

# ALLERGY

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forming on her face and body, which was quickly losing its skin color. After arriving at the hospital, Beck described the scene as a whirlwind.

“I had no idea what was happening,” she said. “I had no idea the severity of the situation.”

Breena was quickly treated and started improving. After a 12-hour observation, she was scheduled for a follow-up appointment to give the family some answers.

“A few days later, we went to the clinic and ended up with a referral to an allergist,” Beck said.

The allergist confirmed Breena had suffered from anaphylaxis, the most serious type of allergic reaction that can progress very quickly and may cause death without proper medical attention. Breena was lucky to be alive.

The news hit Beck and Breena’s father, Mike Riley, like a freight train.

“We didn’t know what to do at first,” Beck admitted.

Doctors determine the

severity of a food allergy patient’s condition with a 0-6 rating scale, Beck said. At 9 months old, Breena was considered “a high 4.”

“With more exposures, her doctor said it would get worse,” Beck said, noting since then, Breena has also been diagnosed with asthma, adding an even higher threat to her allergy.

“(The allergist) provided as much education as he could but followed it with, ‘peanut allergies are the worst and it is the allergy that takes the most lives.’”

Fortunately, Breena’s allergy has kept its distance since that first incident, but her parents say it hasn’t been easy.

“We get a lot of grief for being overprotective,” Beck said. “We are told we are over sheltering her and we are too careful.”

Riley said because most people are unaware of how to deal with the severity of an allergy like Breena’s, they feel he and Beck’s parental decisions can be a burden.

“Some people don’t understand why we act the way we do,” he said.

And while Riley stressed

he and Beck understand the extremity of their daughter’s food allergy is foreign to people, they still get frustrated over the lack empathy.

“We are the way we are because it could mean life or death,” Beck said.

## On the rise

Peanut allergies are exploding in number in babies and children, and it has been difficult for experts to pinpoint the cause. A report from NBC News Chief Medical Editor Dr. Nancy Snyderman says nearly 15 million Americans have food allergies, and potentially deadly reactions to food allergies affect about six million children under the age of 18 throughout the United States each year. Peanuts and cow’s milk top the list of foods most likely to cause allergies in children.

Lindsi Barnhart, health educator for the Koochiching County Health Department, said according to the Center for Disease Control, or CDC, and Prevention website, food allergies in children have increased markedly since the 1990s.

“That’s alarming,” she said. “While there are many

theories, no one knows exactly why this is happening.”

She added although she doesn’t have exact numbers for how many extreme cases of food allergies there are locally, it still is an issue. And education is key.

“It is important for the public to be educated about food and environmental allergies so that we can know they are real and try to understand,” Barnhart said. “It is difficult for those of us who haven’t personally experienced food allergies to understand what it’s like and how much energy it takes to stay healthy and feeling well...When people learn about food allergies and recognize the symptoms of anaphylaxis, they can be quicker to seek treatment if their friend, classmate, or coworker is having a reaction.”

And, she continued, it is important for the person with the allergy to know what they shouldn’t eat, to read labels, to avoid cross-contamination, to carry a source of medicine to treat reactions, and to tell everyone who comes in contact with their food what their allergies are.

Even though Breena is

and those repairs can’t wait. Some of them are currently being assessed, and one has already been repaired, he said, at a cost of \$3,500.

“I just hope we don’t have more issues with the docks, because that’s the pricey thing that really is a public hazard and has to be addressed,” Hummitzsch said.

## Road construction

In other business, the board rejected a bid for a road construction project on County State Aid Highway 107, and agreed to readvertise for bids, which will push the construction timeline back.

County Engineer Joe Sutherland said the county only received one bid for the project, which was estimated by the engineer at \$1.7 million. The sole bidder, Bowman Construction, bid the project for \$2.086 million, or 23 percent above the engineer’s estimate.

A rule states if the bid comes in more than 10 percent above the engineer’s estimate, special authorization is needed from county and state aid agencies for approval, Sutherland said. Federal funding for the project won’t be affected if the bid is rejected and the project is pushed back, he said.

“I concur with the engineer,” Pavleck said. “I find it very difficult to go that much higher with only one bid.”

Because of the high bid, Sutherland said he recommended rejecting the bid, and readvertising for the project, which would still be able to start late this year, and hopefully wrap up in the fall of 2015.

“I sure know that we wanted to get it done this year, I understand that,” Sutherland said. “I know several folks in the community wanted to get it done, I apologize for that.”

# SANDBAG

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“We’re going to have to have some kind of a process, but for right now, if people bring them, we’ve just got to take them, I would imagine,” McBride said.

County Administrative Director Teresa Briggs said if the bags are empty and not mixed in with other garbage, it shouldn’t be a problem to accept them at the transfer station. However, she asked why people would be wanting to get rid of their sandbags, when area flooding hasn’t completely receded.

“Out west, it’s been two weeks since they’ve had any water, and they’d just as soon start getting things cleaned up,” Commissioner Wayne Skoe said in response.

When Koochiching County last saw extensive flooding in 2002, Commissioner Wade Pavleck said the county accepted used, empty sandbags at the transfer station. It didn’t charge people for dropping them off, he said, but it was documented, in order to apply for reimbursement.

“For now, we need something for people who want to get rid of empty bags,” McBride said. “I say we take them, and track it, and just have them track it out there.”

Board Chairman Rob Ecklund said the county should accept empty sandbags at the transfer station, provided they aren’t mixed in with other garbage. If they are combined with other garbage, the person dropping them off will be assessed the normal fee.

There are many residents in the county who are physically unable to empty their sandbags and take them to the transfer station, Pavleck

## More information

Sand and sandbags used during floods may be contaminated. All sand and sandbags must be disposed of at a location approved by Koochiching County, and there are several options for disposal. For more information, call the Environmental Services Department at 218-283-1157.

For sand management, in some cases clean sand can be used as fill. Contact ESD to evaluate potential fill sites or other options for on-site bag emptying, and never use sand to fill wetland areas. Clean sand can also be stockpiled and reused for various purposes like road construction and winter road sand.

All sand must be placed in an area where humans can’t come in contact with it. It should never be used for sandboxes, playgrounds, gardens, or beaches.

Sandbags that have been filled shouldn’t be stored for long periods of time. They can be stored for reuse during the same flood season, but must be disposed of after that.

Uncontaminated, full bags can be used as fill in approved areas, and must be covered with soil. No bags are allowed in wetland or shore impact areas. They can be disposed of at the Koochiching County Demolition Landfill or other county-approved facilities.

All empty bags must be disposed of at the Koochiching County Transfer Station or other county-approved location.

said. For these residents, the county could come pick up their filled sandbags, and store them, he said, until they decided what to do with them.

## Flood damage

In other business, the board heard a report from county Land Commissioner Dennis Hummitzsch on flood damage to county parks, landings, docks, and campsites. Hummitzsch didn’t provide final assessments of the damage, but instead just updated the board on issues department staff have run into.

“It’s not, by any means, complete,” Hummitzsch said. “Addressing these, some can wait, some can’t.”

At Loman Park, the out-house incurred damage, and tables have been lost, but the water well has been tested as safe for public use, Hummitzsch said. A privacy fence at Nelson Park between the park and a neighboring residence has

been damaged, he said, and is probably a more urgent priority to replace.

One of Hummitzsch’s big concerns are the campsites on the Rat Root River, where recent projects were completed using riprap to stabilize the shoreline.

“That’s the type of thing that could wait, but it could be at least \$1,000 per site, it could be \$1,000-\$20,000 per site, to remedy all that,” Hummitzsch said.

Docks at various county parks have been stabilized and kept in place by water-filled barrels, Hummitzsch said, which has saved a lot of headaches and replacements costs. With many of the damaged sites, he said, the final cost won’t be known for quite some time, until the water recedes and a full assessment can be done.

There are also multiple places where washouts have damaged county forestry roads, Hummitzsch said,

young, her parents say she is aware peanuts can make her very sick. But, they still have their work cut out for them. Learning and remembering what foods Breena – and the rest of the family – can and cannot eat started off as an exhausting challenge, Riley said, but has gotten easier.

“We know pretty much what is safe,” Beck added. “But a company can change ingredients or where it makes its food at any time, so we still make an effort to check labels.”

## What’s next

So is there a cure for food allergies? Unfortunately not, but there is hope.

For Breena it is about 440 miles away.

“I was doing research and I found an allergy clinic in La Crosse, Wis.,” Beck said. “I found a place close to home. I found hope.”

Allergy Associates of La Crosse provides sublingual immunotherapy, commonly referred to as allergy drops that are administered under the tongue, according to the facility’s website. The treatment helps children re-educate their over active immune systems by feeding

them very small doses of allergy causing foods, gradually increasing the amounts over the course of several months and hopefully, building enough tolerance to take patients out of the danger zone.

Doctors would be able to pinpoint the exact severity of Breena’s allergy and determine if the drops would benefit her.

However, there are road-blocks.

In Beck and Riley’s case, the cost of treatment and traveling to the clinic exceeds their household budget.

“After a few phone calls, running over insurance and what it does and doesn’t cover, it’s going to exceed our budget,” Beck said.

On the same note, Riley chimed in that he’s prepared to do whatever it takes to let out a sigh of relief over the daily paranoia he and Beck experience because of the allergy.

“I would rather make payments and know how severe my daughter’s allergy is than not know at all,” he said.

Beck agreed. “This could be life changing.”

## Damages

Meanwhile, the governor’s office reports \$10.8 million in eligible damages have been documented through preliminary damage assessments in Chippewa, Freeborn, Jackson, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Renville, and Rock counties.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency threshold for federal assistance is \$7.3 million in statewide eligible damages.

In his letter to the president, Dayton said 31 counties and one American Indian tribe have reported more than \$55 million in response costs and uninsured damages to public infrastructure. The Minnesota Department of Public Safety Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, FEMA, and county emergency managers are continuing to assess damage in affected counties.

Preliminary damage assessments are coming in higher than initial estimates, and because some of the hardest hit areas won’t be able to be assessed for several weeks, Dayon said he is requesting a federal disaster declaration now. Once all preliminary damage assessments are complete, Dayton said he will formally request FEMA designate assistance for all additional counties and tribal governments that exceed their threshold.

Most of the damage reported by local officials is to roads and bridges. Local governments also expended significant resources to protect their communities from floodwaters and for cleanup operations caused by mudslides and sinkholes.

## WELCOME TO THE WORLD!



Matthew Calder and Nathalie Donaldson, Fort Frances, Ontario, proudly announce the arrival of their son, **Frederick Jace Calder**, 8 pounds, 7 ounces, 19 1/2 inches long, born at 1:57 a.m. Saturday, July 5, 2014, at La Verendrye General Hospital, Fort Frances.

Paternal grandparents are Kevin and Tammie Calder, Fort Frances. Maternal grandparents are Ross and Denise Donaldson, Burriss, Ontario. Paternal great-grandfather is Kenny Bangen, International Falls, Minn.

Maternal great-grandparents are Tom and Shirley Morrish, Burriss, and Liz Donaldson, Emo, Ontario.

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