

Swine, seasonal flu outbreaks broad across Kansas, health officials report

By JOHN MILBURN
Associated Press Writer

TOPEKA — Outbreaks of seasonal and swine flu continue to be widespread across Kansas even as the first shipments of swine flu vaccine arrive in the state, health officials said Monday.

The Department of Health and Environment reported in its latest review that there were 30 deaths from pneumonia or influenza out of the state's 456 deaths during the week ending Oct. 10, or about 6.6 percent.

Deaths have recently averaged about three per week. The state reported

92 deaths related to pneumonia or influenza — all but nine among those aged 65 and older — from Sept. 26 through Oct. 10. None of the deaths were among people under age 18, but about 53 percent of those sickened by swine flu were between ages 5 and 24.

Eight deaths in Kansas have been linked directly to the H1N1 virus, commonly known as swine flu. The latest case was a 48-year-old woman from southwest Kansas who died Thursday. Health officials said she had an underlying health condition. Other details weren't released.

"This death shows how important it is for all of

us to do what we can to protect ourselves and our families against H1N1 flu and to reduce the risk of spreading this virus," state health director Dr. Jason Eberhart-Phillips said in a statement.

Overall, 75 of the 105 Kansas counties have confirmed swine flu cases, and the health department report said "clear and consistent" flu patterns were emerging.

"Influenza activity throughout Kansas is high, particularly for this time of year, and is increasing," according to the report.

Department spokeswoman Maggie Thompson said shipments of the new swine

flu vaccine were arriving in Kansas. She said target groups including health care professionals were beginning to get vaccinated.

"The system is just starting to get to roll along and work," Thompson said Monday. "Orders are getting processed and out, and some orders are going to start going out even same day. That's good news."

She said smaller Kansas counties that might not need large quantities of swine flu vaccine are partnering with neighboring counties to increase numbers, which should speed up delivery from suppliers.

Group submits plan for southeast Kan. casino

TOPEKA (AP)—A group that includes a former longtime Wichita mayor submitted a proposal Monday for a southeast Kansas casino, surprising state officials who had anticipated waiting until spring for a plan to emerge.

Ozark Trail Gaming LLC was the only prospective developer to file an application by Monday's deadline for a contract with the Kansas Lottery.

The Wichita firm promises to invest about \$225 million in a casino complex about one mile north of Interstate 44, near the Oklahoma border, in southeast Cherokee County.

The lottery hadn't seen any interest in a southeast Kansas casino since September 2008, when a developer selected to build and operate one, Penn National Gaming Inc., of Wyomissing, Pa., dropped its plans. Penn

cited potential competition from a casino opened by the Quapaw Tribe just across the Oklahoma border in July 2008.

But former Wichita Mayor Bob Knight, an Ozark Trail principal, said his company believes a second casino would be profitable — and that two could draw enough gamblers and tourists to the area to benefit both casinos.

"It's viewed as a very,

very difficult project," Knight acknowledged. "Some are looking at that as a glass half empty. Our view is that it's at least a glass half full."

Under Kansas law, the lottery would own the rights to the new gambling. The law gives lottery officials until Jan. 19 to negotiate a proposed contract with Ozark Trail.

MEDAL: 'It helps me in my own faith'

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started working with the artists at Hasty Awards.

"They weren't really that good of pictures," she said. "We've got a really good art department."

After McMillan and other Hasty Awards employees put together a draft version of the medal, it took awhile to get it OK'd through the various churches and officials.

In the end, however, McMillan said 100 medals were created in the first batch. Each of them will be presented to members of the Catholic Church orders.

"They are such amazing people," she said. "We do some pretty cool things, but this is just beyond everything else."

Throughout the process, McMillan said she worked closely with members of the Catholic Church to make sure

everything went smoothly — this interaction only enriched her faith, she said.

"It's helped me in my own faith in life to be associated with people who are just so obviously dedicated to be doing the work of God," she said. "Everybody is just so kind, so nice, so Christian. They are just exactly the way you would hope Christians would be."

As a reward for all of her hard work, McMillan even was chosen to become a member of one of the Catholic orders — the Order of Saint Anne.

"I don't deserve it," she said. "I don't deserve it at all."

To most people, McMillan said she's the same person, but when communicating with members of the various orders, she's known as "Esquire Donita."

"It's been an absolute thrill and a wonderful blessing in my life," she said.

FISHER: Man stole nearly \$30,000

(Continued from Page 1)

two days after his arrest.

He changed his plea in September from not guilty to no contest. A plea of no contest means Fisher does not refute the charges against him but also does not claim guilt for them.

Williams said Fisher felt "very ashamed and very remorseful" for his actions. He said that during the time Fisher was treasurer, he had put some money back into the church's account.

"The church did not go without," Williams said, adding that members were able to come up with money for needed items for the church, 219 S. Cedar St.

But Will Hurst, who represented the state in the case, said that didn't matter.

"The fact that somehow church members made do doesn't change anything," he said. "He took money that wasn't his. Money that was given by individuals as part of their religion."

In statements written to the court from church members, some expressed concerns that the restitution Fisher was ordered to pay is only about half of the amount they think he

stole.

And that could be true, Hurst said. The restitution amount is only the amount that the state could prove

at this point in the case, he said.

"It's not to say that he didn't take any more," Hurst said.

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Region News

2 officers injured in Kansas crash

MANHATTAN (AP) — Two Riley County police officers have been injured after striking a vehicle involved in a rollover accident.

Police said that the men were flown to Via Christi Regional Medical Center in Wichita, with serious, but non-life-threatening injuries.

The crash happened while the officers were responding to the rollover accident on Kansas 177 early Sunday.

The vehicle they struck wasn't occupied, and the driver involved in the initial rollover accident was not injured.

Jetton still pulls strings in Capitol

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Former politician turned political consultant Rod Jetton has heard it all before.

He's the "Wizard of Oz" behind the curtain making things happen in Jefferson City.

The 42-year-old former House speaker told The Kansas City Star he should be flattered.

"Quite frankly," he said, "I don't have any power. I can't kill a bill. I can't refer a bill. If I have any power, it's because of one thing: I know how to run a campaign and win a race."

Not everyone agrees. Some lawmakers, lobbyists and political observers are accusing him of exercising undue influence in the Legislature and acting like a lobbyist, even though he is not registered as one.

2 firefighters injured in KC blaze

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Two Kansas City firefighters have been hurt while fighting a fire at a vacant apartment building.

Battalion Chief Joe Vitale says both firefighters were taken to the University of Kansas Hospital with burn injuries. One of the firefighters suffered serious burns to his hands, while the other suffered burns to his extremities.



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