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WEEKEND

Willmar keeps focus on biking. C1.

WILLMAR, MINN.

SATURDAY, MAY 14, 2022 - SUNDAY, MAY 15, 2022

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Severe weather causes damage

By Tom Cherveney and Jennifer Kotila
West Central Tribune

Willmar

What the National Weather Service in the Twin Cities termed a “rare and extreme severe weather event” caused extensive damage throughout western and west central Minnesota on Thursday evening, May 12, 2022. The winds downed power lines, and damaged buildings and farm equipment in a wide area from eastern South Dakota into Meeker County in central Minnesota.

Lac qui Parle County

Lac qui Parle County in far western Minnesota suffered widespread damage as winds topping 70 miles an hour whipped over the prairie. A wind gust of 94 miles per hour was recorded at the Madison Airport, according to the National Weather Service.

Blain Johnson, emergency manager for Lac qui Parle County, estimates that 80 percent of the county experienced minor or greater levels of damage.

No community escaped harm, but the city of Madison seems to have been hit the hardest.

There were a number of reports of funnel clouds. The National Weather Service was to survey the county to determine if there were any touchdowns. Most of the damage appears to be from straight-line winds.

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Macy Moore / West Central Tribune

An unidentified woman surveys damage on Friday at the Erickson farm outside Blomkest. Ryan Leif Erickson, 63, was killed on Thursday night on his farm when a grain bin was blown over by high winds and fell on him as he was preparing to leave his farm for storm-watching duty.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER DIES

Blomkest's Erickson dies while on his way to storm-watching duty

By Jen Kotila
West Central Tribune

Blomkest

A Blomkest volunteer firefighter who was on his way to storm-watching duty died Thursday evening as a result of the storms that passed through west central Minnesota.

Ryan Leif Erickson, 63, was identified Friday afternoon by Kandiyohi County Sheriff Eric Holien as the victim of Thursday night's storm.

Erickson died in the line of duty when a large grain bin was blown over by the high winds and fell on him as he was preparing to leave his



Erickson

farm to monitor storms.

The Kandiyohi County Sheriff's Office received the call to the rural Lake Lillian address at approximately 7 p.m. Thursday reporting Erickson missing after the bin blew down, according to a news release from the Sheriff's Office.

Emergency responders arrived to search and discovered Erickson under the collapsed grain bin, according to the news release. Erickson's body was transported to the Midwest

Medical Examiner's Office in Ramsey.

Erickson was very involved in the Blomkest community, and had been since he was young man. He became a volunteer firefighter at 18 years old, according to Blomkest City Clerk Barbara Gilberts. He was also a former fire chief, serving in that position for approximately five years.

He was also the former owner of Erickson Plumbing and Heating, but sold his business recently and was working at Perkins Lumber, according to Gilberts.

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Carris Health changes its name

Name change to CentraCare will not involve loss of staff in Willmar, other locations

By Linda Vanderwerf
West Central Tribune

WILLMAR — Carris Health has announced that it will be changing its name to CentraCare, beginning June 1.

Carris Health was created in 2018, a partnership of health care providers in Willmar, New London and Redwood Falls. It has operated as a CentraCare subsidiary with an emphasis on rural health care.

CentraCare is a nonprofit organization with hospitals in eight cities and more than 30 clinics, when Carris Health is included.

The name change reflects a cohesive focus as Carris Health and CentraCare have developed shared processes and strategies, including creating a Rural Health Division developed in 2021, according to a news release from CentraCare.

“CentraCare and Carris Health were already connected through our common culture, purpose and mission,” Ken Holmen, president and CEO, said in the release. “Now, we will also be connected through one unified name — CentraCare.”

Dr. Cindy Firkins Smith, senior vice president of rural health for CentraCare, said the partnership has helped providers give their

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A smooth ride requires money, maintenance



Shelby Lindrud / West Central Tribune

Maintenance work, such as reclamation, overlay and crack sealing, help keep Kandiyohi County roads in above average driving condition. A project on County Road 41 in Willmar, pictured on Tuesday, is scheduled to begin on Monday.

Kandiyohi County preparing for construction on County Road 41

By Shelby Lindrud
West Central Tribune

WILLMAR — Every two years staff from the state's Office of Materials and Road Research drive every single state and federal aid road to grade the road's ride quality index, or how smooth the ride is on that particular roadway. That Minnesota Department of Transportation office then gives each county a report card on its road conditions.

“Drivers want a smooth road,” said Kandiyohi County Public Works Director Mel

Odens, speaking May 4 at the Kandiyohi County Board's road and bridge meeting. “What do you consider a good road?”

The most recent road quality index report showed that 75 percent of Kandiyohi County roads are in average drivable condition, with ride quality indexes between 45 and 75. Another 23 percent are in above average condition, with indexes between 75 and 100. Only 2 percent of the county's state and federal aid roads are in the worst shape.

“The heart of the roads are above average,” Odens said.

To keep roads in as good a condition as possible requires a constant stream of maintenance projects, ranging from complete road reconstruction

ROADS: Page A9

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WEEK

2022

RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

Look for the keepsake section in Today's West Central Tribune

ERICKSON

From Page A1

“He was very well-known because he took part in a lot of stuff. If there was something you needed a volunteer for, he was one of the first to volunteer,” Gilberts said, noting he

was a township board member and part of the rural electric board. “He was a promoter of small-town life. He loved his town and he was involved.”

She noted he was well-known for his creativity, and was always the last float in the Blomkest parade because of it. He also

loved golfing and could often be found on the golf course in his spare time, Gilberts added.

Erickson leaves behind his wife, Kelly, two grown daughters, and four grandchildren.

“For me, if you want to make a difference, you have to participate, and that’s what he did,” Gilberts said.

The Kandiyohi County Sheriff’s Office was assisted at the scene by the Blomkest Fire Department, Lake Lillian Ambulance, Willmar Fire Department, Kandiyohi County Rescue Squad, Kandiyohi County Emergency Management and the Atwater Police Department.

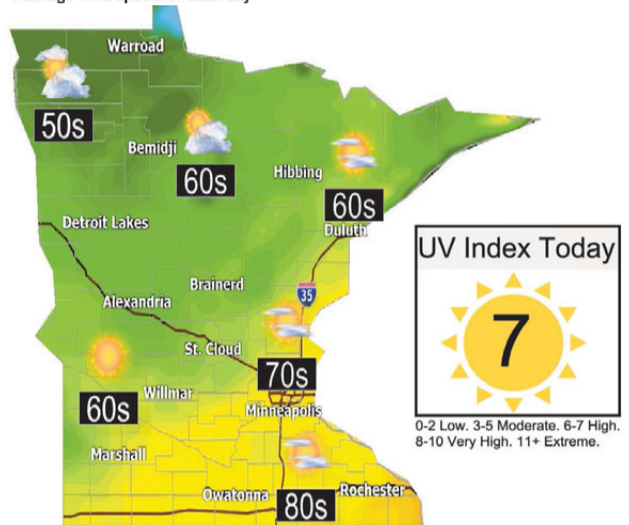


Jared Piepenburg, Jesse Ritka, Chief Meteorologist John Wheeler, Lydia Blume, Robert Poynter

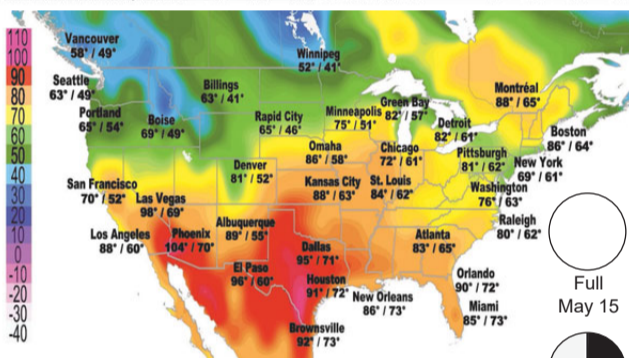
StormTRACKER WILLMAR FORECAST

Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday
69/47 Sunny	71/47 Partly Cloudy	67/46 Mostly Sunny	63/49 PM Showers
Wind: W 17 mph	Wind: W 18 mph	Wind: NW 16 mph	Wind: E 10 mph
Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
68/54 Partly Cloudy	71/55 PM Thunderstorms	68/53 Isolated Thunderstorms	63/47 Partly Cloudy
Wind: S 9 mph	Wind: SW 14 mph	Wind: NW 18 mph	Wind: NW 16 mph

*Average wind speed for each day



Regional Weather	Today	Tomorrow	Regional Weather	Today	Tomorrow
Bemidji, MN	61 / 43	65 / 40	Marshall, MN	69 / 48	70 / 48
Duluth, MN	69 / 48	68 / 44	Minneapolis, MN	75 / 51	72 / 49
Eau Claire, WI	82 / 50	72 / 48	Rochester, MN	80 / 52	70 / 50
Fargo, ND	63 / 43	67 / 42	Sioux Falls, SD	72 / 52	70 / 49
International Falls, MN	63 / 42	61 / 38	St. Cloud, MN	70 / 48	69 / 47



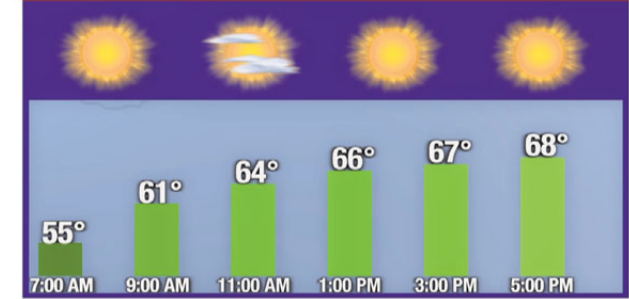
StormTRACKER Forecast

Sunny skies and breezy with highs in the mid to upper 60s.

Almanac Through 6 pm Friday

Temperature	High	Low
Friday	73°	59°
Avg. Wind Direction Friday	SW	
Peak Wind Speed Friday	24 mph	

Sunrise: 5:51 a.m. Sunset: 8:41 p.m.
Moonrise: 7:08 p.m. Moonset: 5:30 a.m., May 15



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, or stop in our office at 2208 Trott Ave. S.W., Willmar.

Lottery results Winning numbers drawn Friday night are: Daily 3: 6-8-4 Gopher 5: 3-14-26-40-42 Northstar Cash: 14-15-18-21-24 Mega Millions: 11-41-43-44-65 Mega ball: 13 Lucky for Life: 6-9-13-28-38 Lucky ball: 18 For more information, go to mn-lottery.com.

Corrections If you have a question about accuracy of information in a news story, please call the news department at 320-235-1150.

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Photos by Macy Moore / West Central Tribune

Lightning strikes illuminate the sky Thursday over the Middle Fork Crow River near Spicer. The storm brought down trees and infrastructure, causing multi-hour power outages in the area.

WEATHER

From Page A1

The emergency manager reported a wide path of damage to houses, sheds and equipment on rural farmsteads in a path running from north of Madison toward Appleton.

The storms knocked out power throughout the county, and efforts were still underway Friday to restore power in a number of communities.

Sheriff Allen Anderson said Otter Tail Power estimates that it will take three days to fully restore power to all of those affected in its service area.

Winds knocked over grain bins at the Bellingham Elevator.

The county opened an emergency operations center after the storm. The County Board of Commissioners is holding an emergency meeting Sunday to seek a disaster declaration.

The winds also caused considerable damage in western Chippewa County. The straight-line winds blew over a camper at the Lac qui Parle State Park and caused damage to buildings at the Lac qui Parle Wildlife Headquarters.

The winds caused damage in the Canby area of western Yellow Medicine County, as well as other locations scattered about the county. Yellow Medicine County Sheriff Bill Flaten said restoring power and downed lines had been the focus of much of the recovery work on Friday.

Swift County

Rural Swift County experienced widespread damage, with some of the worst damage in the Murdock area.

The wind storm brought widespread damage to the city of Benson, ripping shingles from roofs, tearing most of the roof off a house on Hall Avenue, and toppling trees throughout the community. Police Chief Ian Hodge estimates that about half of the taller pine trees in the community were destroyed.



John Zvorak of Otter Tail Power Company removes branches from power lines Friday morning in Murdock.

The Benson Fire Department contained a fire that erupted when a gas line apparently broke at the Case IH facility along U.S. Highway 12.

The storm’s fury was felt most on the city’s west side. The winds tore the roof off the old elevator over the seed storage area.

The storm knocked out power as trees fell on lines.

Benson Municipal Utilities fired up its backup generators around 8 p.m. Thursday and ran them until around 10 p.m. to provide emergency power after the city lost its outside power.

Power outages

The storms left thousands of people throughout the region without power as winds knocked down power lines or dropped trees on them. Hardest hit were areas in the western portion of the state.

Agralite Cooperative, headquartered in Benson, reported extensive damages and outages throughout its entire system. Damages to the system included trees blown down on power lines, wind-snapped utility poles, and wind driven debris striking electric lines.

Agralite Cooperative crews were continuing to restore power in rural areas of Swift County on Friday. At mid-afternoon, the cooperative estimated that 65 percent of its customers were

without power and it was unsure when power would be fully restored.

More than 2,300 Xcel Energy customers in the New London area were without power Thursday night and Friday, as crews worked to restore downed lines and poles.

Kandiyohi Power Cooperative, Willmar, was hoping to have its system fully restored by the end of the day Friday, but there will still be some work remaining Saturday. Ryan Nelson, CEO, said the cooperative’s service crews worked late into the night Thursday and returned at daybreak.

The damage was widespread with trees and debris on lines. The worst of the damage was along a path running from southwest of Willmar to the Long Lake and Hawick areas.

Renville County

Flooding along the Minnesota River is a concern in Renville County. Mike Hennen, emergency management director, said he will be asking the Board of Commissioners for an emergency declaration Tuesday.

The water level on the Minnesota River has led the county to close one bridge crossing it. There are also high-water problems on township and county roads in the river valley area, he said.

The emergency manager said he had also received reports

that winds caused significant damage to structures at the Buffalo Lake Central Cooperative facility in Buffalo Lake.

Stevens County

With hundreds of power poles blown down by Thursday’s storm, the majority of Stevens County remained without power Friday, according to Stevens County Sheriff Jason Dingman.

“Crews are working on it and making good progress,” Dingman said, noting that many homes were also damaged in the storm. Some of the damage to homes was severe, but most had light to moderate damage, he added.

There were also several commercial buildings damaged in the storm, including airport hangars in Morris, the Morris Fire Hall, the John Deere dealership, Riverview Dairy in rural Morris and numerous others, according to Dingman.

Train derailment

Four rail cars derailed during the storms late Wednesday in Penock, according to Lydia Underdahl of BNSF Railway.

At the time of the derailment, the train was stopped, and there were no injuries and no hazardous materials were involved.

As of 2:10 p.m. Friday, the incident scene had been cleared and BNSF’s main line was back in service, according to Underdahl.