

Groton Daily Independent

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Wednesday, January 6

School Breakfast: Egg and cheese omelet, fruit, juice, milk.

School Lunch: Spaghetti with meat sauce, green beans, garlic toast, fruit.

Senior Menu: Ham and raisin sauce, sweet potatoes, California blend vegetables, crazy cake.

Anniv: Bill and Vicki Podoll

Birthdays: Alfred Tastad, Carla Ronning, Samantha Bunke, Zachary Townsend, Stephanie Luvaaas-Jung

7:00am: United Methodist Men's Bible Study

12:00pm: Kiwanis meets at the Community Center

1:30pm: St. John's Lutheran Ladies Aid LWML

3:45pm: St. John's Lutheran Confirmation

5:00pm: Emmanuel Lutheran Sarah Circle

6:45pm: Emmanuel Lutheran League

7:00pm: Emmanuel Lutheran Confirmation

Thursday, January 7

School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza, fruit, juice, milk.

School Lunch: Mini corn dogs, baked beans, lettuce salad, fruit.

Senior Menu: Sweet and sour pork, steamed rice, carrot and broccoli medley, honey fruit salad, whole wheat bread.

Birthdays: Eugene Brolin, Mary Finnesand, Rodney Kappes, Terry Herron

1:30pm: St. John's Lutheran Nursery Circle

2:00pm: Emmanuel Lutheran Nigeria Circle

5:15pm: GBB at Milbank Area (C game at 5:15 followed by JV at 6:30 and varsity at 8:00)

6:00pm: Wrestling Triangular in Groton (Milbank and Sioux Valley)

Friday, January 8

School Breakfast: Cinnamon roll, yogurt, fruit,

Open: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave.

The cardboard/paper

recycling trailer at the school is **Closed**

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Mark Malmberg, DDS

19 North 6th St.

Oakes, N.D.

701-742-3401



Secretary of State Announces Increase in Concealed Carry Weapon Permits

Pierre, SD – Secretary of State Shantel Krebs announced that South Dakota has seen a large increase in conceal carry weapon permits for 2015. “In the month of December alone we have seen the number of permits issued double from 1,423 in 2014 to 2,968 in 2015. Our office expects this trend to continue while there are national security concerns and as long as restrictions to the Second Amendment are a top issue at the federal level,” stated Secretary Krebs.

Total Active Permits

12/31/2015 – 85,273

Total New and Renewal Regular Permits Issued on a Yearly Basis since 2006:

2015 – 22,554

2014 – 18,656

2013 – 26,863

2012 – 17,160

2011 – 15,332

2010 – 14,839

2009 – 16,095

2008 – 13,838

2007 – 11,533

2006 – 11,763

Total New Enhanced Permits Issued

2015 - 36

Total number of new and renew permits for the month of December for the previous 5 years:

December 2011: 1204

December 2012: 1014

December 2013: 997

December 2014: 1423

December 2015: 2968

The South Dakota Secretary of State’s office issues the permits once they are approved by the County Sheriff in which the permit holder resides.

Conde National League

Team Standings: Pirates 3, Cubs 3, Colts 3, Mets 1, Giants 1, Braves 1

Men's High Games: Lance Frohling 211, Chad Furney 184, Larry Frohling 181

Men's High Series: Chad Furney 500, Larry Frohling 498, Lance Frohling 489

Women's High Games: Mary Larson 182, Vickie Kramp 173, Alice Severson 165

Women's High Series: Mary Larson 450, Vickie Kramp 442, Renee Hanlon 429



Service Notice: Robert Wehde

Memorial services for Robert "Bob" Wehde, 85, of Aberdeen will be 10:30 a.m., Friday, January 15th at the United Methodist Church, Groton. Pastor Tom Carlson will officiate. Inurnment with military honors will follow in Union Cemetery, Groton.

Bob died December 21, 2015 at Banner Heart Hospital in Mesa, Arizona.



Follow Us On Livestream at <http://livestream.com/gdi>
Check in to see upcoming games that will be streamed.

Justin Olson (front) has been providing the play-by-play commentary of the Groton Area basketball games. You can watch the Groton games on-line with Paul Kosel (back) and Justin Olson at livestream.com/gdi.

Death Notice: Richard Nehls

Richard Nehls, 90, of Pierpont, died January 5, 2016 at Sanford Medical Center in Webster. Services are pending with Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

"There's A Song In The Air"

To make you aware that
the Coopers are having an

Open House

Sunday, Jan. 17, 2016

1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

208 N. 2nd St., Groton

The Life of Lavohn C. Sieh



Mass of Christian burial for Lavohn C. Sieh, 95, of Aberdeen, was held Friday, December 11, 2015, at Sacred Heart Catholic Church, 409 3rd Avenue SE, Aberdeen, with Father Mark Lichter as celebrant. Burial took place at Groton Union Cemetery in Groton, SD.

Lavohn died peacefully on Monday, Dec. 7, 2015 at Avera Mother Joseph Manor in Aberdeen.

Known for her strong personality, Lavohn (Herron) Sieh was born June 3, 1920 at Groton, S.D. to Guy and Emma (Kalbus) Herron. Lavohn grew up in Groton where her dad owned a Case Farm Implement dealership. She often helped out by working. She was a waitress at local cafes and worked for the city for \$1 a day while in high school. She did housework and fixed hair for 10 cents a head. She attended Groton schools and graduated from South Dakota State at Brookings with a degree in home economics in 1942. Tuition at the time was \$66 a year.

In 1943, Lavohn traveled by train to Catalina Island, Calif. On Feb. 15, she

married her high school sweetheart, Roland "Bill" Sieh. They lived in Catalina through the end of WW II and after his discharge from the Navy, moved to Austin, Minn., then Hutchinson, Minn. In 1952, they moved to the Bath area to be close to family. They farmed for nearly 50 years. In 2000, they left the farm and moved to an apartment in Aberdeen. Bill passed away May 7, 2009. In April of this year, Lavohn moved to Nano Nagle Village in Aberdeen and then to Mother Joseph Manor where she lived at the time of her death.

Lavohn taught school and also worked with the South Dakota Extension Service. She was well known for her work with women in Extension Clubs and 4-Hers. She taught classes in nutrition, sewing and home arts to many individuals. Her skills in teaching enhanced her work with young people in Brown County's 4-H programs.

In addition to traveling to 49 states, she and her husband enjoyed extending their home to a lake cottage at Lake Sallie in Minnesota and to Port Aransas, Texas where they spent many winter months. Family often visited them at these locations. She loved family gatherings and hosted many dinners on the farm.

She and Bill raised five children. They enjoyed their extended family with trips to visit their kids, grandkids and great grandkids. Bird watching was a favorite past time. Lavohn always had a special fondness for cats. Playing bridge was a special treat for her and served to keep her mind active. When young, she read for pleasure. Books were her constant companions up to her last days.

Lavohn was reserved but outgoing in starting conversations and learning about people's background. Many times she found a link to people who started out as strangers.

A group of ladies began meeting in the Bath area in the 1960s for coffee. The group continues even today though most members now live in Aberdeen. Life-long friendships were forged and Lavohn was a regular member of that coffee group and continued to be a part of it this year.

She was a member of Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Aberdeen. She was a member of Band 711 and a member of Catholic Daughters of the Americas.

Surviving Lavohn are her children Tom (Nancy) Sieh of Katy, Texas; Patrick Sieh of Groton, S.D.; Connie (Dale) Groop of Frederick and Julie Sieh and her husband Brent Blumenthal of Belton, Texas and son-in-law, John Dokken of Sartell, Minn.; 12 grandchildren: John Dokken, Susan Altenburg, William Sieh, Melissa Sieh, Amanda Strickland, Robert Sieh, Angela Sieh, Ellen Arens, Alisha Amar, Katy Groop, Ben Blumenthal and Sam Blumenthal; and 16 great-grandchildren: Danielle and Deanna Dokken; Sophie and John Robert Altenburg; Garrett and Kyle Fitzgerald and Hunter Reed; William and Joseph Strickland; William and Christopher Sieh; Madelyn and Brandon Sieh; Donald and Nathan Arens; and Avishai Amar.

Preceding her in death were her husband in 2009, and her daughter Charlotte (Sieh) Dokken in 2014, her parents and her three sisters, Darlene Crawford, Dorothy Schulz and Betty Purcell.

THINKING ABOUT HEALTH

Can Shopping for Health Services Really Bring Down Costs?

By Trudy Lieberman, Rural Health News Service

Early in December David, a reader who lives in the foothills west of Denver, sent me an email. "It's scary when you go into any healthcare facility and don't know whether to bring your check book, loan application papers, or bankruptcy processing papers," he said. "Nobody seems to care or be concerned about it." He wanted to know why we aren't told all costs up front so we can make informed decisions.

David had a point. When we go in for a procedure, most of the time we don't know the total price or even what we will pay after insurance covers its share. In the last few years the lack of transparency has provided opportunities for entrepreneurs to create websites aimed at giving patients some price information for the handful of procedures that you can actually shop for. But it's one thing to shop for a low-cost stress test or a spinal X-ray. It's a lot trickier when you need heart by-pass surgery or a back operation.

I am all for price transparency that sheds light on our high-cost health system, and I want it to spark a serious conversation about why we have the most expensive care in the world and what we as a country can do about it. But don't count on turning patients into consumers who can force prices down and magically give us cheaper healthcare. That's a lot harder than something like boycotting the local Ford dealer in favor of the Chevy dealer who offers rock bottom prices.

The fundamental relationship between patients and their doctors is different from the relationship between buyers and sellers of cars and other consumer goods. Patients have to trust their healthcare providers since it's hard to judge the proposed care or treatments unless you have a medical degree. For most other products, the admonition "buyer beware" is at the heart of the relationship. Furthermore, shoppers generally have an idea of what makes a good car, and can more easily judge if the seller is giving them one.

If you buy a bad car, you live with it for a while and try not to make the same mistake again. If you pick the wrong imaging center or the wrong doctor, you could die or suffer serious harm. The stakes simply are higher.

In the last couple of weeks I came across another barrier to price shopping—marketing activities by pharmaceutical companies. Those activities are designed to help patients pay for their expensive prescriptions while at the same time keeping the underlying price of the drugs high.

An e-book I found on the website of "Medical Marketing & Media," a trade publication, advises healthcare sellers how to market their products. This book, titled "Pathway to Specialty Access," offers instructions to drug companies for using coupon programs to sell more drugs particularly the new, very costly specialty drugs and how to stop customers from not filling their prescriptions because they are too expensive. That's apparently a big problem in the drug business.

Those coupons available online or from doctors and pharmacies offer discounts on medicines especially those with high price tags like the new specialty drugs coming on the market. One example notes that a patient's out-of-pocket costs for multiple sclerosis or rheumatoid arthritis drugs could be as little as \$5 a prescription thanks to coupons and discounts. It could be hundreds of dollars without them.

Other coupons take the form of e-vouchers. A pharmacist sends a prescription to a vendor. The drug makers and the vendors establish how much they will cover of the costs insurance requires the patient to pay. While the process is going on, the patient "doesn't know what he will pay," says Andrew Pollpeter, a senior principal with The Amundsen Group, a pharmaceutical consulting firm. "But they are happier when they see a lower copay," he added.

What's wrong with this? After all, the patient gets cheap medicine; the drug company gets more sales. The high drug prices, however, are still with us. "Coupons shield consumers from the true cost of medications, and (consumers) are less likely to make decisions based on the true cost of the drug," says Troy Filipek, an actuary with the consulting firm Milliman. In short, discounts mask what the drug maker is really charging.

And that, of course, means all the advice about price shopping goes out the window.

At least when it comes to medicines, lots of middlemen are involved in what drugs you get and how much they cost. There's nothing transparent about drug pricing, and there's not likely to be.

What's been your experience with shopping for health care? Write to Trudy at trudy.lieberman@gmail.com

January 2016 Climate Outlook for South Dakota

BROOKINGS, S.D. - South Dakotans can expect weather changes this January based on data from the new National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Climate Prediction Center 30-day outlook.

"The outlook shows January 2016 weather to be different from December in several ways including temperature and precipitation," said Dennis Todey, South Dakota State Climatologist & SDSU Extension Climate Specialist.

Todey explained that the January 2016 outlook shifts the temperature probability slightly, with above average chances for warmer temperatures only in the northern third of the state. "The rest of the state is listed as equal chances for below or above average temperatures," he said, noting that this is a slight shift from previous outlooks which had been very bullish on warmer than average temperatures overall for the whole state and region.

"The shift is likely caused by a couple changes in conditions," Todey said.

With low winter sun angles and shorter days, Todey added that the current snow cover across the state will keep surfaces from warming as readily.

"Northern areas of the state and parts of North Dakota actually have lesser amounts of snow cover allowing them a better opportunity to melt out and warm up in time," he said. "The deeper areas of snow cover will not likely melt off during the month."

Todey said that areas throughout the state and region with lighter snow cover should have a chance of melting out if little additional snow falls.

Cold outbreak

Computer models, although mixed on the strength and length, are projecting a cold outbreak in the middle January, explained Laura Edwards, SDSU Extension Climate Field Specialist.

"Even in an El Nino winter, some cold outbreaks are not unexpected," said Edwards. "This expected cold outbreak also contributes to the lower likelihood of warmer conditions for the month as a whole."

Winter wheat benefits from snow cover

"The updated precipitation outlook is very El Nino-like," Todey said. "The northern edge of the state is included in below average chances for precipitation. El Nino is still influencing our winter weather."

He explained that wetter than average areas are confined largely from California across the southern U.S. "Overall this month does look quieter than December, with the pattern shifting away from the storm track experienced in December."

He added that historically, January is the lowest precipitation time of the year for South Dakota.

"Snow cover is more than expected over much of the state at the start January due to record snows in December," Edwards said.

She referenced the fact that areas west of the Missouri and in the southeast have more than a foot of snow on the ground, with at least a few inches of snow covering the rest of the state.

"The snow is having an impact on conditions in several ways," she said. As mentioned, the snow cover is helping keep temperatures somewhat cooler.

While temperatures have not been extremely cold to this point in the season, Edwards explained that the snow cover in western, winter wheat growing counties, has been advantageous for winter wheat as it provides protection for the overwintering crop.

"The recent consistent sub-freezing temperatures have also eased some livestock issues," she said. "Before the onset of colder temperatures in the latter part of December, many feedlot managers were reporting difficulties with muddy conditions." Now most of the feedlots are solid.

South Dakota PUC certifies Keystone XL Pipeline construction permit

PIERRE, S.D. - The South Dakota Public Utilities Commission today determined that the certification filed by TransCanada Keystone Pipeline to construct the Keystone XL Pipeline in South Dakota is valid. The decision was made by commission members Chris Nelson, Kristie Fiegen and Gary Hanson at a regular PUC meeting in Pierre, S.D., on Jan. 5, 2016.

"State law narrowly defines the certification question we voted on today," said PUC Chairman Nelson. "This was not a question of whether the permit should have been issued in 2010; rather, it was whether TransCanada filed a valid certification stating that the company can meet the conditions attached to the original permit. Opponents failed to prove that the certification was not valid. We all understand, however, that the pipeline cannot be constructed without a presidential permit," Nelson continued.

"My vote today to accept Keystone XL's certification takes proper account of the controlling law enacted by the legislature that guides our actions in this docket," stated Kristie Fiegen, PUC Vice Chairman. "Due process has been delivered. The commission considered a host of motions, allowed a vast amount of discovery to be gathered, provided an opportunity for all to properly argue their case, and enabled compilation of a complete written and oral record that addressed the conditions first established in the Keystone XL Pipeline construction docket," Fiegen concluded.

"We made it clear from the very beginning of this process that in order to prohibit the Keystone XL Pipeline certification, proof would need to be presented that TransCanada cannot meet the conditions set by the PUC in 2010," Commissioner Gary Hanson said. "Through this protractive and open process, the validity of Keystone XL's certification has been thoroughly vetted. There has been no evidence provided that shows TransCanada Keystone XL will be unable to meet the requirements of the permit. If the company secures a presidential permit and the pipeline is built, the PUC will monitor the progress to ensure the construction conditions are met," Hanson said.

TransCanada came before the PUC in March 2009 with its request to construct the Keystone XL Pipeline across parts of western South Dakota. The commission approved an amended final decision and order on June 29, 2010. Because TransCanada did not begin construction on the Keystone XL Pipeline in South Dakota within four years of the permit being issued, state law requires the company to certify to the PUC that the facility continues to meet the conditions upon which the permit was granted.

TransCanada Keystone Pipeline filed the certification with the PUC on Sept. 14, 2014. Since then, the PUC has reviewed thousands of pages of filings by parties; held numerous meetings at which motions offered by intervenors, TransCanada and PUC staff were discussed and decided; and conducted a nine-day evidentiary hearing.

The commission granted intervenor status to all 30 individuals and 12 organizations that requested it, allowing them full participation in the certification docket including the ability to file legal motions, request discovery (facts or documents), present testimony and evidence, and participate in the evidentiary hearing. Three intervenors withdrew from the docket in the spring of 2015. The remaining intervenors included landowners along the pipeline route, Native American tribes, environmental groups, grassroots membership organizations, and interested individuals from South Dakota, Nebraska, Minnesota and New York.

Approximately 100 people attended a public input session at the State Capitol in Pierre on July 6, at which 52 commenters offered verbal statements to the commission about the Keystone XL Pipeline certification. Several hundred written comments were submitted to the PUC throughout the course of the proceeding.

The evidentiary hearing was held in Pierre on July 27-Aug. 1 and Aug. 3-5, during which the commission heard testimony and accepted evidence from TransCanada, PUC staff, and intervenors.

The pipeline route in South Dakota has an estimated length of 315 miles that will cross portions of Harding, Butte, Perkins, Meade, Pennington, Haakon, Jones, Lyman and Tripp counties. The project also includes seven pump stations to be located in Harding, Meade, Haakon, Jones and Tripp counties. The plans specify two pump stations each in Harding and Tripp counties. The pipeline will transport crude oil starting in Hardisty, Alberta, Canada, to Steele City, Nebraska.

The PUC expects to issue its written final decision and order in the coming weeks. That document will be part of the full docket found on the PUC's website at www.puc.sd.gov, "Commission Actions," Commission Dockets," "Hydrocarbon Pipeline Dockets," "2014 Hydrocarbon Pipeline Dockets," Docket HP14-001 - In the Matter of the Petition of TransCanada Keystone Pipeline, LP for Order Accepting Certification of Permit Issued in Docket HP09-001 to Construct the Keystone XL Pipeline.

Today in Weather History

January 6, 1962: Snow, strong winds, and sub-zero temperatures along with near blizzard conditions caused hazardous driving conditions across the area from the 6th into the 9th. Snowfall of generally 2 to 6 inches with winds of 30 to 40 mph caused widespread low visibilities along with drifts up to 4 foot high across central and northeast South Dakota.

January 6, 2010: A strong Alberta Clipper low pressure system tracked southeast through the northern plains on Tuesday night, January 5th through Thursday, January 7th. Sufficient Pacific moisture interacted with bitter cold Arctic air surging south from Canada resulting in widespread heavy snowfall over much of northeast South Dakota. Snowfall amounts ranged from 6 to 11 inches. The snowfall began across northeast South Dakota in the late evening of the 5th into the early morning hours of the 6th. Many schools were closed on the 6th and the 7th. Some snowfall amounts included, 6 inches in Andover and Doland; 7 inches in Britton, Sisseton, and near Milbank; 8 inches in Aberdeen, Bryant, and near Summit; 9 inches at Wilmot and Castlewood; 10 inches in Clear Lake and 11 inches at Watertown.



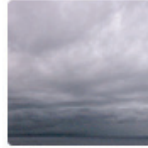




January 6, 2014: The coldest air in recent history moved into the region during the early morning hours of the 5th and continued into the afternoon hours of the 6th. The combination of sub-zero temperatures with north winds produced dangerously cold wind chills from 40 below to around 55 degrees below zero. Winds gusted to over 40 mph at times. Several area activities were cancelled, as well as many schools on Monday the 6th. Some of the coldest wind chills include; 56 below in Summit; 55 below near Hillhead; 54 below in Brandt and Webster; 53 below in Clear Lake; 52 below in Herreid; 51 below in Leola; 50 below in Watertown, Sisseton, Bowdle, and McIntosh.


1886: The "Great Blizzard of 1886" struck the Midwest with high winds, subzero temperatures and heavy snowfall. These conditions caused as many as 100 deaths and 80% of the cattle in the state of Kansas.

1996: A more recent Great Blizzard was a severe nor'easter that paralyzed the East Coast on January 6 to the 8th. In Washington D.C., this storm is also known as the "Great Furlough Storm" because it occurred during the 1996 federal government shutdown. Snowfall amounts from this event includes: 47 inches in Big Meadows, Virginia; 30.7" in Philadelphia; 27.8" in Newark; 24.6" at the Dulles International Airport; 24.2" in Trenton; 24" in Providence; 22.5" in Baltimore; 18.2" in Boston; 17.1" in D.C.; and 9.6" in Pittsburgh.


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Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday
						
Areas Fog then Cloudy	Slight Chance Snow	Cloudy	Slight Chance Snow	Chance Snow	Slight Chance Snow	Cold
High: 29 °F	Low: 23 °F	High: 30 °F	Low: 21 °F	High: 24 °F	Low: 2 °F	High: 4 °F

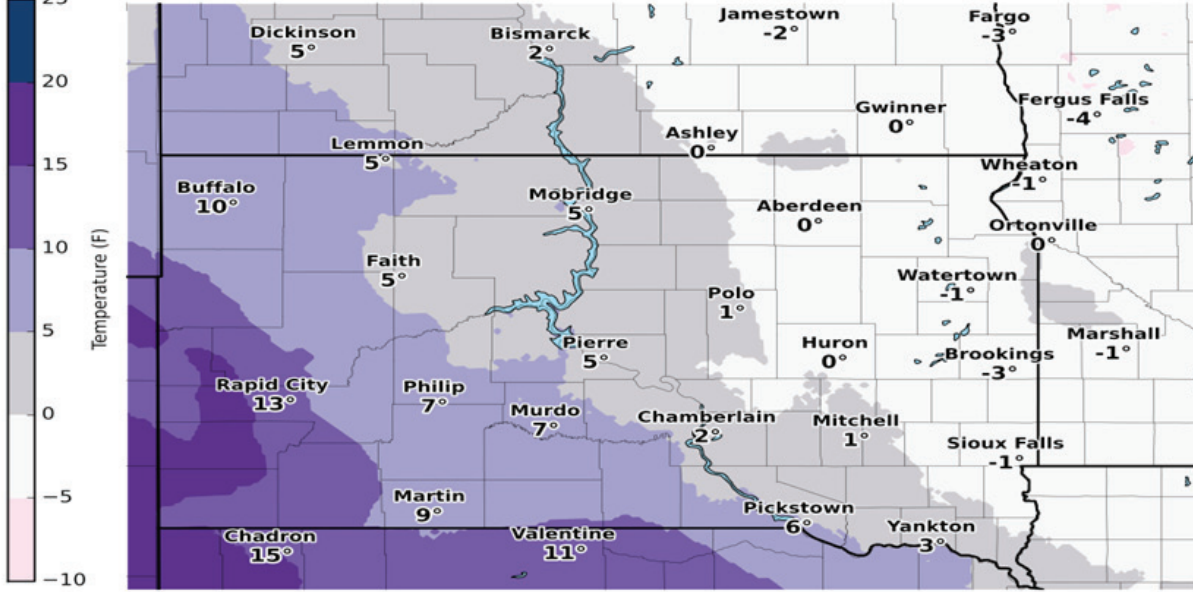


Taking A Look At Sunday...




Sunday's Highs




Valid: January 10, 2016




City	High (°F)
Dickinson	5°
Bismarck	2°
Jamestown	-2°
Fargo	-3°
Lemmon	5°
Ashley	0°
Gwinner	0°
Fergus Falls	-4°
Buffalo	10°
Mobridge	5°
Aberdeen	0°
Wheaton	-1°
Faith	5°
Pierre	5°
Polo	1°
Ortonville	0°
Watertown	-1°
Rapid City	13°
Philip	7°
Murdo	7°
Chamberlain	2°
Mitchell	1°
Huron	0°
Brookings	-3°
Marshall	-1°
Martin	9°
Valentine	11°
Pickstown	-6°
Sioux Falls	-1°
Chadron	15°
Yankton	-3°




National Weather Service
Aberdeen SD
01/06/2016 04:46 AM CST

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Published on: 01/06/2016 at 4:59AM

Arctic air is still on schedule to arrive this weekend and will likely stick around through next week. Here is an early look at highs on Sunday. Highs may struggle to reach zero across northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota. Wind chill values will be well below zero this weekend. Be prepared for very cold conditions this weekend as this will be the first real arctic air mass to settle over the region this winter.

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Yesterday's Weather

High: 31.3 at 3:26 PM

Low: 19.1 at Midnight

High Gust: 37 at 1:47 AM

Precip: 0.0

Today's Info

Record High: 49° in 2012

Record Low: -30° in 1909

Average High: 22°F

Average Low: 2°F

Average Precip in Jan.: 0.11

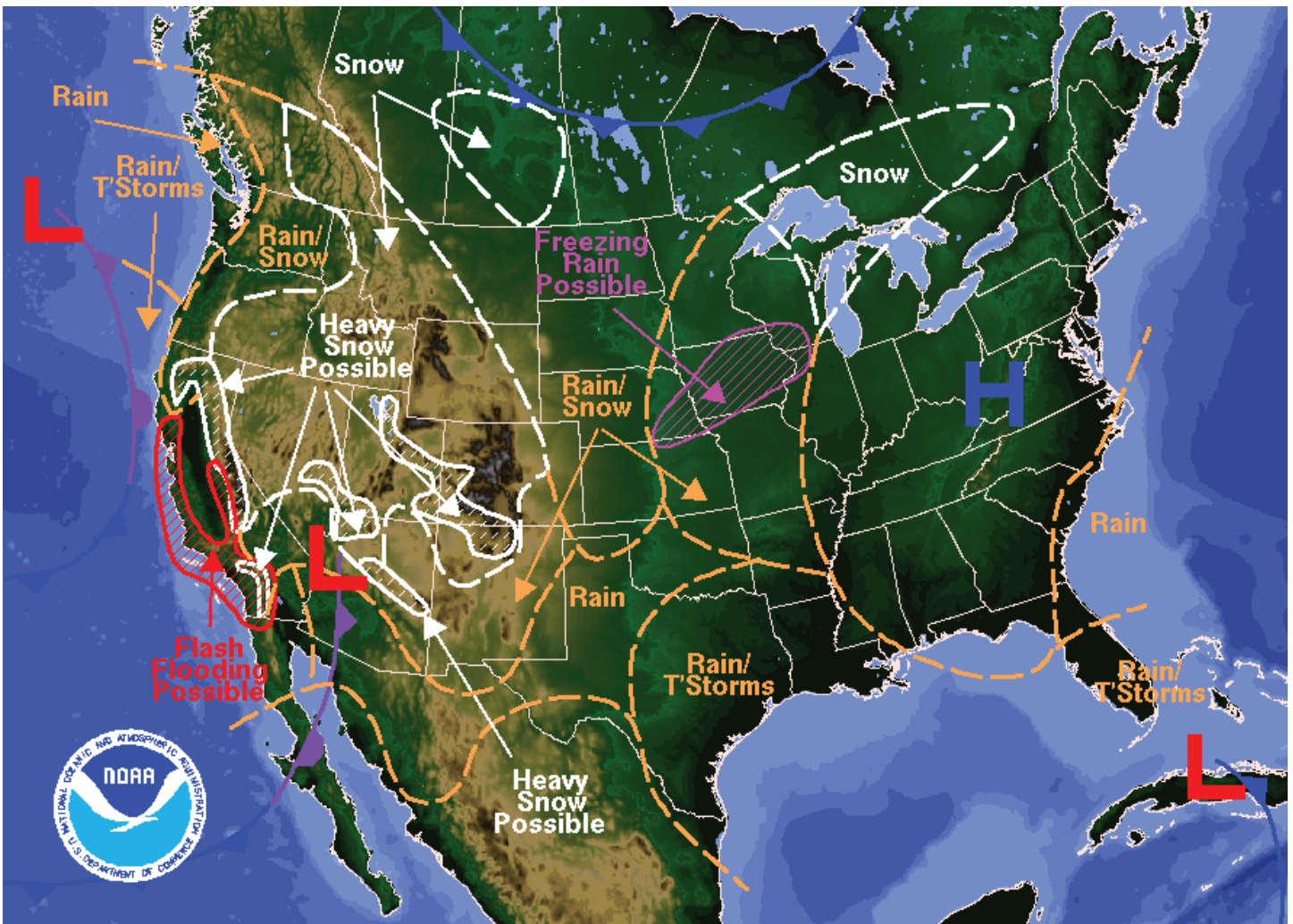
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.11

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 5:05 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:13 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Wed, Jan 06, 2016, issued 3:29 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Mcreynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

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GIVING AND RECEIVING

An elderly couple walked slowly to the desk in a hotel. They were exhausted from their travels and wanted to retire as quickly as possible. When they asked for a room, the clerk politely said, "I'm sorry, but we have no vacancies." However, when he saw the look of despair on their faces, he said, "But I can't send you away in such horrible conditions. You may have my room."

Hesitatingly, they accepted his offer and settled in for the night. As they were leaving the next morning the gentleman said to the clerk, "You are the kind of manager who should be the boss of the best hotel in the United States."

Two years later that clerk, George Boldt, received a letter from the gentleman. It contained a ticket to New York. Leading Mr. Boldt into a new hotel named the Waldorf-Astoria, the gentleman said, "I built this hotel for you to manage. My name is William Waldorf Astor."

Solomon wrote, "Give generously, for your gifts will return to you later." Giving involves risk and opportunity, trust and adventure. But God demands it and will always reward it.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to reach out to those in need, knowing that You will honor our efforts and reward our deeds. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Scripture for Today: Ecclesiastes 11:1 Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days.

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News from the  Associated Press

Construction starts on \$6.3M welcome center in Deadwood

DEADWOOD, S.D. (AP) — Construction has begun on a \$6.3 million welcome center in Deadwood. The facility will house the local Chamber of Commerce and will provide space for various community events. It's also intended to be a focal point for tourists.

The project was launched with a ground-breaking ceremony on Monday. Mayor Chuck Turbiville says it should be finished in May 2017.

Tourism Department looking for information center applicants

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The state Department of Tourism is seeking travel counselors and supervisors for 10 information centers along Interstates 29 and 90.

The travel guides are needed from May through September to help visitors with travel needs and to answer questions. The centers are located near Chamberlain, New Effington, Salem, Spearfish, Tilford, Valley Springs, Vermillion, Vivian, Wasta and Wilmot.

Applicants for the jobs must be high-school graduates, have knowledge of South Dakota's history and visitor attractions, and have computer and communication skills.

Several centers remain open through October to help out-of-state hunters and other travelers. Applications are due Feb. 6.

Where have the great mid-major teams gone?

DOUG FEINBERG, AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — It's been a tough year for mid-major teams.

A glance through the women's basketball poll this season and there are none of them in the Top 25. Monday marked the sixth straight week that there were no teams from non-power five conferences plus the Big East and American Athletic. It's the first time since the Top 25 became a writers poll in 1994-95 that no mid-major teams were ranked for more than three straight weeks.

George Washington and Chattanooga were the lone non-power schools to earn any time in the poll this season. Both were gone by the first week in December.

"There is still plenty of quality among mid-major teams this season, maybe even too much for the narrow space afforded them in the national picture," said Graham Hays, who has been ranking the top mid-major programs for ESPN for the past eight years. "The depth, especially as those programs increasingly play each other, makes it difficult for any one of them to break free of the pack, as Princeton did a season ago. It has been more difficult to find an obvious No. 1 in the mid-major rankings this season but also more difficult to limit the rankings at just 10 teams."

It's going to be even more difficult now for them to get into the Top 25 with conference play having started.

"I was thinking about that," Notre Dame coach Muffet McGraw said. "It's so hard for them to break into the poll. George Washington got ranked early on. If they have one or two losses they're done. People just drop them."

To McGraw's credit, the Irish played at South Dakota State earlier this season and came away with a tough nine-point victory. The Jackrabbits (12-3) are the highest ranked mid-major right now, sitting tied for 35th with four points in the poll.

Coach Aaron Johnston's team's only other losses came to then-No. 6 Maryland, by seven points, and Green Bay by one.

"The margin of error for mid-majors is so small," Johnston said. "We played Maryland and Notre Dame close this year, beat DePaul who's ranked and lose by one to Green Bay. Unfortunately one loss gets us

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out of people's minds."

The loss to Green Bay came a few days after the win over DePaul, which didn't help them with the voters. With limited national TV exposure for women's basketball it makes it more difficult for smaller schools to garner any attention.

Still this season seems more of an anomaly for mid-majors. Last year was a huge breakthrough for them. Princeton went undefeated in the regular season and climbed as high as 13 in the poll. Chattanooga, George Washington and Florida Gulf Coast also were in the final poll. That marked the fifth time in the past 10 years that four non-power conference teams were in the last poll of the season.

"There was some recognition for some really good mid-majors," Johnston said of last year's success. "There haven't been enough of those big wins to get the recognition this year, maybe that's a part of it."

The other part is that some of the perennial mid-major powers have struggled this year. Dayton lost two stars to graduation and then was hit by injuries. Marist had a few of its players transfer over the summer and coach Brian Giorgis is working with a young squad. Gonzaga sits at 12-4, but has no real big victories. Princeton lost an early game to Seton Hall and then dropped a pair of games at Dayton and Ohio State.

All of those programs have spent some time in the Top 25 over the past few years.

"That thing comes and goes in cycles," said Ohio State coach Kevin McGuff, who built Xavier into a power before it joined the Big East. "They'll come back around. I've been on both sides of it. At the mid-major level it usually takes a special group of kids that make a great run. It's hard to sustain from a recruiting stand point to keep it going at that level. But there are some great coaches at the level and they'll get them back up there."

Daktronics providing scoreboards for new USD arena

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Brookings-based Daktronics is providing video display scoreboards for the University of South Dakota's new basketball arena.

The company will be installing two video displays that will each measure 8 feet high by 21 feet wide. Two ribbon displays are being put in along the seating fascia on each side measuring 2.5 feet high by 366 feet wide. Four scorer's table displays measuring 3 feet high by 9 feet wide will be installed along the sidelines.

Other new displays at the Sports Performance Enhancement Complex will include scoreboards for the new practice facility, a scoreboard for soccer and a portable video display for track and field. The DakotaDome will also receive an upgraded video display.

Tuesday's Scores The Associated Press

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Alcester-Hudson 66, Freeman 42
Beresford 51, West Sioux, Hawarden, Iowa 39
Brookings 50, Harrisburg 40
Canistota 48, Mitchell Christian 44
Canton 68, Centerville 50
Castlewood 53, Lake Preston 47
Chamberlain 65, Winner 52
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 89, Crow Creek 73
Clark/Willow Lake 65, Sisseton 52
Colman-Egan 68, Baltic 46
Colome 69, Lyman 48
Dakota Valley 63, Sergeant Bluff-Luton, Iowa 60
DeSmet 50, Miller 41
Deubrook 55, Milbank Area 40
Douglas 50, Hot Springs 48
Elkton-Lake Benton 46, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 19

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Ethan 58, Avon 27
Gayville-Volin 53, Scotland 42
Gregory 65, Andes Central 50
Herreid/Selby Area 65, Edmunds Central 16
Huron 63, Aberdeen Central 54
Irene-Wakonda 66, Menno 40
Langford 45, Britton-Hecla 35
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 59, Platte-Geddes 49
Rapid City Stevens 66, Spearfish 41
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 55, Bridgewater-Emery 51
Sioux Falls Christian 59, Sioux Falls O'Gorman 44
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 76, Sioux City, West, Iowa 71
St. Francis Indian 85, Bennett County 68
Stanley County 71, Highmore-Harrold 61
Sturgis Brown 47, Lead-Deadwood 35
Timber Lake def. McIntosh, forfeit
Tri-Valley 62, Bon Homme 35
Viborg-Hurley 45, Tripp-Delmont/Armour 36
Wagner 55, Burke/South Central 51
Watertown 50, Brandon Valley 46
West Central 77, Tea Area 76
Wilmot 63, Rosholt 55

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Central 76, Huron 42
Aberdeen Roncalli 44, Leola/Frederick 23
Baltic 49, Colman-Egan 46
Bennett County 50, Hay Springs, Neb. 42
Beresford 58, West Sioux, Hawarden, Iowa 48
Brandon Valley 49, Watertown 39
Canton 56, Centerville 42
Chester 56, Dell Rapids St. Mary 30
Corsica/Stickney 44, Parkston 42
Dell Rapids 61, Garretson 30
DeSmet 61, Miller 28
Ethan 46, Avon 34
Faith 57, Dupree 23
Flandreau 69, Howard 59
Hamlin 52, Florence/Henry 39
Harding County 61, Newell 33
Harrisburg 50, Brookings 36
Herreid/Selby Area 46, Edmunds Central 18
Hitchcock-Tulare 61, Sunshine Bible Academy 31
Irene-Wakonda 53, Menno 40
Lead-Deadwood 63, Sturgis Brown 48
Lyman 48, Kadoka Area 33
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 61, Platte-Geddes 25
Northwestern 44, Faulkton 40
Philip 66, Bison 34
Rapid City Stevens 55, Spearfish 48
Red Cloud 66, Pine Ridge 62

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Redfield/Doland 61, Potter County 32
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 55, Bridgewater-Emery 51
Sergeant Bluff-Luton, Iowa 67, Dakota Valley 60
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 52, Marshall, Minn. 50
Sioux Falls Washington 67, Sioux Falls Lincoln 52
Sully Buttes 67, Mobridge-Pollock 29
Tri-Valley 63, Bon Homme 32
Viborg-Hurley 67, Tripp-Delmont/Armour 43
Wagner 62, Hanson 51
Warner 60, Ipswich 36
Webster 75, Tiospa Zina Tribal 27
West Central 66, Tea Area 53
Winner 61, Chamberlain 47

Rocky Mountain names 5 finalists for head football coach

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — Rocky Mountain College has named five finalists for head football coach including former Montana coach Robin Pflugrad and former Montana State-Northern coach Mark Samson.

Athletic director Bruce Parker says school officials also plan to interview Rocky's assistant coach and defensive coordinator Matt Hollowell, South Dakota defensive coordinator and defensive backs coach Jason Petrino and Zach Tinker, the offensive coordinator and assistant head coach at South Dakota School of Mines & Technology.

The on-campus interviews begin on Jan. 11. Parker says there will be community forums with each candidate and the dates and times will be announced when they're scheduled.

Rocky is looking to replace Brian Armstrong, who resigned to take an assistant coaching position at Montana State.

State regulators again approve Keystone XL oil pipeline

JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — State regulators approved again on Tuesday the portion of the Keystone XL oil pipeline that would go through South Dakota, despite the project's stalled status at the federal level.

The South Dakota Public Utilities Commission's decision also hinges on a requirement that TransCanada Corp. get a presidential permit for the project. President Barack Obama blocked the pipeline in November, but it could be revived under the next administration.

South Dakota's decision "further strengthens" the company's commitment to the project, and TransCanada is evaluating its options despite the "unjustified denial" of its application by the Obama administration, spokesman Mark Cooper said in a statement.

TransCanada's proposed pipeline would go from Canada through Montana and South Dakota to Nebraska, where it would connect with existing pipelines to carry more than 800,000 barrels of crude oil a day to refineries along the Gulf Coast. It would move about 100,000 barrels of oil daily from the western North Dakota oil patch.

The project has prompted opposition from Native American tribes, some landowners and environmental groups that were concerned the pipeline would contaminate water supplies and contribute to pollution.

John Harter, a Tripp County landowner whose property would be crossed by the pipeline, said the decision is "basically just leaving me hanging" since TransCanada doesn't have a presidential permit to move forward with the project.

Opponents of the pipeline, who have lauded Obama's decision, had previously argued that the company would have to start from the beginning with a new application for a new project. The Public Utilities Commission rejected that thinking last month.

The state authorized the pipeline in 2010, but permits must be revisited if construction doesn't start within

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four years. The commission voted to accept the company's guarantee that it can complete the project while meeting the conditions of the 2010 approval.

Robin Martinez, an attorney with organization Dakota Rural Action, said the group is "seriously considering" an appeal to the courts.

Supporters say the pipeline would be a boon for the country and would create construction jobs in South Dakota. It's also a safer way to transport oil than by rail, said Sam Mickelson, whose Meade County land is part of the pipeline's proposed route.

Mickelson said the pipeline would also bring in tax revenues for South Dakota. Opponents discount economic arguments.

"The property taxes, the number of jobs, cannot be compared to or equal the devastation it will cause," said Paula Antoine, chair of opposition group Oyate Wahacanka Woecun.

South Dakota gun permits up 21 percent from 2014

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Secretary of State Shantel Krebs says her office saw a 21 percent jump in conceal carry weapon permits for 2015.

The total of new and renewal permits jumped to 22,554 in 2015, up from the 18,656 issued in 2014. A total of 26,863 permits were issued in 2013, the highest amount since 2006.

Krebs said permits in the month of December alone doubled from 1,423 in 2014 to 2,968 in 2015.

Krebs, a Republican, said she expects this trend to continue with concerns over national security and potential federal gun restrictions.

South Dakota had a total of 85,273 active gun permits as of Dec. 31.

Police still trying to find safe seen at Westerhuis home

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Police investigating a September murder-suicide that ended in flames have resolved some outstanding questions but are still trying to find a small safe or lockbox that might have been in the home at the time, South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley said Tuesday.

Detectives have identified the likely source of a cellphone call and identified a white pickup they had been looking into, Jackley said, new information that does not suggest anyone other than Scott Westerhuis was responsible for killing his family.

Authorities say Westerhuis shot his wife, Nicole, and four children, then set the family home ablaze before killing himself in an act that might have been motivated by financial issues. Scott and Nicole Westerhuis worked for Mid-Central Educational Cooperative, and the killings came hours after the state informed the cooperative on Sept. 16 that it was cancelling a \$4.3 million contract with Mid-Central to administer a federal grant program to prepare Native American students for college.

Investigators had been trying to identify a Sept. 17 call placed just before 3 a.m. from the Westerhuis' landline to Nicole Westerhuis' cellphone, as the phone and voice mail were destroyed in the fire. Investigators have found that the call was likely triggered by an automated fire alarm set to first dial Scott Westerhuis' cellphone, then Nicole Westerhuis' cellphone.

Detectives were also trying to identify the pickup and trailer seen on a gas station surveillance video. They've determined that the truck had been delivering a load of pheasants from a farm in Gregory County to a pheasant hunting preserve north of Platte.

But investigators are still asking for the public's help in finding the gray safe or lockbox. While it had been seen at various times on the Westerhuis property, state investigators aren't certain if it was in the home during the fire, Jackley said.

Family of homicide victim upset with 20-year sentence

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Family members of a woman slain by her boyfriend in Sioux Falls say the man's 20-year prison sentence is too light, and they do not believe justice has been served.

Michael Martinez stabbed Beverly Guerra, 21, 14 times with a knife during an alcohol-fueled argument in

their apartment in July 2014, according to authorities. Guerra's 3- and 6-year-old children were in a back room when she was killed.

Martinez was convicted last fall of manslaughter but acquitted of murder. Judge Susan Saber sentenced Martinez on Monday, saying the incident did not warrant a light sentence but also did not call for the maximum punishment of life in prison, according to the Argus Leader newspaper.

"The facts and jury decision guide me to a middle ground," she said.

With time already served, time off for good behavior and the possibility of parole, Martinez could be out of prison in less than a decade.

Guerra's stepmother, Andreama Guerra, was among family members who angrily left the courtroom after the sentence was handed down.

"When I heard 30 years and 10 years suspended, I was just blown away," Guerra told KDLT-TV. "He'll be out within nine, 10 years tops. That's what's sad and breaks my heart."

Defense attorney Mike Miller said Guerra had threatened Martinez with a knife or hit him several times, and that Martinez felt remorse for killing the woman he had wanted to marry.

"This homicide might not have happened if she didn't arm herself first and stab first," Miller said.

Retired FBI agent to investigate complaint against alderman

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The Rapid City Council is hiring a retired FBI investigator to look into a code of conduct complaint against Alderman Jerry Wright.

The complaint against Wright was submitted last month by Ron Sasso, a former alderman. Sasso claims that Wright tried to get him fired from his job at a private company after Sasso wrote a critical opinion article about Wright in the local newspaper last June.

Sasso was fired from Black Hills Works, a nonprofit that works with adults who have disabilities and receives funding from the city. Sasso decided against suing Wright after documents surfaced showing Black Hills Works was considering firing him before Wright's alleged involvement.

The City Council voted unanimously Monday night to hire retired FBI investigator Mark Pecora to look into the matter. He operates a private investigation firm in Rapid City.

"We just want to get a fresh set of independent eyes on it," Alderman John Roberts said. "I think that's the only way to be fair."

Mayor Steve Allender said he informally polled council members, excluding Wright, about who could lead the investigation, giving them the options of Pecora, City Attorney Joel Landeen, or local attorney and former lawmaker David Lust. Eight council members wanted Pecora, while one wanted Lust.

Allender expects a report on Pecora's findings by the end of the month.

Wright said at the meeting that he would not vote his own alleged violations.

Pennington County voters reject wheel tax for road repairs

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Pennington County voters have rejected a proposed wheel tax to fund road and bridge repairs.

KEVN-TV reports that nearly 60 percent of the 10,000 people who voted in Tuesday's special election rejected the proposal.

County commissioners approved a wheel tax of up to \$60 per vehicle last fall, but opponents gathered enough petition signatures to bring the matter to a public vote.

The Rapid City Journal reports that county officials said the tax would be necessary to qualify the county for bridge improvement grant funds from a state-run program. Opponents said it would add to people's tax burden.

The Latest: NATO head says N. Korea test undermines security

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The latest on North Korea's announcement that it has conducted a hydrogen bomb test (all times Seoul):

9:20 p.m.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg says the nuclear weapons test announced by North Korea is a "clear breach" of U.N. Security Council resolutions and "undermines regional and international security."

Stoltenberg said in a statement Wednesday, "I condemn the continued development by North Korea of nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs and its inflammatory and threatening rhetoric."

He called on North Korea's government to "fully respect its international obligations and commitments."

North Korea said Wednesday that it has conducted a hydrogen bomb test — a move that would put the country a step closer toward improving its still-limited nuclear arsenal.

7:30 p.m.

Russia's Foreign Ministry says it hasn't been confirmed that North Korea has carried out an actual nuclear test.

In a statement, the ministry calls on "all interested sides to preserve maximum restraint and to not take actions that could rouse the uncontrolled growth of tensions in Northeast Asia."

— Jim Heintz, Moscow

7:15 p.m.

The EU foreign policy chief says that North Korea's nuclear test, if confirmed, would represent "a grave violation of the DPRK's international obligations not to produce or test nuclear weapons."

Federica Mogherini said in a statement that these obligations are determined by U.N. Security Council resolutions. The North's action would represent "a threat to the peace and security of the entire Northeast Asia region."

She called on North Korea to re-engage in a credible and meaningful dialogue with the international community, in particular in the framework of the six-nation talks, "and to cease this illegal and dangerous behavior."

She says she will consult with South Korean and Japanese foreign ministers and work with the U.N. Security Council meeting in an emergency session later Wednesday.

— Raf Casert, Brussels

6:40 p.m.

The head of the International Atomic Energy Agency says if confirmed, North Korea's hydrogen bomb test would be in clear violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions and "is deeply regrettable."

IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano issued a statement which urged North Korea to implement fully all relevant resolutions of the U.N. Security Council and the IAEA.

Amano said that IAEA remains ready to contribute to the peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue by resuming its nuclear verification activities in the North once a political agreement is reached among countries concerned.

— George Jahn, Vienna

6:20 p.m.

Britain's foreign secretary says that if a nuclear bomb has been detonated by North Korea, it would be a grave breach of U.N. Security Council resolutions.

Philip Hammond condemned North Korea's announcement of the nuclear test, and said it underlined the "very real threat that North Korea represents to regional and international security."

Hammond, who is visiting China, said in a statement that he discussed the matter with his Chinese counterpart, Yang Jiechi. He says they "have agreed to work with other members of the U.N. Security Council

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towards a robust international response.”

Hammond said he would also speak Wednesday with his Japanese and South Korean counterparts.

6:10 p.m.

A South Korean lawmaker says the country’s spy agency told him in a private briefing that Pyongyang may not have conducted a hydrogen bomb test given the relatively small size of the seismic wave reported.

Lawmaker Lee Cheol Woo says the National Intelligence Service told him that an estimated explosive yield of six kilotons and a quake with a magnitude of 4.8 were detected Wednesday.

According to him, that’s smaller than the estimated explosive yield of 7.9 kilotons and a quake with a magnitude of 4.9 that were reported after the 2013 nuclear test, and only a fraction of a typical successful hydrogen bomb test’s explosive yield of hundreds of kilotons.

Lee says the agency told him that even a failed hydrogen bomb detonation typically yields tens of kilotons. Lee sits on the parliament’s intelligence committee.

5:10 p.m.

China, Australia and France have strongly condemned North Korea’s announcement of a nuclear test.

China, the North’s closest ally, says the reported test was carried out in defiance of the international community and urged North Korea to refrain from acts that might worsen tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop says in a statement Wednesday that the action “confirms North Korea’s status as a rogue state and a continuing threat to international peace and security.”

French President Francois Hollande said in a statement that “France condemns this unacceptable violation of Security Council resolutions and calls for a strong reaction from the international community.”

4:30 p.m.

South Korea’s President Park Geun-hye has convened an emergency national security council meeting and is vowing a tough response to the North’s bomb test.

Park said at the start of the meeting that the government “must get North Korea to face corresponding measures based on closed cooperation with the international community.”

She says: “It’s not only grave provocation of our national security, but also an act that threatens our lives and future. It’s also a direct challenge to world peace and stability.”

Park also ordered the military to bolster its combined defense posture with the U.S. military, saying South Korea will sternly deal with any additional provocation by North Korea.

She called for a swift, accurate analysis on the North’s claim to have conducted a hydrogen bomb test.

— Hyung-jin Kim, Seoul, South Korea

3:45 p.m.

In Pyongyang, North Koreans reacted enthusiastically to the news that the country has carried out its fourth nuclear test since 2006.

Kim Sok Chol, a 32-year-old man who watched the TV announcement on a big screen at the train station square, told The Associated Press that he does not know much about what a hydrogen bomb is, but added that “since we have it, the U.S. will not attack us. I think the first successful H-bomb test is a great national event.”

Ri Sol Yong, a 22-year-old university student, said the test “gives us more national pride.”

She said, “Thanks to the fact that our country is a nuclear weapons state, I can study at the university without any worries. If we didn’t have powerful nuclear weapons, we would already have been turned into the slaves of the U.S.”

2:25 p.m.

The White House says it can’t confirm a North Korean nuclear test, but said it would condemn such a test as a violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions.

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North Korea said Wednesday it has conducted a hydrogen bomb test — a move that would put the country a step closer toward improving its still-limited nuclear arsenal.

National Security Council spokesman Ned Price says the U.S. is “aware of seismic activity on the Korean Peninsula in the vicinity of a known North Korean nuclear test site and have seen Pyongyang’s claims of a nuclear test.”

He calls on North Korea to abide by its international obligations and commitments and said the U.S. consistently made clear that it will not accept North Korea as a nuclear state and will continue to defend U.S. allies in the region.

2:10 p.m.

Crowds dressed in thick winter coats have gathered outside a large video screen near a Pyongyang train station to cheer and take video and photos on their mobile phones of the state TV anchor announcing the country had carried out a nuclear test.

Some people raised their hands and applauded. Many smiled and cheered.

2 p.m.

South Korea says it will consult with allies and regional powers to get North Korea to face the consequences of the nuclear test it said it had carried out, such as additional U.N. sanctions.

Presidential security official Cho Tae-yong says: “We strongly condemn” the North’s fourth bomb test.

He says North Korea must abide by U.N. resolutions that require the country to scrap its nuclear and ballistic missile programs completely and irreversibly.

South Korea’s Defense Ministry also says it is bolstering security and monitoring on North Korea.

— Hyung-jin Kim, Seoul, South Korea

1:45 p.m.

The head of the U.N. Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization, which monitors worldwide for nuclear testing, says if confirmed, a nuclear test by North Korea would be a breach of the treaty and a grave threat to international peace and security.

Lassina Zerbo says in a statement that the universally accepted norm against nuclear testing has been respected by 183 countries since 1996.

Zerbo urged North Korea to refrain from further nuclear testing and join the 183 states who have signed the treaty.

— George Jahn, Vienna

1:40 p.m.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe says the North Korean announcement of a hydrogen bomb test is a threat to his nation’s safety.

Abe told reporters: “We absolutely cannot allow this, and condemn it strongly.”

He called it a violation of the U.N. Security Council agreements that is against the global efforts toward nuclear disarmament.

Abe says he will take “strong action,” work with other nations, the U.S., South Korea, China and Russia, as well as through the U.N.

— Yuri Kageyama, Tokyo

1:25 p.m.

The U.N. organization monitoring the world for signs of nuclear testing says it has detected “an unusual event in the Korean Peninsula.”

The head of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization Lassina Zerbo says in a statement: “Our International Monitoring System detected an unusual seismic event in the Korean Peninsula at latitude 41.27 longitude 129.10.”

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The location on the map places the epicenter at North Korea's Pyonggye-ri testing site in its northeastern mountains, where all of its nuclear tests have been conducted.

North Korea said Wednesday it had conducted a hydrogen bomb test, which, if confirmed, would put Pyongyang a big step closer toward improving its still-limited nuclear arsenal.

World stocks, oil fall on North Korea nuke test, China data

KELVIN CHAN, AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — Global stock markets and oil prices fell Wednesday after a North Korean nuclear test unnerved investors and a report reinforced worries about growth in China, the world's No. 2 economy.

KEEPING SCORE: France's CAC 40 shed 1.5 percent to 4,468.68 and Germany's DAX dropped 1.6 percent to 10,149.97. Britain's FTSE 100 lost 1.5 percent to 6,045.38. U.S. stocks were poised to open lower. Dow and S&P 500 futures slumped 1.5 percent and 1.6 percent, respectively.

NUCLEAR TEST: North Korea announced it had carried out a hydrogen bomb test, after South Korea detected an "artificial earthquake" near the North's main nuclear test site. The test is likely to raise tensions in the region and make investors more cautious and less willing to place risky bets. The surprise announcement makes it tougher to curb North Korea's longstanding efforts to establish an arsenal of nuclear-armed long-distance missiles.

SERVICE SLIDE: A monthly survey of China's service industries slipped to a 17-month low, renewing fears that the world's No. 2 economy was facing stronger headwinds. The Caixin/Markit survey of service industry purchasing managers slipped to 50.2 in December from 51.2 the previous month. The index is based on a 100-point scale with numbers above 50 indicating expansion. Service industries have helped offset weakness in trade and investment as China's economy undergoes a painful slowdown, but the latest figures show momentum is slowing.

QUOTEWORTHY: "I didn't expect 2016 to be anything other than a roller-coaster, but we're really starting off the roller-coaster really early," said Michael Every, head of Asia-Pacific financial market research at Rabobank. The poor data and a weakening Chinese currency, which hurts export rivals, were bad enough, but now "you have North Korea letting off a hydrogen bomb, not just a nuclear test, but a stronger nuclear bomb," he said. "You wonder how much worse things could get."

CHINA MEASURES: Stocks in China rebounded on news that Beijing would keep market steadying measures in place. The China Securities Regulatory Commission said that when a six-month old ban on sales by large shareholders ends this week, new restrictions will take effect. Stockholders owning more than 5 percent of a company will be required to sell their shares in private transactions rather than on the open market to avoid shocks to the market, the regulator said.

EUROPEAN HOPES: Despite the global market turmoil, Europe saw a positive report on economic activity, which has been sluggish in recent years. Financial information company Markit said its purchasing managers' index — a measure of growth in the manufacturing and services sectors — rose to a four-month high in December. It said the survey results bode well for 2016, as companies are starting to hire more.

ASIAN SCORECARD: Most regional benchmarks closed lower. Japan's Nikkei 225 index lost 1 percent to close at 18,191.32 and South Korea's Kospi fell 0.3 percent to end at 1,925.43. Hong Kong's Hang Seng shed 1 percent to 20,980.81 but the Shanghai Composite Index in mainland China rebounded 2.3 percent to 3,361.84. It slumped 6.9 percent on Monday and 0.3 percent on Tuesday. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 retreated 1.2 percent to 5,123.10.

ENERGY: Crude futures gave up their early gains as investors became cautious about the North Korean nuclear test. Benchmark U.S. oil fell 91 cents to \$35.06 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. That added to the 79-cent drop on Thursday, when a report showed large global stockpiles. Brent crude, a benchmark for international oils, lost \$1.32 to \$35.57 a barrel in London, its lowest in 11 years.

CURRENCIES: The dollar slipped to 118.39 yen from 119.13 yen in the previous day's trading. The euro weakened to \$1.0748 from \$1.0744.

Drought stricken California welcomes El Nino's storms

KRISTIN J. BENDER, Associated Press

SCOTT SMITH, Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Despite the potential for flooding and mudslides, storms moving toward California were welcome news for a state suffering from a severe drought. But officials warned against reverting to old water-use habits.

As the first of the storms drenched the state on Tuesday, authorities cautioned that even the wettest of winters can't replenish depleted reservoirs and aquifers unless everyone keeps pitching in.

California's water deficit is so deep after four years of drought that a "steady parade of storms" like these will be needed for years to come, said Mike Anderson, climatologist for the state's Department of Water Resources.

"We're at least on a good trajectory," he said. "We've got to keep it going."

The current El Nino — a natural warming of the central Pacific Ocean that interacts with the atmosphere and changes weather worldwide — has tied 1997-1998 as the strongest on record, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center said, citing statistics that go back to 1950.

El Ninos usually bring heavy rains to California, although it remains to be seen whether people should expect anything like a repeat of 1997 and 1998, when storms killed 17 people, wiped out crops, washed out highways and pushed houses down hillsides.

"DarthNino may finally have California in its sights," said Jeff Masters, meteorology director of the private Weather Underground.

"A parade of strong Pacific storms characteristic of a strong El Nino event will batter the state this week and will likely bring damaging flooding by the time the second storm in the series rolls through on Wednesday," Masters said.

However, Masters and meteorologist Ryan Maue of the private WeatherBell Analytics don't believe this first storm is as powerful as some other Pacific storm systems, and they caution that the storms now following it may land elsewhere.

The current forecast calls for a "kind of a nice level of bombardment" over the next two weeks — probably not enough to cause the tremendous flooding of 1998, but then again, that year's floods didn't peak until February, Masters said.

As much as 15 inches of rain could fall in the next 16 days in Northern California, with about 2 feet of snow expected in the highest points of the Sierra Nevada, said Johnny Powell, a forecaster with the National Weather Service.

In Southern California, between 2 and 3.5 inches of rain is predicted to fall across the coastal and valley areas, and up to 5 inches falling in the mountains.

The first in the line of storms also drenched the desert Southwest on Tuesday and was aiming for the Gulf Coast, but should weaken to no more than a couple inches of rainfall by the time it reaches the Southeast, Masters added.

Flash flooding and flows of mud and debris were a concern, especially in places left barren by last year's wildfires. Residents of the Silverado Canyon burn area in Orange County and the Solimar burn area in Ventura County were urged to consider evacuating.

"The best time to prepare is before a weather event happens, but there is still time to prepare at least a basic emergency kit for your home, your car or your place of work," said Brad Alexander, spokesman for the Governor's Office of Emergency Services.

In Orange County, south of Los Angeles, a homeless man in his 40s was swept off his feet by swift waters and washed nearly a mile down Brea Creek in Buena Park before he pulled himself out, county fire Capt. Steve Concialdi said. He was treated at a hospital for scraped feet and arms.

Rocks fell on the roadway through Malibu Canyon, damaging four vehicles and clogging a heavily traveled commuter route through the steep Santa Monica Mountains, and Los Angeles police were rousting the homeless from normally dry riverbeds.

As steady and sometimes heavy rains fell, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti urged people to clear gutters and anything in their yards that might clog storm drains, and to stockpile sandbags if their home is

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susceptible to flooding.

Garcetti also said that the city's homeless encampments have been mapped for the first time, and he promised shuttles to bring people to shelters with 6,000 beds.

Los Angeles Fire Chief Ralph Terrazas said swift-water rescue teams are ready, but he'd rather not deploy them. Authorities hope to avoid a repeat of last September's rescue of a homeless man who scrambled up a tree with his dog when the Los Angeles River quickly grew to a torrent.

The storms are whipped up large ocean swells that could generate hazardous breaking waves at west-facing harbors. Ventura's Harbor Boulevard was closed Tuesday by flooding about a foot deep, police there said.

Altogether, the storms hold the potential for massive amounts of precipitation for a very parched state, but water managers won't be able to fully estimate this year's snowmelt until April 1, when the snowpack is typically at its deepest.

"Mother Nature has a way of surprising or disappointing us," Department of Water Resources spokesman Doug Carlson said, insisting that conservation must continue.

Californians used 20 percent less water this past November than they did in November 2013, before Gov. Jerry Brown declared the state's water emergency, the Water Resources Control Board announced Tuesday.

That falls short of Brown's 25 percent conservation mandate for a second straight month, although board chairwoman Felicia Marcus said the state remains on track to meet his overall goal.

"The fact that per-person water use dropped to 75 gallons per person per day on average is proof that Californians are clearly thinking twice before turning on the tap," Marcus said in a statement.

Despite these storms, Shawn Coburn says growers like him, working thousands of acres in the western San Joaquin Valley, expect no water this year from the federal government's vast system of reservoirs and canals. He blames strict environmental laws designed to protect endangered fish.

"I hope that it rains so much that Noah and his ark are flowing down the San Joaquin River," he said. "The people that run the system are telling us to be prepared for zero."

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. NORTH KOREA SAYS IT CONDUCTED SUCCESSFUL AND POWERFUL H-BOMB TEST

If confirmed, the move would be a huge jump in Pyongyang's quest to improve its still-limited nuclear arsenal, but South Korea's spy agency says an A-bomb was more likely.

2. WHY OBAMA'S GUN MOVES COULD PROVE INEFFECTIVE

The president's executive actions would have had no impact in keeping weapons from the hands of criminals who used weapons bought by others, or bought them legally.

3. WHICH SCENARIO U.S. ENVISIONS FOR SYRIA

The Obama administration's timeline for political transition in Syria does not foresee Assad stepping down as the country's leader before March 2017, according to a document obtained by The AP.

4. WHO MUST WALK A FINE LINE AMID IRANIAN, SAUDI RIFTS

While many Iraqi Shiites took to the streets in outrage over Saudi Arabia's execution of a Shiite cleric, the country's prime minister has to be cautious, trying to contain Iraq's sectarian tensions.

5. ARMED GROUP IN OREGON FEARS RAID

The Harney County Joint Information Center says in a statement it has no information on arrests or arrest warrants and that authorities are "still working on a peaceful resolution."

6. ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN WAVE OF VIOLENCE MARKED BY INCREASED FEMALE ROLE

While battling Israel was once a role restricted to Palestinian men and boys, the current slew of attacks sees an unprecedented spike in involvement of women.

7. EL NINO TIES A RECORD

The current weather pattern pulls even with the 1997-1998 El Nino as the strongest recorded, based on

temperature measurements in the Pacific.

8. GUN BUYER IN SAN BERNARDINO ATTACK FACES ARRAIGNMENT

Enrique Marquez Jr. also revealed plots he and his friend, Syed Rizwan Farook, discussed but never carried out to slaughter community college students.

9. VOLKSWAGEN EXEC SEES U.S. FIXES SOON IN EMISSIONS TEST CHEATING

Brand CEO Herbert Diess says that the company is having constructive discussions with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

10. WILL GRIFFEY SET RECORD, CAN BONDS GET BIG BOOST?

Fewer than 500 people get a vote, but most every baseball fan seems to have a vehement opinion on who belongs in the Hall of Fame.

H-bomb: More powerful than Hiroshima bomb, fits on missile

YURI KAGEYAMA, AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — The announcement Wednesday from North Korea that it had carried out a nuclear test brought to the front lines of global attention a phrase not often heard since the Cold War — “the H-bomb.”

As opposed to the atomic bomb, the kind dropped on Japan in the closing days of World War II, the hydrogen bomb, or so-called “superbomb” can be far more powerful — experts say, by 1,000 times or more.

North Korea’s first three nuclear tests, from 2006 to 2013, were A-bombs on roughly the same scale as the ones used on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which together killed more than 200,000 people. Pyongyang announced Wednesday that it had detonated its first H-bomb; while seismic data supported the claim of a large explosion, there was no immediate way to confirm the type.

Atomic bombs rely on fission, or atom-splitting, just as nuclear power plants do. The hydrogen bomb, also called the thermonuclear bomb, uses fusion, or atomic nuclei coming together, to produce explosive energy. Stars also produce energy through fusion.

“Think what’s going on inside the sun,” says Takao Takahara, professor of international politics and peace research at Meiji Gakuin University in Tokyo. “In theory, the process is potentially infinite. The amount of energy is huge.”

The technology of the hydrogen bomb is more sophisticated, and once attained, it is a greater threat. They can be made small enough to fit on a head of an intercontinental missile.

“That the bomb can become compact is the characteristic, and so this means North Korea has the U.S. in mind in making this H-bomb announcement,” says Tatsujiro Suzuki, professor at the Research Center for Nuclear Weapons Abolition at Nagasaki University.

But the H-bomb requires more technology in control and accuracy because of the greater amount of energy involved, he said. Both the A-bomb and H-bomb use radioactive material like uranium and plutonium for the explosive material.

The hydrogen bomb is in fact already the global standard for the five nations with the greatest nuclear capabilities: the U.S., Russia, France, the U.K. and China. Other nations may also either have it or may be working on it, despite a worldwide effort to contain such proliferation.

The hydrogen bomb was never dropped on any targets. It was first successfully tested in the 1950s by the U.S., in bombs called Mike and Bravo. Soviet tests soon followed.

The crew of a Japanese fishing boat that unknowingly went into the waters near the nuclear testing of Bravo got acute radiation sickness. Since the 1960s, nuclear tests have gone underground to reduce radioactive fallout.

Terumi Tanaka, head of Nihon Hidankyo, or the Japan Federation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations, has been working to ban nuclear weapons for years and was stunned by reports of the H-bomb test.

“It defies hopes for progress,” he said. “I am outraged.”

APNewsBreak: EPA says pesticide harms bees in some cases

SETH BORENSTEIN, AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A major pesticide harms honeybees when used on cotton and citrus but not on other big crops like corn, berries and tobacco, the Environmental Protection Agency found.

In its first scientific risk assessment of the much-debated class of pesticides called neonicotinoids and how they affect bees on a chronic long-term basis, the EPA found in some cases the chemical didn't harm bees or their hives but in other cases it posed a significant risk. It mostly depended on the crop, a nuanced answer that neither clears the way for an outright ban nor is a blanket go-ahead for continued use.

Honeybees don't just make honey; about one-third of the human diet comes from insect-pollinated plants, and the honeybee is responsible for 80 percent of that pollination. Bees and other pollinators worldwide have been in trouble with declining numbers.

Some advocacy groups solely blame neonicotinoids — they work on insects' central nervous systems — and call for bans on the chemicals. Recent scientific studies have pointed to problems and pesticide makers dispute those studies. Europe banned the pesticide class, and then lifted the ban. Top bee scientists have said that class of pesticide is only one of a number of factors hurting bees, not the sole cause of their decline.

Before acting, EPA said it needed more specific and targeted research and this is the first of four planned assessments of risk of specific neonicotinoids. It will be announced Wednesday, but The Associated Press obtained the summary earlier and the chief pesticide official explained the results in an interview. The study was done by the EPA and California's environmental agency, with a similar one done by Canada being released Wednesday at the same time.

EPA analysis of detailed tests found a clear level of concentration of the pesticide imidacloprid, the most common neonicotinoid, in which things start to go awry. If nectar brought back to the hive from worker bees had more than 25 parts per billion of the chemical, "there's a significant effect," namely fewer bees, less honey and "a less robust hive," said Jim Jones, EPA's assistant administrator for chemical safety and pollution prevention.

But if the nectar chemical level was below 25 parts per billion, it was as if there were no imidacloprid at all, with no ill effects, Jones said.

There was a clear threshold at 25 parts per billion of harm or no harm, not really much of a grey area, he added.

The study also found that it was the crop more than anything that determined if it was above or below that harmful level, Jones said. While nectar of cotton and citrus fruits were above the harmful level, the levels were not harmful when it came to corn, most vegetables, berries and tobacco. Other crops weren't conclusive and need more testing, including legumes, melons, tree nuts and herbs.

Also, the controversial practice of treating seeds with the chemical seemed not to harm bees, Jones said.

The nation's top crop — in terms of production value in billions of dollars — is corn. And imidacloprid treatment of this crop is not a problem, Jones said. Same goes for hay and wheat, which are the nation's third and fourth most valuable crops. Soybeans, the No. 2 crop, and No. 5 crop almonds are in the still-to-be-determined category. The problem crops of cotton and citrus are No. 7 and 9 in U.S. production value in 2014, according to Agriculture Department statistics.

The study looked just at honeybees, not bumblebees. A 2015 study in the field in the journal *Nature* found neonicotinoids in general harmed bumblebees, but not honeybees. Jones said EPA used honeybees because they are a good surrogate for all pollinators.

This is a draft of a scientific report, not a regulation, Jones said. After public comments and the report is finalized, then EPA may act.

"The literature is all over the place, which is why we wanted to draft a protocol that we knew would be scientifically robust enough," Jones said.

EPA required imidacloprid-maker Bayer Crop Sciences to run specific tests and then the federal agency analyzed the results for the report, Jones said. Imidacloprid is used under several different names because it is off patent, Jones said.

Bayer has long maintained its pesticides are safe and has found what it considers problems in previous studies. But the EPA only shared the risk assessment summary and provided Jones for the interview on the condition that the EPA study was not shared with anyone before the Wednesday announcement.

University of Illinois entomologist May Berenbaum, who in 2014 was awarded the National Medal of Science, said last year that two 2015 studies in the journal *Nature* "are more nails in the systemic neonicotinoid coffin." One of those studies showed that bees may even seek out the chemical. Berenbaum, who wasn't part of those studies, said research has long shown that honeybees "display a paradoxical preference for certain neurotoxic phytochemicals, including nicotine and caffeine."

Last year the EPA proposed banning use of pesticides that harm bees — including but not limited to neonicotinoids — when crops are in bloom and bees are being used as commercial pollinators.

Honeybees pollinate more than 90 flowering crops, including citrus, peaches, berries, melons, apples, nuts, avocados, soybeans, asparagus and cucumbers.

Armed group in Oregon fears raid; critics decry goals

REBECCA BOONE, Associated Press

BURNS, Ore. (AP) — The small, armed group occupying a remote national wildlife preserve in Oregon has said repeatedly that local people should control federal lands — a sentiment that frustrates critics who say the lands are already managed to help everyone from ranchers to recreationalists.

With the takeover entering its fourth day Wednesday, authorities had not removed the group of roughly 20 people from the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in eastern Oregon's high desert country. But members of the group — some from as far away as Arizona and Michigan — were growing increasingly tense, saying they feared a federal raid.

Arizona rancher LaVoy Finicum said Tuesday evening that he believes federal officials have issued warrants for the arrest of five group members — including himself and Ammon Bundy — but Finicum offered no details.

The FBI in Portland referred calls to the Harney County Joint Information Center, which said in a statement it had no information on arrests or arrest warrants and that authorities were "still working on a peaceful resolution."

Bundy said they would take a defensive position anticipating a possible raid. Late Tuesday, the group moved a large plow vehicle to block the refuge's driveway.

Bundy told reporters Tuesday the group would leave when there was a plan in place to turn over federal lands to locals — a common refrain in a decades-long fight over public lands in the West.

"It is our goal to get the logger back to logging, the rancher back to ranching," said the son of Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy, who was involved in a high-profile 2014 standoff with the government over grazing rights.

The younger Bundy's anti-government group is critical of federal land stewardship. But environmentalists and others say U.S. officials should keep control for the broadest possible benefit to business, recreation and the environment.

Randy Eardley, a Bureau of Land Management spokesman, said the group's call for land ownership transfer didn't make sense.

"It is frustrating when I hear the demand that we return the land to the people, because it is in the people's hand — the people own it," Eardley said. "Everybody in the United States owns that land. ... We manage it the best we can for its owners, the people, and whether it's for recreating, for grazing, for energy and mineral development."

Bob Sallinger, conservation director of the Audubon Society of Portland, said in a statement this week that occupation of the refuge "holds hostage public lands and public resources to serve the very narrow political agenda of the occupiers."

The armed group seized the refuge's headquarters Saturday night. Bundled in camouflage, earmuffs and cowboy hats, they seem to be centered around a complex of buildings on the 300-square-mile high

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desert preserve.

Finicum said the power was still on at buildings at the refuge. "If they cut it off, that would be such a crying shame. All the pipes would freeze," he said.

Ammon Bundy offered few specifics about the group's plan to get the land turned over to local control, but Finicum said they would examine the underlying land ownership transactions to begin to "unwind it."

The federal government controls about half of all land in the West, which would make the wholesale transfer of ownership extremely difficult and expensive.

For example, it owns 53 percent of Oregon, 85 percent of Nevada and 66 percent of Utah, according to the Congressional Research Service. Taking over federal public lands in Idaho could cost the state \$111 million a year, according to a University of Idaho study.

Bundy said the group felt it had the support of the local community. But the county sheriff has told the group to go home, and many locals don't want them around, fearing they may bring trouble. A community meeting was scheduled for Wednesday. Harney County Sheriff David Ward said in a statement the meeting was to "talk about their security concerns and the disruptions that the behavior of the militants on the refuge are causing for our people."

So far, law enforcement hasn't taken action against the group, whose rallying cry is the imprisonment of father-and-son ranchers who set fire to federal land.

The group calling itself Citizens for Constitutional Freedom said it wants an inquiry into whether the government is forcing ranchers off their land after Dwight Hammond and his son, Steven, reported back to prison Monday.

The Hammonds, who have distanced themselves from the group, were convicted of arson three years ago and served no more than a year. A judge later ruled the terms fell short of minimum sentences that require them to serve about four more years.

The takeover comes amid a dispute that dates back decades in the West. In the 1970s, Nevada and other states pushed for local control in what was known as the Sagebrush Rebellion. Supporters wanted more land for cattle grazing, mining and timber harvesting.

VW exec sees US fixes soon in emissions test cheating

TOM KRISHER, AP Auto Writer

LAS VEGAS (AP) — The top executive of the Volkswagen brand worldwide says he's optimistic that U.S. environmental regulators will approve fixes within the coming weeks or months for diesel engines that cheat on emissions tests.

Brand CEO Herbert Diess said Tuesday night at the CES gadget show in Las Vegas that the company is having constructive discussions with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the California Air Resources Board.

Diess says VW already has received approval to fix 8.5 million cheating cars in Europe. Repairs will start this month and most will be fixed this year.

But the U.S. cars are more problematic because they emit up to 40 times more toxic nitrogen oxide than allowed. About 500,000 cars are affected in the U.S., with a total of 11 million worldwide. Diess spoke as the company unveiled a concept of an electric-powered Microbus that could go into production in 2019.

U.S. fixes could be complicated and take several years. VW has admitted cheating on about 500,000 diesel cars nationwide by installing software that turns emissions controls on during government tests and turns them off on real roads.

Diess apologized for the scandal. "I'm optimistic that we will find a solution, we will bring a package together which satisfies our customers first and foremost and then also the regulators," he said.

The U.S. Justice Department sued Volkswagen on Monday over emissions-cheating software, potentially exposing the company to billions of dollars in penalties for clean air violations.

The company is in the midst of negotiating a massive mandatory recall with U.S. regulators and potentially faces more than \$18 billion in fines for violations of the federal Clean Air Act.

The company and its executives could also still face separate criminal charges, while a raft of private

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class-action lawsuits filed by angry VW owners are pending.

The company first acknowledged in September that the cheating software was included in its diesel cars and SUVs sold since the 2009 model year, as well as some recent diesel models sold by the VW-owned Audi and Porsche brands.

Hall vote: Will Griffey set record, can Bonds get big boost?

BEN WALKER, AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Fewer than 500 people get a vote, but most every baseball fan seems to have a vehement opinion on who belongs in the Hall of Fame.

With the election results on deck, a look at what to watch for when the newest members of Cooperstown are announced today at 6 p.m. EST:

JUNIOR'S JURY: Ken Griffey Jr. takes his first swing at a truly huge number — will he break the record for the highest voting percentage ever? Tom Seaver set the bar at 98.84 percent when he was picked on 425 of 430 ballots in 1992. About one-third of the voters revealed their choices early, and www.bbhoftracker.com said they all listed Griffey. What would hurt his chances? His last 10 years were injury filled, resulting in no seasons with 100 RBIs and just one over .300.

JUICED UP: Barry Bonds, Roger Clemens, Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa haven't come close to getting the required 75 percent for induction. Tarnished by links to steroids, they're almost certain to get shut out this time, too. Yet they could get a boost because about 100 retired writers have lost their vote. There's an assumption — not proven — that a younger electorate might take a different stance on the issue of performance-enhancing drugs.

CLOSING TIME: Trevor Hoffman is second on the career saves list with 601 and clearly ranks among the best relief pitchers ever. Even so, the early returns show him falling short in his first try. Why? Only a handful of relievers have been enshrined, and Hall voters don't quite seem to have a handle on how to evaluate modern-day closers. Mariano Rivera will have no such worries when he's eligible in a few years.

THE TWEENERS: Mike Piazza, Jeff Bagwell and Tim Lincecum all drew over 50 percent in the last election and figure to be knocking on the door this time. Raines might be the most curious case. The leadoff man was among the game's most dynamic players in the 1980s and had perhaps only one major fault — he wasn't as good as Rickey Henderson.

PETE AND REPEAT: Every year, Pete Rose gets a couple of write-in votes. They don't count, of course, because he's not allowed on the ballot. Commissioner Rob Manfred recently rejected Rose's appeal to overturn a lifetime ban for gambling. The career hits leader still has his sympathizers, but at 74, it's getting harder and harder to imagine he'll ever see his plaque hanging in the Hall.

Pope: 'restless hearts' seeking certainty in our times

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis says restless hearts these days are seeking sure answers to life's questions but don't find them.

Francis has voiced this reflection during Mass in St. Peter's Basilica Wednesday to mark Epiphany, which recalls the Gospel account of the Three Kings, or Magi, who follow a star to find the infant Jesus in Bethlehem.

The pontiff says the Catholic church is tasked with seeing and showing ever more clearly the desire for God which is present in the heart of every man and woman."

Francis says: "Like the Magi, countless people in our day have a 'restless heart' which continues to search without finding sure answers."

Recalling the long journey of the Magi, Francis says "before Jesus, all divisions of race, language and culture disappear."

Questions and answers about Obama's executive plan on guns

JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama's plan to strengthen controls on guns in the U.S. is meeting swift resistance from gun rights groups, Republicans and even a few Democrats who say it's up to Congress to enact new policies on firearms. Yet the overall effect on gun violence could prove to be relatively small.

Some questions and answers about Obama's presidential actions on gun control:

WHAT ACTION IS OBAMA TAKING?

Obama announced a 10-point plan to try to keep guns from people who shouldn't have them. The centerpiece is new federal guidance that seeks to clarify who is "in the business" of selling firearms and has to get a federal license.

Licensed dealers must run background checks on prospective buyers, but private sellers don't. Obama is aiming to narrow that loophole so that more firearms sold at gun shows, flea markets or online are subject to background checks.

Other steps include 230 new examiners the FBI will hire to process background checks. And Obama is directing federal agencies to research smart gun technology to reduce accidental shootings and asking Congress for \$500 million for mental health care. Further steps aim to better track lost guns and prevent trusts or corporations from buying dangerous weapons without background checks.

I SELL A FEW GUNS FROM TIME TO TIME. DO I NEED TO REGISTER?

There's no cut-and-dry answer.

The new guidance says if your "principal motive" is profit, you're a dealer, but if you occasionally sell guns from your personal collection, you're not. Someone who only sells at gun shows or online can still be a dealer.

There's no specific number of guns that triggers a requirement to register. But the Justice Department is warning sellers that courts have convicted people for dealing without a license even when they've sold as few as two guns.

It's up to individuals to look at the guidance and determine whether they need a license. The penalties for making the wrong call are steep: up to five years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000 for those who deal firearms without a license. If you're not sure, you can contact the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

WOULD THIS HAVE STOPPED RECENT MASS SHOOTINGS?

Probably not.

An Associated Press review shows that Obama's executive actions would have had no impact in keeping weapons from suspects in several of the deadliest incidents, including Newtown, Connecticut; San Bernardino, California; and Aurora, Colorado. The shooters in Newtown and San Bernardino, for example, used weapons purchased by other people.

Obama's actions could potentially reduce other gun deaths — especially suicides, which cause two-thirds of gun deaths. But it's unclear whether the steps will significantly curb unregulated gun sales.

Millions of guns are sold annually in informal settings outside of gun shops, including many through private sales arranged online. The Obama administration acknowledged it couldn't quantify how many gun sales would be newly subjected to background checks. Nor could it say how many currently unregistered gun sellers would have to obtain a license.

WHY NOW?

Obama is running out of time. With barely a year left in his presidency, he has to act quickly to roll out new policies, especially if he wants them to become ingrained and harder to rescind when the next president takes over.

After the Newtown shooting, Obama in 2013 sought far-reaching, bipartisan legislation that went beyond background checks to ban certain assault-style weapons and cap the size of ammunition clips. When the effort collapsed in the Senate, the White House said it was working to identify every legal step he could take on his own.

But a more recent spate of gun-related atrocities, including in San Bernardino, California, spurred the administration to give the issue another look.

CAN THE PRESIDENT DO THIS ALONE?

Obama says he can. Republicans and gun rights advocates say he can't.

The White House says Obama is acting fully within his legal authority, by clarifying existing laws that Congress has already passed. It's an argument Obama has used before when opposition in Congress has led him to take sweeping executive action on immigration, climate change and other issues.

Still, Obama readily concedes the executive steps will be challenged in court. One likely option for opponents is to challenge Obama's authority to define what it means to be "engaged in the business" of selling guns, since that definition isn't laid out in the law.

House vote to send health law repeal to Obama for first time

ERICA WERNER, AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — After dozens of failed attempts to undo President Barack Obama's health care law, the GOP-led Congress will finally put a bill on the president's desk striking at the heart of his signature legislative achievement.

Obama will veto the bill, and so the ultimate outcome will be the same as the many previous GOP attempts to repeal "Obamacare." But Wednesday's vote in the House will mark the first time such a bill makes it all the way to the White House.

Unlike past efforts that were blocked by Senate Democrats, this time the legislation was written under special rules protecting it from a Democratic filibuster. It passed the Senate late last year, and so Wednesday's House vote will send it straight to Obama.

House GOP leaders, opening their 2016 legislative session, said Wednesday's vote and Obama's subsequent veto will lay bare a stark choice between the parties in a presidential election year. The legislation also cuts federal funding for Planned Parenthood.

Democratic presidential front-runner Hillary Clinton has decried the legislation while leading GOP candidates applaud it.

"It's up to the president to decide if he wants to side with the people whose health care costs have skyrocketed out of control, or the abortion industrial complex whose profits have skyrocketed out of control," said Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis. "Congress is holding President Obama accountable."

Democrats denounced the vote as a waste of time aimed at placating GOP base voters riled up by Donald Trump and the unruly Republican presidential race.

"It's the 62nd vote on repealing the Affordable Care Act. It has as much chance as the previous ones did," said House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer of Maryland. He said that Republicans "don't have an alternative, and the reaction of the American public if they lost the benefits and protections of the Affordable Care Act would be very upset."

Indeed despite numerous promises to "repeal and replace" the health care law since its enactment nearly six years ago, Republicans have never coalesced around an alternative. Ryan has promised that will change this year.

The bill being voted on Wednesday would dismantle the health law's key pillars, including requirements that most people obtain coverage and larger employers offer it to workers.

It would eliminate the expansion of Medicaid coverage to additional lower-income people and the government's subsidies for many who buy policies on newly created insurance marketplaces. And it would end taxes the law imposed to cover its costs.

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The bill would also terminate the roughly \$450 million yearly in federal dollars that go to Planned Parenthood, about a third of its budget. A perennial target of conservatives, the group came under intensified GOP pressure last year over providing fetal tissue for research.

"It is appalling that in their first week back in session the top priority for Republican leaders in the House is rolling back women's access to preventive health care," said Dawn Laguens, vice president of the Planned Parenthood Action Fund.

GOP leaders hope to schedule a veto override vote to coincide with the Jan. 22 March for Life in Washington, the annual gathering of anti-abortion activists on the anniversary of the 1973 Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion. However Republicans do not command enough votes to override the president's veto.

Gun buyer in San Bernardino attack faces arraignment

RIVERSIDE, Calif. (AP) — The friend who bought the assault rifles used in the San Bernardino attack faces arraignment on gun, immigration and terrorism-related charges.

Enrique Marquez Jr. is due in a Riverside courthouse Wednesday to answer to five counts that could keep him behind bars for up to 50 years if he's convicted.

Prosecutors say Marquez bought the guns that Syed Rizwan Farook and his wife, Tashfeen Malik, used in the Dec. 2 massacre that killed 14 people and injured 22 others at a building where Farook's colleagues from the San Bernardino county health department were meeting.

Farook and Malik were killed later in a shootout with police.

Prosecutors say Marquez bought the guns in 2011 and 2012 when he and Farook planned an attack they never carried out.

Today in History The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, Jan. 6, the sixth day of 2016. There are 360 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 6, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in his State of the Union address, outlined a goal of "Four Freedoms": Freedom of speech and expression; the freedom of people to worship God in their own way; freedom from want; freedom from fear.

On this date:

In 1540, England's King Henry VIII married his fourth wife, Anne of Cleves. (The marriage lasted about six months.)

In 1759, George Washington and Martha Dandridge Custis were married in New Kent County, Virginia.

In 1838, Samuel Morse and Alfred Vail gave the first successful public demonstration of their telegraph in Morristown, New Jersey.

In 1912, New Mexico became the 47th state.

In 1919, the 26th president of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, died in Oyster Bay, New York, at age 60.

In 1945, George Herbert Walker Bush married Barbara Pierce at the First Presbyterian Church in Rye, New York.

In 1950, Britain recognized the Communist government of China.

In 1963, "Oliver!" Lionel Bart's musical adaptation of the Charles Dickens novel "Oliver Twist," opened on Broadway. "Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom" premiered on NBC-TV.

In 1974, year-round daylight saving time began in the United States on a trial basis as a fuel-saving measure in response to the OPEC oil embargo.

In 1987, the U.S. Senate voted 88-4 to establish an 11-member panel to hold public hearings on the Iran-Contra affair.

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In 1994, figure skater Nancy Kerrigan was clubbed on the leg by an assailant at Detroit's Cobo Arena; four men, including the ex-husband of Kerrigan's rival, Tonya Harding, went to prison for their roles in the attack. (Harding denied knowing about plans for the attack.)

In 2001, with Vice President Al Gore presiding (in his capacity as president of the Senate), Congress formally certified George W. Bush the winner of the bitterly contested 2000 presidential election.

Ten years ago: Al-Qaida's No. 2 official, Ayman al-Zawahri (AY'-muhn ahl-ZWAH'-ree), said in a videotape that a recent U.S. decision to withdraw some troops from Iraq represented "the victory of Islam." Hugh Thompson, Jr., a former Army helicopter pilot honored for rescuing Vietnamese civilians from his fellow GIs during the My Lai massacre, died in Alexandria, Louisiana, at age 62. The 115-year-old Pilgrim Baptist Church of Chicago was gutted by fire. Velvet-voiced singer Lou Rawls died in Los Angeles at age 72.

Five years ago: U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates announced he would cut \$78 billion from the Defense Department budget over the next five years, an effort to trim fat in light of the nation's ballooning deficit. Vang Pao, a revered former general in the Royal Army of Laos who'd led thousands of Hmong guerrillas in a CIA-backed secret army in the Vietnam War, died in Clovis, California, at age 81.

One year ago: In a blend of pageantry and politics, Republicans took complete control of Congress for the first time in eight years, then ran straight into a White House veto threat against their top-priority legislation to build the Keystone XL oil pipeline. President Barack Obama pledged to stand with Mexico against "the scourge of violence and the drug cartels" as he met at the White House with President Enrique Pena Nieto. Randy Johnson, Pedro Martinez and John Smoltz, a trio of star pitchers who dominated in an era of offense, were elected to baseball's Hall of Fame along with Craig Biggio.

Today's Birthdays: Pollster Louis Harris is 95. Retired MLB All-Star Ralph Branca is 90. Country musician Joey, the CowPolka King (Riders in the Sky) is 67. Former FBI director Louis Freeh is 66. Rock singer-musician Kim Wilson (The Fabulous Thunderbirds) is 65. Singer Jett Williams is 63. Rock musician Malcolm Young (AC-DC) is 63. Actor-comedian Rowan Atkinson is 61. World Golf Hall of Famer Nancy Lopez is 59. Actor Scott Bryce is 58. Rhythm-and-blues singer Kathy Sledge is 57. TV chef Nigella Lawson is 56. Rhythm-and-blues singer Eric Williams (BLACKstreet) is 56. Movie composer A.R. Rahman is 50. Movie director John Singleton is 48. Actor Norman Reedus is 47. TV personality Julie Chen is 46. Actor Danny Pintauro (TV: "Who's the Boss?") is 40. Actress Cristela Alonzo (TV: "Cristela") is 37. Actress Rinko Kikuchi is 35. Actor Eddie Redmayne (Film: "The Danish Girl") is 34. NBA player Gilbert Arenas is 34. Actress-comedian Kate McKinnon (TV: "Saturday Night Live") is 32. Rock singer Alex Turner (Arctic Monkeys) is 30.

Thought for Today: "A little learning is not a dangerous thing to one who does not mistake it for a great deal." — William Allen White, American newspaper editor (1868-1944).