

Assault charges filed in Granite Falls stabbing. **A3.**

Montevideo turns on the lights. **B1.**

WILLMAR, MINN.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2020

\$1.00

GROCCERS HANDLING DEMANDS LIKE NEVER BEFORE

Some items will remain tight but overall supply chain is very much intact, store owners say



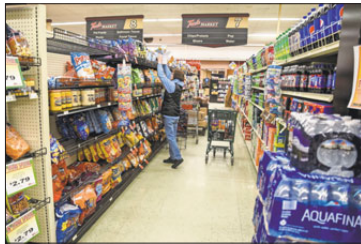
Photos by Erica Dischino / West Central Tribune
Teal's Market employee Robert Hinderks restocks an empty shelf with flour March 26 at Teal's Market in Spicer. Flour is among the products seeing record demand during this pandemic, according to local grocers.

By Tom Cherveny
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Willmar

Tim Mattheisen likes to joke that he has a "few bags of groceries under this belt," having started working at the Do-Mat's Family Foods store in Benson in June 1960 and becoming its owner on April 1, 1972. "Nothing like this. Nothing even close to this. This is the wildest I've ever seen," said Mattheisen of what the last few weeks in the store have been like. Sales have soared to record levels at grocery stores throughout west central Minnesota as

people have stocked up in response to stay-at-home orders amid the COVID-19 pandemic. "A snowstorm on steroids" is how Brett Almich, of Almich's Market in Granite Falls and Clara City, initially described the surge in sales. "Area stores report they are still seeing higher-than-normal sales volumes, but that some normalcy is returning. Yet none of those contacted by the West Central Tribune expect to see "normal" anytime soon.

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A shopper picks up a bag of chips recently at Teal's Market in Spicer during the store's designated shopping time for customers more at risk for illness. Grocery stores around the region are offering special shopping hours, and curbside and home deliveries, to help reduce the spread of the COVID-19 illness.

Minnesota slowing the doubling rate of coronavirus

By Paul John Scott
Forum News Service
ROCHESTER, Minn. — With just a week to go before a critical mid-April window once projected as the peak of coronavirus patients over-running Minnesota hospitals, Gov. Tim Walz and health officials pointed to encouraging signs that the state is slowing the spread of the virus, and pushing back the acceleration of new cases.

"Some of the models said the peak would have been here by now," said state health commissioner Jan Malcolm during the governor's daily press briefing. "I'm personally gratified to see the growth rate staying in a stable zone, but that could change any day."

Though Tuesday, April 7 marked another highest one-day jump in new cases with 83, and though the state added four deaths and seven ICU cases, these daily increases remain in the single digits, the state's hospitals have yet to see the system become swamped with patients, and the doubling rate is slowing.



Walz

"We will continue on with a stay-at-home but try to refine that," Walz said of his first major recalibration of health emergency orders in two weeks, signaling that larger changes are not expected to come before May. "Our peak has been pushed out some. We're not going to give up on the things that are working, but I think we can add more things that work ... maybe by geography."

"A social compact made by all of us has bought us more time than any other state, and I want to use it wisely."

Roseau and Swift counties added cases for the first time on Tuesday, and another long-term care center, Riverview Landing in Wright County, has reported a case. The deaths on Tuesday were all among long-term care patients, and included a Dakota County resident in their 60s, a Winona County resident in their 90s, a Hennepin County resident in their 90s, and another Hennepin County resident in their 80s.

The statewide death total is now 34, and the total case count has passed 1,000 for the first time, reaching 1,069. The laboratory confirmed case count is widely believed to be a gross undercount however, and unrepresentative of a far greater total. The state demand on health care services remains far below the 2,750 ICU beds now available, suggesting a peak remains in the far distance.

Walz acknowledged a new web page established by the Carlson School of Management at the University of Minnesota, one tracking a key metric in a time of a shortage of testing, that of hospitalizations for coronavirus nationwide.

"We'll have time to get into this later, but that's FEMA's job," he added, a reference to the frustration felt by governors as local government and business have been tasked with fulfilling services ordinarily conducted by the federal government. "A federal coordinated response is meant to do that."

Minnesota Department of Health COVID-19 hotline: 651-201-3920. COVID-19 discrimination hotline: 833-454-0188. Minnesota Department of Health COVID-19 website: Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) website.

Reach Scott at pscott@forumcomm.com.

Kandiyohi County urges residents to continue to distance, stay home

No decision yet on opening county parks amid COVID-19 pandemic

By Shelby Lindrud
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Willmar

While Kandiyohi County has only had two lab-confirmed cases of COVID-19, the respiratory virus that has shut down much of the globe for the past several weeks, that is no reason for residents of the county to become complacent. "We need to assume there are many more cases of COVID-19 in our county and our state," said Kandiyohi County Health and Human Services Director

Jennie Lippert. Lippert, along with Kim Lindahl, Kandiyohi County Emergency Management Director, gave an update on the pandemic at Tuesday's Kandiyohi County Board meeting conducted remotely using Zoom software. Lippert reiterated how dangerous COVID-19 can be for many people and asked the public to continue following social distancing and the stay-at-home order. "I am asking, from public health, that you don't go out unless it is absolutely necessary," Lippert said.

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Screenshot
The Kandiyohi County Board of Commissioners and members of county staff met for Tuesday's board meeting utilizing Zoom meeting software. County Administrator Larry Kleindl, left at the table, and County Board Chair Commission Harlan Madsen were at the county Health and Human Services building, while everyone else joined the meeting from homes or offices.

BOREDOM Busters

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GROCERS

From Page A1

"Sounds like it's going to be dragging on for a little while," Mattheisen said.

Shoppers emptied shelves of toilet paper and cleaning supplies in the first couple of weeks. The grocers reached by the West Central Tribune said it remains a challenge to keep these products on hand.

Tim Dittes, who operates the Montevideo Market, Don's Food Pride in Appleton and Tim's Food Pride in Dawson, said the stores were selling bath tissue by the single roll at one point. The sudden and continued demand for bath tissue surprised the grocers.

Dittes said it is easy to understand why cleaning supplies flew off the shelves. It remains hard to get some of them. He pointed out that suppliers are diverting a larger share of these products to hospitals and other care facilities.

Rice, flour, canned goods, potatoes and West-keep rice and noodles packages are among the products that have been and remain the most in demand, according to the grocers. Lots of people are certainly baking at home through this all, according to Marilee Peterson, manager of Teal's Market in Spicer. She said it's become a challenge to get yeast at this point.

Local grocers said their suppliers have put limits on how much they can order. Chris Coborn, of Coborn's Inc., which operates Cash Wise Foods in Willmar, told the West Central Tribune via email that "the situation is fluid each day with our supply chain."

"Our supplier, transportation teams, and our employees are trying their best to ensure people can get what they need so they can stay at home," stated Coborn.

"We make choices," said Mattheisen of ordering when there are limits on quantities and the products that are available. He said he gives preference to ordering healthy foods. Surprisingly, it's the availability of different snack foods that seems to vary the most week-to-week, he and other grocers reported.

There are signs that



A sign hanging in front of a shelf of toilet paper March 26 asks customers to limit their purchase to one package at Teal's Market in Spicer. Grocers report it remains a challenge to keep toilet paper on the shelves, but said things have been improving lately.

suppliers are catching up with demand in some areas. Mike Tersteeg, who on April 1 marked his eighth anniversary at B & D Market, Olivia, said his bread supplier recently told him that supplies are looking better.

Those who understand the economics of supply and demand also appreciate what has generated the most complaints heard by the grocers. Prices have risen for many items, eggs and meat in particular.

Almich said the price he pays for a dozen eggs has climbed by \$1.30 in the past few weeks alone. It's all a matter of supply and demand, he said.

Along with paying more for their products, stores are doing more. Coborn's has decided to hire temporary clerk positions at the Willmar Cash Wise Foods store. Coborn said the decision was made to have the staff needed to meet the needs of customers in the coming week.

The owners of some stores told the West Central Tribune they have seen some employees resign due to their concerns about potential exposure to the COVID-19 virus from customers.

The store owners are well-aware that their jobs have become more demanding. Some of the store owners reported working consecutive days of anywhere from 14 to 18 hours during the shopping surge.

The demands on employees have grown too. "We keep the same staff but we just run a little faster," Mattheisen said.

Employees at stores throughout the region are



Employees Darlene Stewart, left, and Crystal Perez prepare a pickup grocery order March 26 at Teal's Market in Spicer.

devoting more time than ever before to cleaning and disinfecting surfaces. Disinfectant wipes and gloves are available to customers at the stores.

Adding to the demand on staff, the stores are filling grocery orders and offering curbside and home deliveries more than ever before.

In Montevideo, the owners of the Millennium Theater, temporarily closed due to the pandemic, are delivering groceries for the Montevideo Market. Dittes said many of the deliveries go to the homes of seniors, but not all. There are also single parents who have a difficult time leaving their homes and people who have self-quarantined, he said.

In Granite Falls, Almich said he has been helped by volunteer shoppers who fill orders for seniors. To protect employees as well as shoppers, the store has installed glass shields at its checkouts.

He said the pandemic is bringing other changes he would never have expected. Some large companies are purposely

reducing the range of products they offer. A major peanut butter brand recently informed the store it was only going to distribute one size jar and reduce its product line to two.

Many of the suppliers have also pulled back on the advertising and promotions they typically run, Almich added.

No one is hazarding a guess as to when things might return to normal. At Teal's Market in Spicer, Peterson laughed and said that she will know things are back to normal when the trucks arrive with enough toilet paper to stay ahead of the demand.

While the grocers are seeing record sales levels now, they noted that they expect business to slow as the economic hurt of the pandemic is felt by more and more people.

Looking forward, they said their biggest worries aren't for their own businesses, but for all of the restaurants and other small businesses that have been forced to close during this pandemic.

"I'm hoping and praying for them," Almich said.

remain closed until further notice and most business will be completed remotely.

"I don't think anyone could predict the magnitude of this," said Commissioner Harlan Madsen, board chairman.

Lippert knew these restrictions are difficult for most people and thanked everyone who is following the recommendations.

"We are all in this together. We depend on each other and we are responsible to protect each other," Lippert said. "We are both the target of the virus, but we are also the solution if we can avoid it."

Willmar 5-Day Forecast

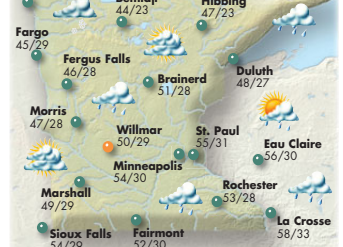
Table with 3 columns: Morning, Afternoon, Evening. Includes temperature forecasts (42°, 47°, 44°) and weather conditions like 'Cooler with spotty showers' and 'Mainly clear around'.

Table with 4 columns: Tomorrow, Friday, Saturday, Sunday. Includes temperature forecasts (40° 26°, 45° 32°, 49° 31°, 37° 24°) and weather conditions like 'Mostly sunny, breezy and chilly' and 'Calder with a bit of snow and rain'.

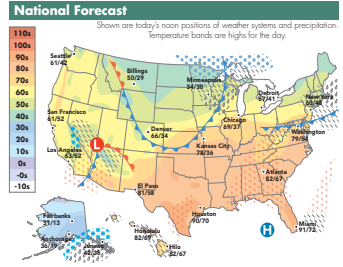
Almanac

Table with 2 columns: Sun and Moon. Includes sunrise and sunset times (6:47 a.m., 7:58 p.m.) and moon phase information (Last, New, First, Full).

Regional Weather



National Forecast



National Summary

As May-like warmth extends northward over the Midwest and into part of the Northeast today, areas of showers and heavier thunderstorms will erupt or continue from last night. The greatest risk of thunderstorms becoming severe on a regional basis will extend from the Ohio Valley to the middle Mississippi Valley and the Tennessee Valley later in the day.

Storms in this area can bring large hail, flash flooding and high winds. Much colder air will break loose over the northern Plains and then aim at the Deep South and East Coast later in the week.

Forecasts and graphics provided by AccuWeather, Inc. ©2020

TODAY'S INFO

What's happening? Do you know of something that might make a good story or photograph for the newspaper? Just give us a call at 320-235-1150. Corrections: If you have a question about accuracy of information in a news story, please call the news department at 320-235-1150. Lottery results: Winning numbers drawn Tuesday night are: Daily 3: 4-6-8 Northstar Cash: 3-10-11-19-20 Mega Millions: 25-33-43-51-68 Mega ball: 20 For more information, go to mnlottery.com.

West Central Tribune

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HOME

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The state stay-at-home order does allow people to leave their homes for essential errands, including grocery shopping and picking up medication. When out in the public, Lippert wants people to limit how much one touches surfaces and after returning home to clean items that have been exposed.

If one chooses to wear a mask, it should be put on prior to entering the store, not touched at all and not removed until the person returns home.

"I know this takes work," Lippert said.

Lippert warns that fabric masks may reduce the germs a wearer spreads. It does not stop germs already in the air from reaching the wearer. Masks do not replace hand washing, covering coughs and social distancing, and those who are ill still need to stay home.

"Wearing a mask does not mean those who are sick should go out into the community," Lippert said.

The public should steer clear of purchasing surgical or medical masks, including the N95 type, as those are still very much needed by health care providers. Kandiyohi County Emergency Management is still collecting donations of new personal protective equipment, including masks, that will be dis-

tributed to those who need them.

Lindahl said those wanting to donate can call 320-214-6780 to make an appointment to drop off the equipment.

The public still needs to keep apart from each other as much as possible, even when at home, Lippert said. Family members who live in different households should stay separate and socialization should only be done from afar, preferably by using telephones or computers.

"The virus will find its way in, that is what viruses do and they are very good at doing that," Lippert said.

Kandiyohi County Public Health is available to answer questions regarding COVID-19. If asked by the state, Public Health staff would also assist any COVID-19 patients in the county.

"Our health and human services staff are essential employees. We are still providing services and resources to the community, to meet the needs," Lippert said. "I am very proud of this state." The pandemic is also requiring the county to start making plans for the county parks and whether there will even be a camping season this year.

"Most likely we will be delaying opening, but no decisions have been made," said County Administrator Larry Kleindl. While state parks are open for people to hike or bike in, all campgrounds

and park facilities are closed, and programming has been canceled.

At the county level, Kleindl said there are concerns about being able to keep distance between park visitors in facilities such as bath houses, restrooms, beaches and park stores. Also a big part of camping is socialization with family and friends, an activity not encouraged at this point.

"We are not going to make any rash decisions, Kleindl said. "Public safety comes first over personal enjoyment."

The state stay-at-home order is currently set to expire Friday, but Kleindl expects it to be extended. County buildings will

ATTENTION GARAGE SALE ATTENDEES! Spring Sale. We look forward to seeing you all for the FALL GARAGE SALE THAT IS SCHEDULED FOR SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19TH AT THE WILLMAR CIVIC CENTER. Includes details about items to choose from, admission fee, and contact information for West Central Tribune.