



DEATH TOLL TOPS 10,000

Magnitude of destruction more evident in Japan as recovery efforts begin. **A5**



RAIDERS ON THE DIAMOND

Tech ties in the ninth then scores on bases-loaded single for a win Sunday. **C1**

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Home sales: closings up, prices down

BUSINESS/Average price of home sold in February was \$124,615

BY WALT NETT
AVALANCHE-JOURNAL

Lubbock home sales activity picked up in February, but while the number of sales was up, the average dollar value fell by more than 6 percent, according to figures released by the Lubbock Association of Realtors.

Realtors closed 162 sales last month, compared with 156 in February 2010 and 135 in January.

Average sale price was \$124,615, down from \$132,837 the previous year, while the median price — at which half the sales were for more and half for less — was \$106,000, down from \$110,000 in February 2010. January's average price was \$135,971, while the median was \$109,500.

Total dollar volume was nearly \$20.19 million last month, compared with \$20.72 million a year earlier.

Cade Fowler, executive officer of the Lubbock Realtors, cautioned that the numbers

SEE SALES, PAGE A6

Burglaries drop, but still problem

BY ROBIN PYLE
AVALANCHE-JOURNAL

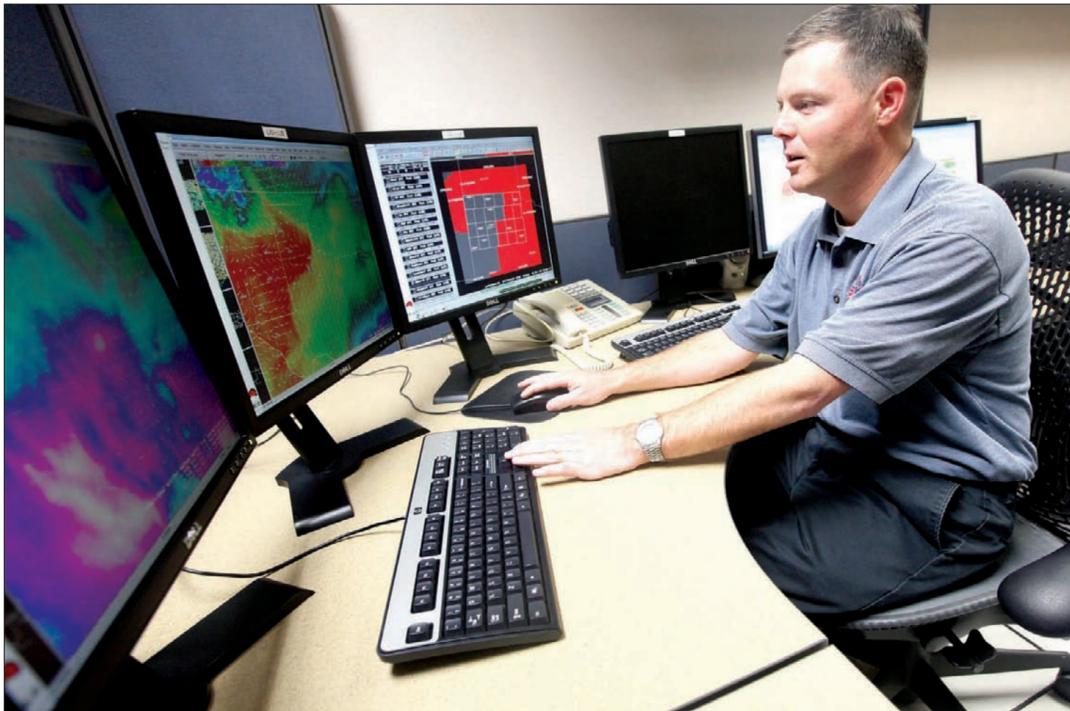
The good news: Car and house burglaries dropped last month. The bad news: The same places are still getting hit pretty hard by thieves, and burglaries may increase again as the weather gets warmer.

The number of burglaries dropped by more than 150 reports last month compared to January.

A total of 368 residents reported being victims of car and residential break-ins in February, according to Lubbock police data. There were 526 reported the month before.

The Heart of Lubbock, again, saw the most burglaries of any neighborhood in the city during the month of February — 24 total, according to a monthly Avalanche-Journal analysis of police data.

SEE BURGLARIES, PAGE A6



ZACH LONG ● AVALANCHE-JOURNAL

Lubbock National Weather Service senior forecaster Todd Lindley has done extensive research on fire weather patterns in West Texas.

Sparking interest

SOUTH PLAINS/Local fire weather research key in minimizing destruction from wildfires across the South Plains

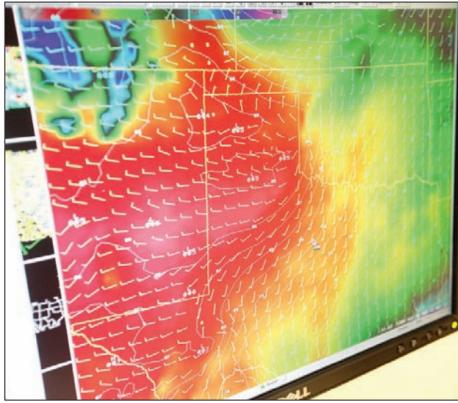
BY ALYSSA DIZON
AVALANCHE-JOURNAL

Five years ago this weekend, the South Plains experienced the largest single-day fire in U.S. history when wildfires burned more than a million acres and killed 12 people.

This year's outbreak on Feb. 27 that burned 284,911 acres and killed one person could have ended like the March 12, 2006, event if not for vital National Weather Service fire weather research, local fire officials said.

"When (the outbreak) did occur five years ago in the

SEE FIRE, PAGE A6



ZACH LONG ● AVALANCHE-JOURNAL

Lubbock National Weather Service senior forecaster Todd Lindley's computer screen shows humidity levels across West Texas. Lindley has done extensive research on fire weather patterns in West Texas.

WantMore? For a related video on fire weather across the South Plains, go to lubbockonline.com

Ag projections show higher prices, production

AGRICULTURE/Cotton, corn, wheat and soybeans may have the highest 2011 expectations

BY ALYSSA DIZON
AVALANCHE-JOURNAL

Americans could expect higher levels of agricultural production, commodity prices and consumer food prices this year, according to agricultural projections analysts. That means everyone, not just the

farmer, will feel the impacts of this unique situation on their spending.

In February, the U.S. Department of Agriculture released its annual agricultural long-term projections consisting of the production, trade and price changes the country could see through 2020.

USDA forecast 2011 may have the highest prices and production totals — namely for corn, cotton, wheat and soybeans — and may reach a new record in U.S. agricultural exports.

While these are just estimates of what's to come, these numbers give the public a

window into the state of agriculture and show them the truth behind higher commodity prices and retail prices, said Darren Hudson, director of the Cotton Economics Research Institute at Texas Tech.

"The general public needs to be cognizant of the facts of what drives their food prices," he said. "The more they understand about what's driving their food prices, the more they'll understand how that market works and what changes they are likely to have on their pocketbooks."

SEE PRODUCTION, PAGE A6

McWhorter Elementary namesake was Lubbock County pioneer

Burton Owen McWhorter, namesake for McWhorter Elementary School, rode the prairies of West Texas while it was still part of the Old West.

As a 20-year-old in 1887, he herded his father's cattle into the northern portion of an area that was about to become Lubbock County.

The entire West Texas region at the time was essentially an immense open range. McWhorter had grown up attending



RAY WESTBROOK
THE A-J REMEMBERS

country schools in Denton County, then enrolled in the Jacksboro School for Boys. And when his parents, Owen Chel-

ton and Margaret Ann McWhorter, began moving west, he set out with them and staked his future on the Staked Plains — the Llano Estacado.

He spent his first night after crossing the Caprock by sleeping in the open just north of the present location of Lubbock. For the next five years he rode the prairies as a cowboy from north of Lubbock to a point as far south as the Pecos River.

McWhorter also took his turn living in a dugout in Yellowhouse Canyon during the winter, and helped pull cows out of intermittent muddy bogs in stream beds of that area.

He was known always as a cattleman, and after he married Hallie Katherine Lemond on Dec. 7, 1893, they settled in west Lubbock County near the present town of Shallowater.

SEE REMEMBERS, PAGE A6

BeyondTheCaprock

Cockpit locked down over praying

LOS ANGELES — Pilots on an Alaska Airlines flight locked down the cockpit and alerted authorities after three passengers conducted an elaborate orthodox Jewish prayer ritual during their Los Angeles-bound flight.

Airline spokeswoman Bobbie Egan says the crew of Flight 241 from Mexico City became alarmed Sunday after the men began the ritual, which involves tying leather straps and small wooden boxes to the body.

The cockpit was placed on a security lockdown — meaning the door couldn't be opened even for pilots to leave briefly.

FBI and customs agents, along with police and fire crews, met the plane at the gate at Los Angeles International Airport.

Airport police say three men — all Mexican nationals — were escorted off the plane, questioned by the FBI, and released.

They were not arrested.

● ASSOCIATED PRESS

For more state, nation and world news, see pages A3-5 and B5, 6.

2ThingsInside

(That will make you smarter)

An Associated Press study finds that many governmental bodies want more openness, but old patterns of secrecy are still prevalent.

Page A4

A study has found that new dads can also experience depression, which may lead to them spanking children younger than 1.

Page B6

InTomorrow's-A-J

Find out where and who the Lady Raiders will play in the NCAA playoffs.

SECTION A

WordsOfInspiration

If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. Psalm 139: 8-10

Mrs. E.L. Merriott, Wamego, Kan.

OnTheOutside

Weather

● Partly sunny

High: 66

Low: 38

Tomorrow: Partly sunny and warmer. High of 76.

FindItInside

Annie.....B6	Horoscope.....D5
Bridge.....C6	Jumble.....C3
Classified.....C1-6	Lottery.....A2
Comics.....D5	Obituaries.....B5
Crossword.....D5	Records.....B2
Editorial.....A4	Sports.....D1-4, 6
Features.....B6	Sudoku.....C6
Heloise.....B6	Weather.....A2

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