISH MOURNERS

Families are focused on reuniting with the victims rather than on the cause of the fatal balcony collapse in Berkeley, California.

7. TREASURY SAYS WOMAN WILL BE PICKED FOR \$10 BILL

Jacob Lew announces that a redesign of the \$10 will feature the first female on the nation's paper money in 100 years.

8. 'SUPERSIZED' BURGER CHAIN SLIMMING DOWN

For the first time in more than 40 years, and perhaps ever, McDonald's says its number of restaurants in the U.S. is shrinking.

9. REPORTS: WILLIAMS OUT AS 'NIGHTLY NEWS' ANCHOR

Brian Williams won't return to his nighttime post at NBC after his suspension ends for misrepresenting his role in a news story.

10. TRAINS, TREE AND BROWN GREENS

The first U.S. Open in the Pacific Northwest will look like no other when golf's second major gets underway at Chambers Bay.

THE LATEST: Filipino activists encouraged by pope's message

The Associated Press

13:57 p.m. (1157 GMT), 7:57 a.m. EDT)

Climate activists in the Philippines have expressed relief that Pope Francis has joined their fight against global warming.

More than a dozen activists marched 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) from a historic park to a Roman Catholic church in Manila to show their support.

Rodne Galicha, one of the marchers, says: "The pope alone cannot solve the climate crisis. He'll make a difference as a charismatic global figure but there has to be collective action by Catholics and by world leaders. It's a difficult battle."

His group will help gather between 10 million to 20 million signatures across the Philippines, Asia's largest Roman Catholic nation where Francis was welcomed with rock-star intensity in January, to call for drastic actions, including substantial reduction in carbon emissions, ahead of the climate negotiations in France.

The Rev. John Leydon, an Irish priest in Manila, said he was happy that the pope's encyclical could help drive home the urgency of climate change amid skepticism by some doubters.

Leydon told the AP: "Sometimes, you feel like a voice in the wilderness." But with the pope's encyclical, he says he "felt like Christmas had come early."

13:34 p.m. (1134 GMT), 7:34 a.m. EDT)

Cardinal Peter Turkson, whose Vatican office penned the first draft of the pope's encyclical, has a word for those Republicans and climate doubters in the U.S. who say the pope should stay away from

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science.

Turkson acknowledged the pope isn't a scientist (though Francis did work as a chemist in his native Argentina before entering the seminary). But Turkson said that shouldn't bar him from talking about science or consulting with scientists to make pronouncements about important issues.

And he wondered out loud if those same politicians who are criticizing the pope, "without being scientists," would themselves refrain from talking about science.

Last week, U.S. Republican presidential hopeful Rick Santorum, a devout Catholic who says he loves the pope, urged Francis to "leave science to the scientists" and stop talking about global warming.

Another U.S. Republican Catholic presidential candidate, Jeb Bush, said such a political issue had no place in faith.

13:14 p.m. (1114 GMT), 7:14 a.m. EDT)

Andrew Steer, president of the World Resources Institute, a Washington-based environmental think tank, expects the pope's encyclical to have an important impact in the U.S. where "there are many Catholics who currently have not been supporters of climate action."

Steer told the AP that the Bible has plenty of references to protecting the Earth and its resources, "so it's really ludicrous that some are saying he shouldn't deal with this issue. The church has been dealing with this issue for centuries."

He predicted that "the climate deniers who are Catholics in the United States, they are going to lose this battle."

Steer was part of a climate commission that met Pope Francis in the Vatican three weeks ago.

12:58 p.m. (1058 GMT), 06:58 a.m. EDT)

The scientist credited with coming up with the goal of keeping global warming below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees F) says Pope Francis' science is on target.

Speaking at the launch of the encyclical, John Schellnhuber said everything in it "is in line with the scientific evidence. This is very gratifying."

In his presentation, Schellnhuber illustrated how the earth has warmed over the course of history. He discounted as a "myth" claims that a growing population in the developing world is responsible for destroying the environment.

Addressing an issue that is particularly dear to the Vatican, since it gets into questions of birth control, he said: "This utterly wrong, actually. It's not poverty that destroys the environment. It's wealth, consumption and waste. And this is reflected in the encyclical."

12:38 p.m. (1038 GMT), 6:38 a.m. EDT)

The Church of England has praised the papal encyclical on climate change, describing it as a compelling document that is not just good for Roman Catholics but everyone on the planet.

The church's spokesman on environmental issues, Bishop of Salisbury Nicholas Holtam, described climate change as one of the great moral challenges of our times.

He said Pope Francis has underscored how the consumption of the wealthy nations has repercussions in poorer ones, and that what is "bad for our neighbors is also bad for us."

He says churches and other faith communities "have a unique power to mobilize people for the common good and change attitudes and behaviors." He called on leaders to achieve ambitious and binding climate change agreements.

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12:26 p.m. (1026 GMT), 6:26 a.m. EDT)

Environmental groups are heaping praise on the pope for stressing many of the points they have been making for years, including that the world's poor will suffer the most from climate change.

WWF International President Yolanda Kakabadse says the pope's message "adds a much-needed moral approach" to the debate on climate change, which "affects the lives, livelihoods and rights of everyone, especially the poor, marginalized and most vulnerable communities."

Rhea Suh of the Natural Resources Defense Council says the pope is "imploring people of good will everywhere to honor our moral obligation to protect future generations from the dangers of further climate chaos by embracing our ethical duty to act."

Greenpeace leader Kumi Naidoo emphasized passages in the encyclical calling for policies that reduce carbon emissions, including by replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy. He said that's "a crystal-clear call on responsible investors, CEOs and political leaders to step up the pace of the clean energy revolution."

12:12 p.m. (1012 GMT), 6:12 a.m. EDT)

The U.N.'s top climate official, Christiana Figueres, calls the pope's encyclical a "clarion call" that should guide world leaders to a "strong and durable" climate agreement in Paris at the end of the year.

The deal will be the first time all countries, both rich and poor, agree to take climate action. But experts say the climate targets pledged so far won't suffice to keep global warming below 2 degrees C (3.6 F), the goal of the U.N. talks.

Figueres has long been arguing that transitioning to a low-carbon economy makes economic sense and has been trying to get corporate leaders aboard.

Welcoming the pope's message, she said that "coupled with the economic imperative, the moral imperative leaves no doubt that we must act on climate change now."

12:03 p.m. (1003 GMT), 6:03 a.m. EDT)

Pope Francis' much-anticipated encyclical on the environment has now been launched. With it he's trying to recast the environmental debate in moral terms and indicts big business and climate doubters in the process.

He calls for a bold cultural revolution to correct the "structurally perverse" economic system of the rich exploiting the poor that is turning Earth into an "immense pile of filth."

The encyclical "Laudato Si" (Praise Be) aims to spur courageous action in U.N. climate negotiations and in daily life.

Francis explains the science of global warming and blames the phenomenon on a manifestly unfair, fossil fuel-based industrial model that harms the poor most. He urges Catholics and non-believers alike to undergo an awakening to protect God's creation for future generations, saying the world needs nothing short of a new concept of progress.

11:52 a.m. (0952 GMT), 5:52 a.m. EDT)

The official launch of Pope Francis' environment encyclical is historic for reasons other than the text itself: It marks the first time that a high-ranking official from the Orthodox Church has presented a document of the pope.

The Vatican spokesman, the Rev. Federico Lombardi, says it is "a sign of great ecumenical hope" that Metropolitan of Pergamon John Zizioulas, a leading theologian in the Greek Orthodox Church, was sent

by the spiritual leader of Orthodox Christians, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, to represent him. Bartholomew has been at the forefront of Christian leaders in drawing attention to the need to care for God's creation, and Francis dedicated two paragraphs of the encyclical to Bartholomew's work. Zizioulas said he was honored to be part of the "historic" presentation but awed by the number of journalists on hand. "May God help me and protect me," he quipped, to laughter.

11:36 a.m. (0936 GMT, 5:36 a.m. EDT)

The Vatican spokesman says that in the 25 years that he has worked there, he has never seen as much prolonged, global and intense anticipation for a single document as with the release of Pope Francis' environment encyclical.

The Rev. Federico Lombardi started a news conference to launch "Laudato Si" (Praise Be) that "clearly humanity has wanted to hear the word of the pope, considering it important and timely."

The news conference was packed, and held in a Vatican audience hall rather than the normal press briefing room to accommodate the crowds.

Lombardi said: "On this day we feel the universal church united with the pope."

Over the past month, the Vatican sent bishops around the world preparatory documents to help them explain the issue to their flocks. Two days ago, Francis sent a copy of the encyclical itself to each bishop, along with a hand-written letter introducing it.

10:40 a.m. (0840 GMT, 4:40 a.m. EDT)

The Vatican is launching Pope Francis' environment encyclical with a high-level press conference aimed at inspiring action from people of all faiths and no faith at all to combat climate change.

Speakers are expected to include Cardinal Peter Turkson, whose Vatican office penned the first draft of the document.

Joining him will be Metropolitan of Pergamon John Zizioulas, a leading theologian in the Greek Orthodox Church, which has prioritized protecting God's creation.

German scientist John Schellnhuber, an atheist, is credited with coming up with the goal to keep global warming from increasing by 2 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels.

Economist Carolyn Woo is head of Catholic Relief Services, the overseas humanitarian agency of the U.S. church.

Midwest braces for remnants of Bill; Texas spared the worst

CLAUDIA LAUER, Associated Press

JUSTIN JUOZAPAVICIUS, Associated Press

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — An already-soaked Midwest on Thursday faced the prospect of more rain and flooding as a slow-moving tropical depression trekked northeast from Texas after drenching that state.

Authorities in southern Oklahoma meanwhile prepared to resume the hunt for a 2-year-old child who was swept away by high water at a rain-swollen creek on Wednesday.

Forecasters said 3 to 8 inches of rain could fall from Oklahoma to Illinois by the end of the week as the low-pressure system churned toward Missouri and Illinois.

Tropical Depression Bill, the second named tropical system of the year, dropped more than 11 inches of rain southwest of Houston on Wednesday, but a pocket of dry air swooped in from the east to spare Texas major problems.

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Bill arrived after record rainfall inundated Texas in late May, swelling rivers and threatening dams from border to border. While the storm dropped enough water to shutter airports and flood roads, its impact was much less severe than had been anticipated.

"Even though the state is facing challenges, it looks like we have been able to avoid the worst," Texas Gov. Greg Abbott said.

The threat late Wednesday shifted to Arkansas and Oklahoma.

"The band (of the storm) is only about 75 miles wide, but that's where the concern for flooding and road closures exists," said John Hart, a meteorologist at the Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Oklahoma. "That narrow corridor is going to be a pretty big deal."

Volunteers in Oklahoma's Okmulgee County filled thousands of sandbags Wednesday to prepare for the storm — the region's second major rainmaker in three weeks.

"We've never had to deal with back-to-back massive flooding situations," Okmulgee County emergency management director Tim Craighton said.

The Oklahoma Highway Patrol said it would resume the search for the missing toddler at 7 a.m. in Ardmore, Oklahoma. The 2-year-old was swept away in Hickory Creek after running away from a relative, Ardmore Police Department Assistant Chief Kevin Norris said.

More than 5 inches of rain fell in Ardmore on Wednesday.

May was Oklahoma's wettest month ever. Five people died in floods and another person was killed in a tornado last month, and already on Wednesday officials closed roads because of high water.

On the east side of the storm — typically a tropical system's strongest side in the northern hemisphere — severe thunderstorm warnings were already up in Arkansas, with the threat of small tornadoes and damaging winds.

Once the storm passes into Missouri and Illinois, the runoff is expected to fill the Arkansas and Red rivers, which crested well above flood stages earlier this month. Arkansas transportation officials closed major routes and farmers headed back to the fields to replant fields after floodwaters roused seedlings from the ground.

"It's really hard. You can't get a plan together," said Robert Stobaugh, a farmer who owns about 6,000 acres near the Arkansas River west of Little Rock. "This second flood, ... it adds to the cost, aggravation and worry."

High water was already causing problems in Missouri, even ahead of Bill's arrival. A motorist died when high water swept his car from an eastern Missouri road and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers declared an emergency in its Kansas City District while delivering 43,000 sandbags for use in the Blue River basin.

Meteorologists warned residents of Missouri and Illinois to watch for high water into the weekend.

APNewsBreak: McDonald's to shrink in US, 1st time in decades

CANDICE CHOI, AP Food Industry Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The burger chain that put "supersize" into the American vernacular is slimming down: For the first time in more than 40 years, and perhaps ever, McDonald's says the number of U.S. restaurants it has is shrinking.

McDonald's plans to close more restaurants in the U.S. than it opens this year, according to the world's biggest hamburger chain. That hasn't happened since at least 1970, according to an Associated Press review of McDonald's regulatory filings.

Becca Hary, a McDonald's spokeswoman, declined to provide a specific figure but said the reduction

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would be "minimal" compared with its total of about 14,300 U.S. locations.

Still, the contraction is symbolic of troubles under the Golden Arches and how it's trying to regroup.

The company enjoyed rapid expansion for much of its history by offering consistent food at affordable prices. It even thrived during the recession, when its Dollar Menu drew in people trying to save money and new products like McCafe coffee drove up sales.

But since then, chains like Chipotle that market themselves as serving better food and ingredients have chipped away at McDonald's dominance. A new breed of "better burger" chains such as Five Guys Burgers and Fries is taking away customers, too.

McDonald's past success led to "a natural overconfidence," said John Gordon, a restaurant industry analyst with Pacific Management Consulting Group.

"McDonald's is such an internally focused organization, it's a situation where you don't have a fresh perspective coming in," Gordon said.

McDonald's executives have also conceded that an overly complicated menu led to inaccurate orders and longer wait times, and that they failed to keep pace with changing tastes.

CUTTING THE FAT

In April, McDonald's said it would close about 700 underperforming locations around the world this year, including in the U.S. CEO Steve Easterbrook, who stepped into the role on March 1, also later laid out plans to restructure the company to remove layers of bureaucracy and move more nimbly.

In any given year, some underperforming McDonald's restaurants will close. But previously, the number of closings has been outweighed by new restaurants that open.

The U.S. store closings will be a mix of franchised and company-owned locations, Hary said. She noted that the closings are part of a strategic review intended to set the stage for the future growth. The company did not provide a list of locations expected to close.

McDonald's Corp. has not reported an annual reduction in U.S. locations since at least 1970, according to archived filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission. For 1969, McDonald's did not include a U.S. store count in its annual report.

The company declined to comment on the last time it reduced its U.S. store base. But given the rapid expansion that characterized its early years, it's likely McDonald's hadn't pulled back since Ray Kroc founded the company in 1955.

SATURATION POINT OR ROOM TO RUN?

Closing weak stores isn't unusual for companies trying to turn around their fortunes. Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz shuttered hundreds of U.S. cafes after returning to head the company in 2008. Since then, the coffee chain has enjoyed healthy sales growth and expanded its footprint.

Mike Donahue, who served as McDonald's chief communications officer before leaving in 2006, said McDonald's hasn't necessarily reached its limit in the U.S.

"The only thing that stops growth is relevancy to the customer," said Donahue, who has since co-founded Lyfe Kitchen, a chain that positions itself as serving more wholesome food.

Even though it's closing locations, McDonald's easily remains the country's biggest hamburger chain. It still has more than twice as many restaurants as No. 2 Burger King, according to the industry tracker Technomic.

Among all fast-food chains, Subway has the most locations in the country with about 27,000 stores, though they do far less business than the typical McDonald's.

And McDonald's is still growing globally. It plans to add about 300 restaurants to its worldwide total of more than 36,000.

Donahue said that people were saying decades ago that McDonald's had reached its saturation point

in the U.S. But within the company, he said there was always confidence that there was room to expand.

Even when McDonald's closed underperforming stores in the past, he said it would open new restaurants in better locations. The closings this year appear to be a way to strengthen its base of stores, he said.

"What they're doing is pruning the tree," he said.

AP News in Brief

Pastor, 8 others, fatally shot at black church in Charleston, SC; police call it a hate crime

CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) — A white man opened fire during a prayer meeting inside a historic black church in downtown Charleston on Wednesday night, killing nine people, including the pastor, in an assault that authorities described as a hate crime. The shooter remained at large Thursday morning.

Police Chief Greg Mullen said he believed the attack at the Emanuel AME Church was a hate crime, and police were looking for a white male in his early 20s. Mullen said the scene was chaotic when police arrived, and the officers thought they had the suspect tracked with a police dog, but he got away.

"We will put all effort, we will put all resources and we will put all of our energy into finding this individual who committed this crime tonight," he said.

The FBI will aid the investigation, Mullen told a news conference that was attended by FBI Special Agent in Charge David A. Thomas.

Charleston Mayor Joseph P. Riley called the shooting "the most unspeakable and heartbreaking tragedy."

The latest on Charleston shooting: FBI will aid investigation into shooting that killed 9

3:35 a.m. (EDT)

Charleston Police Chief Greg Mullen says the FBI will be involved in the investigation of a shooting at a historic black church that killed nine and is being called a hate crime.

Mullen said the FBI would aid the investigation while speaking at a news conference that was also attended by FBI Special Agent in Charge David A. Thomas.

House Minority Leader Todd Rutherford says that among those killed at Emanuel AME Church was the church's pastor, state Sen. Clementa Pinckney.

Authorities are still searching for the shooter, who's described as a white male in his early 20s.

A year after its blitz across Iraq and Syria, Islamic State group creates nation of fear

ESKI MOSUL, Iraq (AP) — When the Islamic State fighters burst into the Iraqi village of Eski Mosul, Sheikh Abdullah Ibrahim knew his wife was in trouble.

Buthaina Ibrahim was an outspoken human rights advocate who had once run for the provincial council in Mosul. The IS fighters demanded she apply for a "repentance card." Under the rule of the extremist group, all former police officers, soldiers and people whose activities are deemed "heretical" must sign the card and carry it with them at all times.

"She said she'd never stoop so low," her husband said.

Buthaina Ibrahim was an outlier in her defiance of the Islamic State. It would cost her dearly.

The "caliphate," declared a year ago, demands obedience. Untold numbers have been killed because they were deemed dangerous to the IS, or insufficiently pious; 5-8 million endure a regime that has swiftly turned their world upside down, extending its control into every corner of life to enforce its own radical interpretation of Islamic law, or Shariah.

A chronology of major moments in the spread of the Islamic State group

April 18, 2010 — U.S. and Iraqi forces kill two top leaders of al-Qaida's branch in Iraq. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi becomes the terror group's new leader.

March 2011 — Syrian conflict erupts following an uprising against President Bashar Assad that turns into an insurgency and eventually civil war, attracting scores of al-Qaida militants from Iraq.

April 2013 — Al-Baghdadi announces his group has taken over the Nusra Front, the al-Qaida affiliate in Syria. The combined group is variously called the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL, and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIS; eventually it is known as the Islamic State group. Nusra denies the takeover, sparking infighting that continues to this day.

March 5, 2013 — Rebel factions including the Nusra Front take over Raqqa, a provincial capital in north-central Syria, the largest city to be wrested from Assad's government by rebels.

May 2013 — IS fighters burst on stage and show their strength by shooting three people in a main square in Raqqa. The group begins seizing towns and villages across northern Syria.

Mass held for victims of Berkeley balcony tragedy; some relatives arrive from Ireland

BERKELEY, Calif. (AP) — Hundreds attended a Mass for victims of a deadly Berkeley balcony collapse, with the Catholic priest calling on people to offer support for the families of the six young people killed and the seven injured.

Father Aidan McAleenan said Wednesday evening at Oakland's Cathedral that family members right now are focused on their loved ones rather than on the cause of the tragedy.

"We may well wonder and want to lash out and talk about the balcony and who built it," said Father Aidan McAleenan, who rushed to hospitals after hearing of the disaster. "But at the end of the day what (families) want the most is to see their loved ones. They want to touch them, they want to hold them and they want to kiss them."

Some families arrived from Ireland and were met by representatives from the Irish Consulate. None of them apparently attended the Mass, which drew some 300 people from around the San Francisco Bay Area.

A candlelight vigil for the victims was also in Berkeley Wednesday night.

Hong Kong government's controversial Beijing-backed election blueprint defeated by lawmakers

HONG KONG (AP) — The Hong Kong government's controversial Beijing-backed election blueprint was defeated in the legislature Thursday but the crucial vote came to a confusing anticlimax as pro-establishment lawmakers walked out just before it began.

After a lengthy debate stretching over two days, 28 lawmakers voted against the proposals, which sparked huge street protests in the southern Chinese city last year.

Eight others voted in favor.

However, in a bizarre scene moments before the vote, most of the pro-establishment lawmakers walked out of the legislature chamber and ended up not casting their votes.

Lawmaker Jeffrey Lam later blamed a "communication gap," explaining that they were waiting for a fellow lawmaker who was ill to return to the chamber. They left even after their request for a 15-minute break was rejected by the legislature president.

FBI to Congress: Surveillance flights over US cities by the book, rarely track cellphones

WASHINGTON (AP) — The FBI assured Congress in an unusual, confidential briefing that its plane surveillance program is a by-the-books operation short on high-definition cameras — with some planes equipped with binoculars — and said only five times in five years has it tracked cellphones from the sky.

The FBI would not openly answer some questions about its planes, which routinely orbit major U.S. cities and rural areas. Although the FBI has described the program as unclassified and not secret, it declined to disclose during an unclassified portion of a Capitol Hill briefing any details about how many planes it flies or how much the program costs. In a 2009 budget document, the FBI said it had 115 planes in its fleet.

The briefing Wednesday to Senate staff was the first effort in recent years — if ever — to impose oversight for the FBI's 30-year aerial surveillance program that gives support to specific, ongoing investigations into counterterrorism, espionage and criminal cases and ground surveillance operations. While it withheld some details, it offered assurances that the planes are not intended to perform mass surveillance or bulk intelligence collection. However, there is still no formal oversight regimen for the program.

The briefing came two weeks after the FBI confirmed to The Associated Press for the first time its wide-scale use of the aircraft, after the AP traced at least 50 planes registered to fake companies back to the FBI. The AP investigation identified more than 100 flights in 11 states over a 30-day period this spring. The planes since June 1 have flown more than two-dozen times over at least seven states, including parts of Texas, Georgia and the Pacific Northwest.

The ubiquity of the flights, combined with few details about the surveillance equipment aboard the planes, raised civil liberties concerns over Americans' privacy.

US believes espionage, not fraud, explains why stolen US employee data not for sale online

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Obama administration is increasingly confident that China's government, not criminal hackers, was responsible for the extraordinary theft of personal information about as many as 14 million current and former federal employees and others, The Associated Press has learned. One sign: None of the data has been credibly offered for sale on underground markets popular among professional identity thieves.

Investigators inside U.S. intelligence and law enforcement agencies, using secret "beacons" employed across the Internet, have been monitoring data transmissions across overseas networks for the file properties associated with the American personnel records, and scouring communications among targeted foreign hackers for credible references to the theft, two people directly involved in the investigation said. They spoke on condition of anonymity because parts of the case and techniques being used

are classified.

The investigation is being coordinated at the little-known National Cyber Investigative Joint Task Force, which is led by the FBI and includes 19 intelligence agencies and law enforcement, including the National Security Agency, CIA, Homeland Security Department, Secret Service and U.S. Cyber Command.

Investigators also have watched underground markets where identity thieves peddle information and found no trace of the data stolen from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, they said. In the chessboard world of espionage, they also acknowledged that by revealing what they said was indirect evidence that spying was actually the motive, it might encourage Beijing's government to sell at least some of the data surreptitiously to implicate identity thieves in what would be a counter-counterintelligence false-flag operation.

China has openly denied involvement in the break-in, and the U.S. has publicly provided no direct evidence proving China was responsible.

What's blamed for California's drought? Dry spell bolsters opposition to immigration, beef

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Mother Nature isn't the only one blamed for California's drought.

The state's historic four-year dry spell has brought with it a flurry of finger-pointing. Now advocates, noting how California's water shortage ranks as the top public concern, are invoking the drought to bolster their own causes.

Animal rights activists, environmentalists and opponents of immigration and federal wildlife protections are among those seizing on concern for the drought to build support for their movements.

The blame game has left state regulators and water watchers frustrated by what they call distractions from the state's immediate and long-term crisis.

"The number one cause of the drought is simply lack of rainfall and snowfall," said Tracy Quinn, a policy analyst with the Natural Resources Defense Council, itself fending off attacks that the drought is a "man-made" result of policies that ensure adequate water for fish and wetlands.

Trains, tree and brown greens. This is a US Open that will look like no other

UNIVERSITY PLACE, Wash. (AP) — Not a day has gone by at this U.S. Open without seeing something new on the young course at Chambers Bay.

A practice range that should have felt like a ghost town late Wednesday afternoon suddenly came to life when Tiger Woods arrived just as everyone was starting to leave. The grandstands were packed and photographers and TV crews crowded about.

It was rare to see Woods at the course so late. Then again, he doesn't tee off Thursday until 2:28 PDT.

Woods will get a chance to watch the early starters on TV and see how Chambers Bay plays. Like everyone else tuning in, he'll also see some things not normally seen in a U.S. Open:

TRAINS: There will be plenty of them, rolling across tracks between the golf course and the water. They don't exactly come into play, but players will have to get used to the idea of them making some noise on the back nine. Expect to see them often as Fox goes all out for to show a prime time audience what a unique place Chambers Bay is.

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Today in History The Associated Press

Today is Thursday, June 18, the 169th day of 2015. There are 196 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 18, 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte met his Waterloo as British and Prussian troops defeated the French in Belgium.

On this date:

In 1778, American forces entered Philadelphia as the British withdrew during the Revolutionary War.

In 1812, the War of 1812 began as the United States Congress approved, and President James Madison signed, a declaration of war against Britain.

In 1873, suffragist Susan B. Anthony was found guilty by a judge in Canandaigua, New York, of breaking the law by casting a vote in the 1872 presidential election. (The judge fined Anthony \$100, but she never paid the penalty.)

In 1908, William Howard Taft was nominated for president by the Republican National Convention in Chicago.

In 1940, during World War II, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill urged his countrymen to conduct themselves in a manner that would prompt future generations to say, "This was their finest hour." Charles de Gaulle delivered a speech on the BBC in which he rallied his countrymen after the fall of France to Nazi Germany.

In 1945, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower received a tumultuous welcome in Washington D.C., where he addressed a joint session of Congress. William Joyce, known as "Lord Haw-Haw," was charged in London with high treason for his English-language wartime broadcasts on German radio. (He was hanged in January 1946.)

In 1953, a U.S. Air Force Douglas C-124 Globemaster II crashed near Tokyo, killing all 129 people on board. Egypt's 148-year-old Muhammad Ali Dynasty came to an end with the overthrow of the monarchy and the proclamation of a republic.

In 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson and Japanese Prime Minister Hayato Ikeda spoke to each other by telephone as they inaugurated the first trans-Pacific cable completed by AT&T between Japan and Hawaii.

In 1975, NBC launched its News and Information Service, an all-news radio network. (NIS lasted until May 1977.)

In 1979, President Jimmy Carter and Soviet President Leonid I. Brezhnev signed the SALT II strategic arms limitation treaty in Vienna.

In 1983, astronaut Sally K. Ride became America's first woman in space as she and four colleagues blasted off aboard the space shuttle Challenger on a six-day mission.

In 1992, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Georgia v. McCollum*, ruled that criminal defendants could not use race as a basis for excluding potential jurors from their trials. Entertainer Peter Allen died in San Diego County, California, at age 48.

Ten years ago: U.S. Marines and Iraqi forces battled insurgents in a restive western Iraqi province, killing about 50 militants in the military's latest campaign to stop foreign fighters who were infiltrating from neighboring Syria. In his Saturday radio address, President George W. Bush said pulling out of Iraq immediately was not an option. Former Texas Congressman J.J. "Jake" Pickle died in Austin at age 91.

Five years ago: Death row inmate Ronnie Lee Gardner died in a barrage of bullets as Utah carried out its first firing squad execution in 14 years. (Gardner had been sentenced to death for fatally shooting attorney Michael Burdell during a failed escape attempt from a Salt Lake City courthouse.)

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One year ago: President Barack Obama met with senior lawmakers in the Oval Office for over an hour to discuss options for responding to the crumbling security situation in Iraq; afterward, congressional leaders said the president believed he did not need authorization from Congress for some steps he might take to quell the al-Qaida-inspired insurgency. The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office ruled that the Washington Redskins' name was "disparaging of Native Americans" and should be stripped of trademark protection. Clayton Kershaw pitched his first no-hitter as the Los Angeles Dodgers defeated the Colorado Rockies 8-0.

Today's Birthdays: Former Sen. Jay Rockefeller, D-W.Va., is 78. Baseball Hall of Famer Lou Brock is 76. Rock singer-composer-musician Sir Paul McCartney is 73. Actress Constance McCashin is 68. Actress Linda Thorson is 68. Rock musician John Evans is 67. Former Sen. Mike Johanns, R-Neb., is 65. Actress Isabella Rossellini is 63. Actress Carol Kane is 63. Actor Brian Benben is 59. Actress Andrea Evans is 58. Rock singer Alison Moyet is 54. Rock musician Dizzy Reed (Guns N' Roses) is 52. Figure skater Kurt Browning is 49. Country singer-musician Tim Hunt is 48. Rock singer-musician Sice (The Boo Radleys) is 46. Rhythm-and-blues singer Nathan Morris (Boyz II Men) is 44. Actress Mara Hobel is 44. Singer-songwriter Ray LaMontagne is 42. Rapper Silkk the Shocker is 40. Actress Alana de la Garza is 39. Country singer Blake Shelton is 39. Rock musician Steven Chen (Airborne Toxic Event) is 37. Actor David Giuntoli is 35. Actress Renee Olstead is 26. Actor Jacob Anderson (TV: "Game of Thrones") is 25. Actress Willa Holland is 24.

Thought for Today: "Frailty, thy name is no longer woman." - Victor Riesel, American labor journalist (1913-1995).