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Duct and cover?

■ State officials say the federal recommendation for attack preparedness not appropriate here

By MATTHEW COULSEY
 Staff Writer

FARIBAULT — Despite warnings and advice from federal officials telling citizens to prepare themselves for chemical, biological, or radiological weapons, area residents aren't rushing out to hardware stores to protect themselves.

And now state officials at the Minnesota Division of Emergency Management are warning against some of the federal governments recommendations.

Earlier this week, officials from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) recommended that families consider designating a room where they will gather in an event of a terrorist attack. The room they said, should have duct tape and heavy plastic sheeting to seal it, in an effort to stop harmful chemicals from infecting residents in a house.

"We see information on citizen preparedness as prudent planning," said Gordon Johndroe, a DHS spokesman. "It's appropriate for citizens to be informed about how to respond to a terrorist attack, much as people have prepared for years to be ready for tornadoes, hurricanes or floods."

But officials at the Minnesota Division of Emergency Management (DEM) do not recommend that Minnesotans apply plastic sheeting and duct tape to windows to make their homes airtight.

"The office of Homeland Security Council has advised Americans to take steps that could help safeguard their homes and families in the event of a terrorist attack," said DEM Director Jerry Rosendahl. But Minnesotans should consider certain regional factors to ensure safety, he said.



Mike Ford, store manager of Faribo Farm and Home, poses with duct tape and plastic, recommended by the federal government to use to seal a room in the case of a biological terrorist attack. (Kelli Wencil / Daily News)

"Minnesotans should not take measures to make their homes airtight at this time," said Rosendahl. "Homes in this area require outside air to operate safely and efficiently in the winter."

Faribault Police Chief Mike Lewis said Minnesota homes are built to withstand harsh weather of all kinds, and plastic sheeting to prevent chemical agents entering into the home may be futile anyway.

"There are gas masks that don't protect against all chemical agents, so I don't think plastic sheeting and duct tape would be much help," said Lewis. "I would recommend that people follow the state's recommendation on this. Putting plastic up and attempting to make a room airtight can be a safety hazard as well."

In any event, Faribault residents aren't rushing out to buy duct tape and heavy plastic sheeting anyway, say area hardware store managers.

"As far as duct tape and plastic sheeting goes, we haven't seen sales out of the ordinary," said Allen Salvesson, the store manager of Ace Hardware in Faribault.

Mike Ford, store manager of Faribo Farm and Home, said sales of duct tape and plastic sheeting haven't been out of the ordinary either.

"No, we haven't experienced an increase in the sales of those items," said Ford. "I think people in other areas are more concerned about terrorist attacks than they are here."

Other recommendations from DHS officials included maintaining ample supplies of food and water, making a family communication plan, and assembling a disaster supply kit. Rosendahl and other officials at the DEM support these recommendations.

Kenyon ready for e-business

■ Designation will promote city's Internet services

By JON MINNICK
 Staff Writer

KENYON — Although Tuesday brought weather that prevented the meeting from happening, that's kind of the point.

Kenyon was to be officially certified as "E-Commerce Ready" at its city council meeting Tuesday, but weather concerns resulted in the meeting's cancellation. However, a recognition for being technologically mobilized seemed fitting on a night when business needed to be carried out from the safety of home.

"E-Commerce Readiness" certification comes from the Minnesota Department of Trade and Economic Development (DTED), and is evaluated on "a scale demonstrating their technical compliance with e-commerce standards," according to the DTED. Representatives from the department were to officially grant the certification to Kenyon at the meeting.

"Kenyon's government, business, and community leaders have demonstrated great vision and leadership in developing and implementing a comprehensive technology plan for the city," said Mark Lofthus, DTED director of marketing and business development.

One of these leaders, Kenyon City Administrator Aaron Reeves, said Kenyon is unique because of its service capabilities.

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Three injured in Friday afternoon crash along I-35

By MATTHEW COULSEY
 Staff Writer

FARIBAULT — The combination of heavy snow and ice proved too much to handle for many Interstate 35 drivers traveling through Rice County Friday afternoon.

While few serious crashes were reported, dozens of drivers found themselves stranded in the interstate's median on Friday evening, as Minnesota State Patrol troopers and Rice County Sheriff deputies fanned out along the interstate between Faribault and Northfield to help. Tow trucks were also out in full force.

"We're extremely busy," said Don Rasmussen, owner of Glenn's Towing in Faribault. "Most of the accidents are out on the interstate, and a lot of them are minor ones. A lot of people need to be pulled out of ditches."

The most serious crash occurred approximately two miles north of Faribault, and



A crash involving three vehicles, including a truck transporting other vehicles, backed traffic up on southbound I-35 just north of Faribault, for hours Friday afternoon and early evening. A sudden snowfall made driving conditions hazardous. (Kelli Wencil / Daily News)

involved three vehicles including a white late model Ford Explorer, an older pick-up, and a semi-truck. At the scene on Friday, Faribault rescue crews pulled an unidentified woman from a vehicle. She was conscious but suffering from a head

injury, placed her on a backboard, and into an ambulance headed for District One Hospital.

"That accident was the most serious one which we responded to," said Faribault Firefighter Dustin Dienst. "Three people

were injured in that accident, but the woman was the most severe. She had a head injury."

Neither the woman's name nor her condition were known as of press deadline.

Dienst said he believed the injured woman's car was headed

northbound, went through the median and entered the southbound lane.

The combination of all the crashes brought I-35 southbound traffic to a standstill Friday afternoon, causing delays for several miles. Northbound traffic was

stop-and-go from Faribault and Northfield.

A tow truck driver from Valley Auto Haus in Northfield, who refused to give his name, said he had been busy for most of the evening pulling vehicles from ditches along the interstate.

Deficit may help chances to lower drunken driving threshold

■ By lowering limit from 0.10 to 0.08, state could get millions in federal funds

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Minnesota lawmakers who haven't had much luck persuading their colleagues to lower the state's legal blood-alcohol limit might have the carrot they need this year: the looming budget deficit.

By agreeing to lower the limit from 0.10 percent to 0.08 percent, the state would get as much as \$25 million a year from the federal government to pay for transportation projects. That might not have seemed like much — it's a small slice of the state's two-year,

\$27 billion budget — until the projected deficit for the next two years ballooned to \$4.56 billion.

Now, lawmakers who have opposed the plan may be forced to think twice.

"I think its time has come," said Sen. Leo Foley, a DFLer from Coon Rapids and the lead sponsor of the bill. "Twenty-five million dollars in the highway and transit area would be a lot of money."


Said Bruce Bechtold, chief sheriff's deputy in Stearns County: "I just think legislators are getting a little more pressure on this and getting a little more educated on what the different levels (of intoxication) mean."

The debate has created some unusual alliances among the groups taking sides on

the legislation.

County and city officials are wary of the idea because they think it will increase the amount of money local governments need for DUI prosecutions and housing inmates in their jails. Their skittishness aligns them with bars and restaurants that adamantly oppose lowering the limit, and in many cases against their own police chiefs and sheriffs, who believe lowering the limit is proper.

"Counties are kind of in a quandary," said Jim Mulder, executive director of the Association of Minnesota Counties. His group, in its legislative priority list, said it would support a bill to lower the blood-alcohol threshold "if it includes state funding for increased costs at the local level."

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