



Toxic school air?

Report raises concerns, skepticism

By Tim Krohn
Free Press Staff Writer

MANKATO — A study showing high rates of air pollution near many schools is raising concerns and questions about the validity of the assumptions made.

USA Today's special project "The Smokestack Effect, Toxic Air and America's Schools" shows many Mankato schools as being among the worst in the nation for unhealthy air outside them.

The conclusions are based on emissions primarily from two large soybean-processing companies in Mankato — CHS and ADM.

CHS officials said their emissions are significantly below required government standards and they are confident they cause no risk. (See related story.)

USA Today, in partnership with several universities, conducted an eight-month study. They used the government's own computer model simulation that predicts the path of toxic chemicals released by companies.

In Mankato, several schools ranked in the 2nd or 3rd percentile nationwide for poor outdoor air quality: Fitzgerald, Franklin, Immanuel Lutheran, Monroe, Mount Olive, Riverbend and Washington. If a school is in the 3rd percentile, it means

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Air pollution outside schools

The lower the percentile number, the more polluted the air is near the school. For example, if a school is in the 3rd percentile, only 2 percent of schools in the nation are worse. The rankings are based on a model, not actual air monitoring.

School	National Percentile rank
Bridges Elementary	20th
Central High	13th
Dakota Meadows	13th
Fitzgerald Middle	3rd
Franklin Elementary	2nd
Garfield	3rd
Grace Christian	6th
Holy Rosary	3rd
Hoover Elementary	18th
Immanuel Lutheran	2nd
Jefferson Elementary	13th
Kennedy Elementary	14th
Loyola High	8th
Mankato East High	8th
Mankato West High	13th
Monroe Elementary	3rd
Mount Olive	3rd
Riverbend Academy	3rd
Roosevelt Elementary	13th
St. Mark Lutheran	20th
Washington Elementary	2nd

Source: USA Today



J. Malmanger



John Cross

Above: Students play outside Monroe Elementary School in North Mankato with the smokestack of ADM off in the distance. A USA Today report says students at many schools are at risk because of air pollution from factories.

Another bar faces drinking death lawsuit

Edward Bump, 19, killed himself in November of '07

By Dan Nienaber
Free Press Staff Writer

MANKATO — It was just days after Amanda Jax drank a fatal amount of alcohol at a Mankato bar when 19-year-old Edward Andrew Bump killed himself in a Mankato apartment.

The University of Minnesota student's death Nov. 2, 2007, drew little media attention compared to 21-year-old Jax's death on Oct. 29, 2007, just four days earlier. A press release from Mankato police did point out, however, that investiga-

tors believed Bump had been drinking before he hanged himself in a girlfriend's apartment.

Now a lawsuit, filed by Bump's parents, is making the same claims Jax's relatives have made: that a Mankato bar is partially responsible for his death. William and Tamara Bump of Rochester filed their lawsuit against Boomtown and its owner, Dan Guimont, last week. Edward Bump was not legally old enough to be in a bar

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Obama names spending watchdog

Economic plan still evolving

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Pointing with concern to "red ink as far as the eye can see," President-elect Barack Obama pledged Wednesday to tackle out-of-control Social Security and Medicare spending and named a special watchdog to clamp down on other federal programs — even as he campaigned anew to spend the largest pile of taxpayer money in history to revive the sinking economy. The steepness of the fiscal mountain he'll face beginning

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Profit warnings, poor job outlook weigh on stocks.

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Analysis: Deficit spending is tough medicine.

Jan. 20 was underscored by stunning new figures: an estimate that the federal budget deficit will reach \$1.2 trillion this year, by far the biggest ever, even without the new stimulus spending.

The incoming president has walked this same tightrope each day this week — advocating fiscal discipline

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Experts seeing more conflicts over health care

McClatchy-Tribune News Service

CHICAGO — Tony Dewitt was not going to win his battle with prostate cancer. He knew it. His wife, Phillis, knew it. The people at the hospital where she worked knew it.

But still, Phillis was taken aback when her supervisor asked whether Tony planned to seek hospice care.

"He's not ready to give

up," Dewitt said she responded.

When her boss raised the subject again a few months later, Dewitt realized executives were monitoring Tony's soaring medical bills. "He still wants to fight," she explained, feeling defensive.

Months later, Proctor Hospital suddenly fired Dewitt over an allegation of

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Soybean-processing plant says its emissions are safe

Among Mankato businesses that release significant emissions into the air, CHS stands out.

The soybean-processing plant (formerly Honeymead) releases 560,250 pounds annually. Next is the ADM soybean plant, which releases 282,488 pounds.

Those emission numbers were used in a computer model study done by USA Today to gauge possible air pollution near schools.

Tom Malecha, a vice president at CHS, said they are confident their emissions aren't a danger and

questions the depth of the report.

Scott Teters, vice president of operations and a chemical engineer, said the plant releases two things into the air: hexane and harmless steam.

"What people see coming out of the stacks, especially when it's cold, is the steam and water vapor."

Hexane is a solvent used in many industries and widely used to extract oil from soybeans and other seeds and vegetables.

The EPA says the most likely

problems from hexane would be long exposure to higher levels of it in the air by workers at a plant. It is not listed as a cancer-causing agent, but its possible carcinogenic effect from long-term exposure isn't known.

Malecha said the company reclaims as much of the hexane as possible — more than is required by the government — both for safety and because reclamation saves money.

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UPCOMING

TOMORROW IN THE FREE PRESS

Hairy battle

Electrolysis and laser treatments help fight against unwanted hair.

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Take a peek

Artist envisions work as windows into different places.

Weighty load: Police say man steals \$800 in change

SALT LAKE CITY — The payload was hefty — and the payback painful.

Police said a robber broke a window at a Salt Lake City home and made off with a paint bucket full of \$800 in change. Officers soon stopped a 48-year-old man holding a bucket of coins and carrying a crowbar in his pants. He was charged Tuesday with several misdemeanors.

— The Associated Press

WEATHER, PAGE B4

Sun, not warmth

Partly sunny but still cold. High at 20. Icy mix possible tonight.



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