

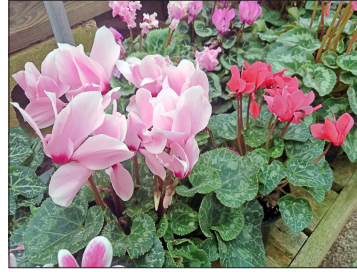
Tourney action

Elkton-Lake Benton and Colman-Egan play at state. **Page 16**



Holiday cheer

It's time to fill your home with colorful holiday plants. **Page 3**



Weather

Partly sunny today, high near 18; tonight, cloudy with a low near 10. Party sunny on Saturday, high near 17.

More weather page 3



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THE BROOKINGS REGISTER

Friday
November 18,
2022

\$1

ARLINGTON ASTORIA AURORA BROOKINGS BRUCE BUSHNELL COLMAN EGAN ELKTON ESTELLINE FLANDREAU NUNDA RUTLAND SINAI TORONTO VOLGA WHITE



High rate of holiday travel expected

SIOUX FALLS – AAA predicts 54.6 million people nationwide will travel 50 miles or more from home this Thanksgiving.

That's a 1.5% increase over 2021 and 98% of pre-pandemic volumes. This year is projected to be the third busiest for Thanksgiving travel, since AAA started tracking in 2000. Locally, travelers will also be out on the roads and in the air as more than 177,000 South Dakotans plan to travel over the holiday weekend. That's an increase of 1.2% over last year.

"Families and friends are eager to spend time together this Thanksgiving, one of the busiest for travel in

See TRAVEL, page 2

Lottery



28 - 34 - 51 - 53 - 56
Powerball: 11

Next Jackpot: \$93 million
No jackpot winner Wednesday



9 - 13 - 14 - 32 - 34
Next Jackpot: \$173,000

No jackpot winner Wednesday



3 - 19 - 26 - 43 - 50
Star ball: 2

Next Jackpot: \$30.3 million
No jackpot winner Wednesday



1 - 16 - 21 - 32 - 44
Lucky ball: 8

\$7K per week
No jackpot winner Wednesday



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RESPECT THE TRAINS



Mondell Keck/Brookings Register

Safety key as Brookings rail line helps move goods to rest of world

By MONDELL KECK
The Brookings Register

BROOKINGS – The next time you're near a rail crossing and see a freight train rumbling toward it, do yourself, your family and the train crew a favor – don't try to beat it. You'll lose, badly, and leave your loved ones and the train crew wrestling with nightmares and what-might-have-beens.

"We can't stop on a dime. We can't get out of your way. You have to stay out of ours," Ryan Griffith said.

He's a crew member on a Rapid City, Pierre & Eastern train that's based in Brookings. Griffith and his crewmates – Shane Warne of Colton and Toby Bartel of Aurora – provide rail service to customers in and around Brookings, stretching west to Lake Preston and east to Verdi, Minnesota.

"There's a lot of people in the public that try and beat the train at the crossing – don't do that," Jared Gooch, assistant vice president of sales and marketing for RCP&E, said. "If we do have an incident, not only is it damaging to the vehicles, it's very taxing on our employees to be part of something like that. It's hard to stop a train on

Above: The Rapid City, Pierre and Eastern railroad keeps a local train based in Brookings. Here, it's busy moving rail cars for customers at a site between Aurora and Brookings.

Below: The local train crosses 22nd Avenue South while serving the 3M plant in Brookings.



a quick basis."

Operations Manager Greg Mellon added that close calls and collisions, unfortunately, aren't out of the ordinary for the engineers and conductors. "Every single one of them has had some kind of close call," he said. "Whether it's been actual contact or not, they've all had close calls and they've had a lot of them."

The safety of their crews and the public is one of RCP&E's highest priorities. The railroad, which is part of the Genesee & Wyoming family of freight railroads, conducts safety briefings every morning alongside its crews'

job meetings.

"This company is very heavily focused on safety," Gooch said. "It's a huge part of the culture for the whole company. Each day we start out with all of our crews – maintenance, transportation – in all aspects with a safety briefing so that everybody knows what's going on. We have different safety things we focus on each week, each month. It's just a huge part of who we are."

That's important because, in a job where crews are regularly handling moving rail cars and locomotives that can weigh up to 200 tons in all

sorts of weather conditions, there's no room for mistakes that could very well result in severe injury or death.

"All of our guys are working all year-round in the hottest of temperatures and the coldest of temperatures," Tom Ciuba, G&W vice president of communications, said. "It really takes a lot of physical fortitude to get through it."

Job demands

The local switching crew typically starts its day at 7 a.m. but, for the vast major-

See TRAINS, page 2

Fake money reports coming in

Incidents reported in Brookings, Volga, Sinai

By MONDELL KECK
The Brookings Register

BROOKINGS – Recent incidents involving counterfeit \$20 bills have led the Brookings Police Department to tell residents and businesses to be vigilant, take time to verify the bill's authenticity – and to contact the BPD or another law enforcement agency if the bills raise suspicions or fail to pass testing.

"We have received at least four reports within the past week of fake \$20s," BPD Detective Adam Smith said. "Some of the reports came from businesses and others came from banks."

Brookings County Assistant Sheriff Scott Sebring said reports of fake currency have also surfaced in the county, including:

- Two reports from Volga, with the first one being months ago involving a \$20 bill and the second one, also involving a \$20 bill, occurring last week. Both occurred at a business on U.S. Highway 14.

- A report from Sinai of a fake \$5 bill that was discovered when the proceeds from a Nov. 6 benefit meal for the fire department were deposited at a bank.

Smith noted that passing fake money is a Class 5 felony in South Dakota, and that individuals could face federal

See MONEY, page 2

Johnson touts policy over 'angry tweets'

By STEPHEN GROVES
The Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — Republicans will hold a House majority for the first time since Rep. Dusty Johnson entered Congress in 2018, yet that's unlikely to change the South Dakota Republican's political style of focusing on conservative policy over hot takes on cable news or Twitter, he told The Associated Press Thursday.

Johnson will start his third term next year after an easy reelection campaign in which he didn't face a Democratic opponent in the heavily red state. It was in part an acknowledgment from the state's Democrats that Johnson can attract moderate voters. And now, with his party in the majority for the first time since

See JOHNSON, page 2

THE HARDEST PART OF A HOME EQUITY LINE OF CREDIT IS DECIDING WHAT TO DO WITH IT.



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TRAINS: Crews strive to serve customers

Continued from page 1

ity of RCP&E train personnel, that's simply not the case.

"Most train crews don't have a regular start time – they're on call," Warne said. "... The public probably doesn't really realize that most train crews work on-call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, so you're never not on call."

Mellon added, "It's all hours of the day they're on call – they work weekends, they work nights, they work in all weather conditions, so when the snow is 2 feet on the ground, they're walking through 2 feet of snow." He pointed out that "It's a definite hard lifestyle, it's a hard job, but it's something our country needs as part of the rail industry."

Serving customers is important to the RCP&E – after all, they're what keeps the railroad's bread buttered, so to speak. In the Brookings area, the local switching crew is kept busy cycling rail cars to and from businesses such as 3M, Novita Aurora, Valero Renewables, South Dakota Soybean Processors and GCC. On the east side of Interstate 29, L.G. Everist supplies RCP&E with its railroad ballast and rip-rap needs.

"One thing we do over here daily is switch all the industries in the Brookings area," Bartel said. "That can be pretty taxing. A lot of work to do, a lot of rules to follow. That's one of the main things is following the rules."

"The railroad is very rule-heavy on everything. Everything we do out here has a rule: don't violate the rule," he continued, emphasizing how rules help to ensure safety. "With all of the switching we have to do, you have to follow the rules. So if you think you can take a short-cut and get done early, that's not happening. You'll either wreck something, someone will get hurt, or the boss will see you and then there will be discipline."

Agriculture important

Aside from the local switching train, the rail line through the Brookings area sees a number of road trains as well, which are typically the longer trains with multiple locomotives chugging through at various times of the day and night. Their commodities include ethanol, wheat, soybeans, corn, clay and cement.

Gooch said that agricultural products represent about half of RCP&E's overall volume. "It's a huge, huge part of what we do," he noted. "(The RCP&E) in particular is a huge part of South Dakota and the ag industry in South Dakota, not to mention some of the other customers and commodities that we serve."

He added that service levels vary depending on the time of year. For example, service can spike during the summer months because of cement and ag products. Other commodities, such as bentonite clay and ethanol, are more consistent year round and, thus, so is the service for them.

Still, "There's no doubt during harvest seasons this rail-



Mondell Keck/Brookings Register

The local train doesn't drive itself. From left is its crew: Shane Warne of Colton; Toby Bartel of Aurora; and Ryan Griffith of De Smet.

road is busy," Gooch said.

Ciuba added that railroads keep freight moving locally, regionally and across the nation. "Here in South Dakota, we play really important part in getting agriculture across the country," he said.

In RCP&E's case, that was true from the day it started operations on June 1, 2014, when it took over operations on more than 725 miles of rail lines that had belonged to the Dakota, Minnesota and Eastern railroad.

"When we first got here, a lot of the elevators had some excess product in their bins and they were trying to get it out, and so there was a huge push when first started to get service up and running right away," Gooch said. "Those first couple years were crucial for us to do so, and the customer feedback that we got was that it was very positive."

"When Genesee & Wyoming took over the operations, they hit the ground running and were able to put a lot of assets in it right away, and that's really helped customer service quite a bit," he added.

The hard work by the railroad's employees paid off then, and it continues to pay dividends today, as RCP&E customers continue to invest in their facilities.

"A lot of our customers have invested and have plans to continue to invest in their particular rail infrastructure at their facilities," Gooch said. "We've been in conversations with them throughout this process to make sure our service can accommodate their growth. ... We want them to be successful because that's how we're successful."

RCP&E's investment hasn't just been limited to train service, either. Tens of millions of dollars have been poured over the years into the company's rail lines and equipment, with the promise of more to come. That includes a project to funnel \$80 million into bridges, rails and crossties on the RCP&E's line between Rapid City and Pierre starting next year.

"That's a significant investment for us, and it's going to change our speed and help our operations significantly," Gooch said.

'No typical day'

Track and equipment main-

tenance, just like keeping the trains running, is a never-ending task. So, in addition to the two, three-person train crews based out of Brookings – the switching crew and a road train crew – the RCP&E also has a track inspector, signal inspector, a three-person maintenance crew and a roadmaster based in the city. A surfacing gang has two people out of Brookings as well.

Roadmaster Cory Lunn said that each day can be different:

"On one day the crew might be working on crossbucks, the next day it could be changing out rail or doing work on crossings. Meanwhile, the track inspector does just that on a regular basis – inspect the main rail line, switches and turnouts – while the signal inspector examines the lights and gates at all rail crossings with signals."

"There is no typical day," Lunn said of his people. "Our day can change in 15 minutes."

One such day was May 12, when a derecho rolled through the Brookings area. It cut off power, damaged buildings, knocked down trees and – oh, yeah – put RCP&E's operations in the area on the backburner as the company raced to make sure its employees were safe.

"To me, that was just a huge thing about the railroad – they try to take care of each other," Gooch said, remembering how the company even helped clear fallen trees from the homes of some employees.

"I think that speaks to our core values and how we really do try to operate as a family," Ciuba added.

With its Brookings-area employees safe, the RCP&E switched over to assessing damage to its infrastructure and equipment – and there certainly was damage in the form of trees fallen across tracks, and signal gates and crossbucks harmed as well.

"It was a lot of work," Lunn said of getting things back into shape. "It was a couple long days, but (our people) did a great job and got it done."

Public safety

RCP&E's concern for its employees and infrastructure also translates into doing a lot to ensure the public's safety when it comes to rail lines.

"We really need help from

the public in maintaining safety and staying off tracks because you never know when a train is going to come through," Gooch said. "If there is some kind of activity that they're going to be on our right of way, then that's something that we need to be notified of."

Ciuba noted that Operation Lifesaver – <https://oli.org/> – is a great resource for the public when it comes to railroad safety, especially at crossings.

"They're a national nonprofit that's dedicated to educating the public about how to navigate grade crossings safely," he said. "They've got a ton of resources on their website ... and they present their informational material in a way that's engaging."

The more information a motorist has when it comes to railroads, the better off they're going to be. It's a point reinforced by Mellon.

"Know that it takes a long time to stop a train," he said. "When you are on tracks and if you do get stalled out ... you need to call that number on the crossing right away and notify (the railroad) because it can take – depending on the train, the size of the train, how fast the train is going – it can take sometimes over a half mile before that train can stop."

"... That's the No. 1 thing that I'll tell you because a lot of our train crews have experienced, unfortunately, accidents and I can guarantee you they don't ever want to have another one."

It's not just motorists that need to pay attention, either – it's anybody who wanders too close to the tracks, including people taking photos or pedestrians who think the rail line would be a great shortcut to get somewhere else quicker.

"It definitely happens, and people just need to understand it's not safe to do that," Ciuba said. "You're dealing with heavy equipment, steel on rail ... (so) anything we can do to avoid that, we'd all be better off."

Lunn agreed. "The utmost important thing is public safety. That's our No. 1 concern," he said. "Don't try to beat a train. Don't walk down the tracks. Stay off the right of ways."

– Contact Mondell Keck at mkeck@brookingsregister.com.

MONEY: Fakes

Continued from page 1

charges as well.

There are methods to detect counterfeit money, Smith said.

"Cashiers should test the money with the counterfeit pens and physically examine the money," he said. "Some may have 'Motion Picture Use'

printed on them and we have seen some that are printed, but it looks like the ink is faded or smeared."

Smith said reports can be called into the dispatch center at 605-692-2113.

– Contact Mondell Keck at mkeck@brookingsregister.com.

JOHNSON: GOP control

Continued from page 1

he went to Washington, the 46-year-old said he expects to chair a subcommittee on either agriculture or transportation infrastructure.

"That'll give us a real opportunity to help drive a policy agenda," he told AP in an interview during which he touted policy wins on making the meatpacking industry more competitive as well as a strategy to tamp down inflation.

"Unlike a lot of my colleagues, I don't spend a ton of time yelling on cable news or firing off angry tweets. I am somebody who reads the bills and drafts the bills," he said.

Though Johnson celebrated the GOP's hold on the House, it will be a narrow one. They are on track to cobble together what could be the party's thinnest majority of the 21st century. But even that hold could give House Republicans an opportunity to investigate the overseas business dealings of President Joe Biden's son, Hunter.

At the same time, the White House is preparing to defend the Democratic president from any allegations of wrongdoing and make the case that Republicans are driven by opportunism. It's a showdown that could explode into a new level of enmity between the House and Biden.

Johnson expressed support for investigating Hunter Biden.

"I'm not saying anybody's

guilty because I don't think you can rush to that judgment until you have the facts," he said. "But how do you have the facts if you don't ask the questions?"

Asked if that would torpedo any hope for cooperation between Biden and House Republicans, the congressman turned it on the president, saying that it would be Biden's problem if he refused to find areas of policy agreement during an investigation into his family.

Before those clashes develop with the new Congress next year, however, Johnson said he will tend to at least one more piece of business of the lame-duck Congress – the Jan. 6 committee's final report. The committee has revealed how former President Donald Trump amplified his false claims of election fraud after he lost the 2020 election until they crescendoed into an insurrection at the Capitol that sent Johnson and his colleagues fleeing.

Any further action to address the attack and shore up the democratic process would require a willingness from Republicans like Johnson to take action. But he wasn't making commitments on taking action after the Jan. 6 committee issues its report: "I'm a guy that always likes to read the bills, read the reports, and examine the evidence before making my mind up. So I'd like to see the report before having an opinion."

Buffalo, western NY brace for potentially dangerous storm

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — New York Gov. Kathy Hochul declared a state of emergency Thursday for parts of western New York ahead of a dangerous storm that had the potential to dump several feet of snow on some communities on the eastern ends of Lake Erie and Lake Ontario.

The worst snowfall was expected in Buffalo, where the National Weather Service said up to 4 feet might fall in some spots through Sunday, with periods of near-zero visibility. Other areas could get a foot or less of the lake-effect snow, which is caused by frigid air picking up copious amounts of moisture from the warmer lakes.

Hochul's state of emergency covers 11 counties, with commercial truck traffic banned from a stretch of Interstate 90 after 4 p.m. Thursday. The snowfall was expected to be most intense between 7 p.m. Thursday and 7 p.m. Friday, but with even more falling on Saturday.

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