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Kansas City sees record early severe weather warnings

BY ROBERT A. CRONKLETON
bcronkleton@kcstar.com

Kansas City's severe weather season has started with a jolt: a rapid-fire burst of severe thun-

derstorm and tornado warnings unmatched this early, with the typical peak still ahead in May and June.

"We have issued the most warnings to this point in the year of any other year," said

Eric Carothers, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Kansas City/Pleasant Hill.

The weather service has issued 252 warnings through April 27, the majority, 215, have been for severe thunderstorms in the

Kansas City forecast area.

The Kansas City region trails only the National Weather Service offices in Norman, Oklahoma, which has issued 397 warnings, and Lincoln, Illinois, which has issued 258, according to

data from the Iowa Environmental Mesonet.

Closer to home, Springfield has issued 226 warnings, while Topeka has issued 172 and Wichita has issued 149.

The surge hasn't come from one blockbuster storm, but rather from a steady parade of systems tracking into the region.

"We've just been continually getting systems that come through with the correct track to produce severe weather over our area," Carothers said.

SEE WEATHER, 3A



The University of Kansas Medical Center at 2060 W 39th Ave. in Kansas City, Kan.

EMILY CURIEL ecuriel@kcstar.com

KC Current inspires global women's soccer stadium projects

BY PJ GREEN
pjgreen@kcstar.com

The Kansas City Current's world-renowned soccer facilities are leading a revolutionary charge of purpose-built facilities across the Atlantic.

The Current tout CPKC Stadium as the first such venue in the world constructed primarily for a women's professional sports team. Led by co-owners Chris and Angie Long, the Current organization has also built team training facilities in nearby Riverside.

The club is now in the process of building out Berkeley Riverfront around the 11,500-seat CPKC Stadium, with hotels, shops and bars in the works — including some already established. Apartments there are also currently under construction.

Whether directly influenced by the Current or otherwise, fellow women's pro soccer clubs around the world are weighing and pursuing similar investments.

Another National Women's Soccer League team, the expansion Denver Summit, is planning to build a 14,500-seat stadium that would open in 2028. Designed by KC-based architecture firm Populous, it, too, will also feature a surrounding entertainment/residential district. It's poised to be the first purpose-built sports district for professional women's sports in Colorado.

In Europe, Portuguese football (soccer) club SC Braga opened 2,500-seat Estádio Amélia Morais for its women's team, second team and training squads last February. It's considered the first stadium built

SEE SOCCER, 3A

Family awarded \$7.65M in fatal KU Med surgery infection case

BY JUDY L. THOMAS
jthomas@kcstar.com

A Wyandotte County jury on Tuesday awarded \$7.65 million in damages to the wife and son of a Raytown man who the family alleged contracted a fatal infection from a contaminated device used during his heart surgery at KU Med.

The jury attributed 88% of the fault to The University of Kansas Hospital Authority and 12% of the fault to LivaNova USA Inc., the medtech company that manufactured the heater-cooler device.

The verdict came after 3 1/2 hours of deliberation on the 12th day of the trial in Wyandotte County District Court.

During closing arguments, Lynn Johnson, an attorney for Christine and Christopher Nolte, suggested the jury award \$10 million for noneconomic damages and \$5 million for economic damages.

"I think we all know that this is a shared responsibility," Johnson told jurors. "A shared responsibility with the University of Kansas Hospital."

LivaNova attorney David Gross said the company denied any fault in Nolte's death, but

told jurors if they believed it was necessary for the company to share some responsibility, they could assess 1% fault to LivaNova and 99% percent to The University of Kansas Hospital Authority.

Of the total damages, the jury awarded \$3 million for noneconomic loss for the personal injury claim. On the wrongful-death claim, the jury awarded \$650,000 for economic loss; \$550,000 for future economic loss; \$2.7 million for noneconomic loss to date; and \$750,000 for future noneconomic loss.

LivaNova's share of the dam-

ages amounts to \$918,000. The University of Kansas Hospital Authority settled with the Noltes shortly before the trial, and District Court Judge Courtney Mikesic approved the confidential settlement on April 13, dismissing KU Med as a defendant. According to a court filing, no admission of liability was made.

FAMILY FILES LAWSUIT IN 2021

Stephen Nolte — a U.S. Navy veteran and retired electrician — underwent an aortic valve

SEE INFECTION, 4A

Police captain's suit claims age discrimination, obstruction

BY BEN WHEELER
benjamin.wheeler@kcstar.com

An Independence police captain has filed a lawsuit accusing city leaders and top department officials of interfering with internal affairs investigations into alleged misconduct, including drinking and driving and a crash involving the former police chief, and retaliating against him when he pushed back.

The lawsuit, filed April 21 in Jackson County Circuit Court,

alleges a pattern of age discrimination, retaliation and obstruction within the Independence Police Department. The petition claims city officials and command staff delayed or undermined Capt. Billy Pope's investigations into senior leaders resulted in discipline being overturned and raised concerns about accountability at the highest levels of the department.

Pope is a 17-year veteran officer with Independence and currently serves as head of the internal affairs unit, according

to the complaint. He is seeking compensatory and punitive damages and has requested a jury trial. Pope's lawyer, David Lunceford, declined to comment for this story.

The lawsuit alleges that since the selection of former police chief Adam Dustman in 2021, city officials have engaged in a pattern of discriminating against older employees, as well as interfered with Pope's work in internal affairs, particularly with investigating Dustman and two deputy chiefs, Jason Petersen



Star file photo

Adam Dustman, Independence police chief, poses for a portrait on Dec. 6, 2023, in Independence, Mo.

and Michelle Sumstad.

Dustman, Petersen and Sumstad did not respond to requests for comment. Independence

Police Department officials did not respond to requests for com-

SEE POLICE, 5A



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