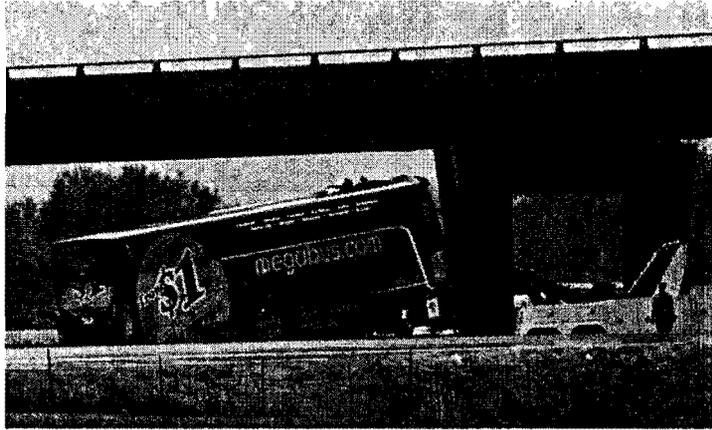


AUG 3 2012

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Mizzou student killed, at least 10 seriously hurt in Megabus crash near Litchfield, Ill.



J.B. Forbes

A wrecker removes a Megabus motor coach that hit a bridge support on southbound Interstate 55 north of Litchfield, Ill., on Thursday, Aug. 2, 2012. Photo by J.B. Forbes jforbes@post-dispatch.com

7 hours ago • [BY MARLON A. WALKER • \[mwalker@post-dispatch.com\]\(mailto:mwalker@post-dispatch.com\) > 314-340-8104](#)

LITCHFIELD • One person died and at least 10 people were seriously injured today when a double-decker Megabus headed from Chicago to St. Louis crashed into a bridge support about 1:20 p.m. on Interstate 55 just north of Litchfield, Ill.

The crash killed Aditi Avhad, 25, the Illinois State Police said.

Avhad was a dental graduate student at the University of Missouri in Columbia, according to her LinkedIn page. She graduated from Nair Hospital and Dental College in India in 2009. She had worked at a hospital in Mumbai before coming to the U.S., according to her online profile. In Columbia, she also worked for a student-operated community health clinic.

More than 30 ambulances and 10 medical helicopters responded to the scene, located about 60 miles northeast of St. Louis.

The southbound bus, carrying more than 70 passengers, hit a concrete support in the median, well off the roadway. Firefighters used ladders to reach victims on the bus' top level. The crash's impact appeared to be on the bus' left front side.

Investigators believe a blown tire led to the accident, said state police spokesman Doug Francis.

Interstate 55 was closed in both directions for several hours but authorities began reopening the road about 5 p.m.

Megabus said the bus was headed from Chicago to Kansas City, with stops in St. Louis and Columbia, Mo.

As of 9:25 p.m., Barnes Jewish Hospital was treating one patient in fair condition and another patient in serious condition. St. Louis Hospital was operating on a man, 24, with multiple fractures.

St. Louis Children's Hospital was expecting to treat two children, ages 7 and 11, each with multiple fractures who were initially treated at a hospital near the accident scene.

Passengers aboard the bus described a chaotic scene in the moments after the crash. Zaq Hall, 25, of Kansas City, said people were thrown into the aisles and over seats. He said one man seemed to have suffered a neck injury and was unable to move. Another had his head stuck between two seats.

"Most people had blood on them somewhere," said Hall, who was returning from a job interview in Chicago.

Megan Arns, 27, of St. Charles, was sitting on the upper level when she felt the bus jerk to one side like it had struck something. The bus driver seemed to lose control of the bus, she said. She could see the concrete pillars approaching. After the crash, screams filled the bus. Many people appeared to have leg and arm injuries.

"It was overwhelming," said Arns, who was headed to St. Louis after flying into Chicago from Amman, Jordan, where she had taught music.

Megabus said the bus involved in the crash was manufactured in 2011 and had passed a full preventative maintenance check within the past week.

"The thoughts and prayers of our entire staff go out to everyone involved, particularly the family of the person who has died," Megabus said in a statement. The driver of the coach has been taken to hospital for surgery, but his injuries are not believed to be life-threatening.

Megabus is a budget bus line best known for its promotional \$1 fares and skipping bus depots in favor of so-called curbside stops.

The growing popularity of low-cost bus services such as Megabus has spurred concerns about safety.

In February, a Megabus driver was acquitted of homicide charges for the deaths of four passengers when his double-decker bus crashed into a low overpass in upstate New York in September 2010, according to the Associated Press.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Department of Transportation shut down 26 bus companies operating along the northeast corridor after declaring them "imminent hazards to public safety." Megabus was not among the companies targeted by regulators.

The scene of this afternoon's crash is near where a Highland school bus returning students from a field trip rammed the back of a tractor-trailer truck stopped in traffic May 14, injuring 11 students.

Denise Hollinshed, Patrick M. O'Connell, Valerie Schremp Hahn and Todd C. Frankel of the Post-Dispatch contributed to this report.

Chicago Tribune

Survivor of fatal Megabus crash 'just woke up to screaming'

A University of Missouri graduate student was killed and dozens of other people injured when a double-decker Megabus bound from Chicago smashed into a concrete pillar of an overpass on Interstate 55 this afternoon, state police say.

The bus, with about 64 passengers listed on the manifest, apparently blew a tire and skidded into the center pillar around 1:20 p.m. near Litchfield, about 60 miles north of St. Louis, police say. As many as half the people on the southbound bus were injured, according to State Police Capt. Scott Compton.

Four to five of the injured were trapped and had to be extricated, including the woman who died, he said.

State police, citing preliminary information, said the woman who died was Aditi R. Avhad, about 25, a citizen of India.

Avhad was born in 1987, but police did not have a birth date.

Christian Basi, spokesman for the University of Missouri, confirmed Avhad is an active graduate student at the university in Columbia, which was on the route of the bus.

He could provide no other information immediately.

Television footage from the scene showed crews on ladders reaching inside the smashed front end of the bus. Thirty ambulances and five medical helicopters responded, and I-55 was shut down in both directions from the Carlinville exit to the Litchfield exit.

Compton said he was one of the first on the scene, and many of the passengers were already out of the bus. "Some of them . . . were a little more concerned or acting erratically, but it was relatively calm.

"There were all sorts of injuries, extremities, leg injuries, neck injuries," he said. "And there were several cuts to the heads and the legs and things like that."

Compton said a hard rain in the drought-ravaged area slowed down reconstruction of the crash briefly but "did not impede" extrications. He said the exact number of people on the bus was still being confirmed tonight as the investigation continued. A bus company statement said "more than 70" people were believed to have been on the bus.

Megabus passenger Eliana Siegal, of West Rogers Park, said the time from when the bus veered off the road to when it slammed into the concrete pillar felt like about five seconds.

"I flew forward and my glasses were smashed into the back of the seat in front of me," said Siegal, 16. "People were panicking and babies were crying – a woman across the aisle from me was screaming that her leg was broken."

Siegal, who was riding on the top tier of the double-decker bus, said she and other passengers rushed off the bus as quickly as they could out of fear it might explode. But the driver and at least one other passenger were trapped, she said.

"There was a lot of manpower spent trying to get the people who were trapped out of the bus," Siegal said.

Siegal was taken to a community center in Litchfield. She said she was traveling alone, on her way to meet friends for a concert in St. Louis.

Siegal said she believed she was uninjured because her father gave her a dollar to give to charity, a Jewish tradition that helped protect her en route.

"I believe it was that money that kept me out without a scratch," said Siegal.

On his way to Kansas City to see family, Michael Martin of Minneapolis said he was asleep but woke up on the floor with bloodied people standing all around him and screaming.

"All I heard was hollering and screaming, blood," Martin said. "There was the front window."

"I was like, in shock, in a daze," said Martin, 36. "A guy grabbed me ... told me I was in shock, my neck was swollen all up."

Riders were from many different places, Martin said.

One rider near the front was stuck from waist up and hollering, a child was stuck in a seat but calmer, Martin said.

"I just kept hearing people hollering," Martin said. "There was blood everywhere."

"Pain and shock," Martin said. "Little kids were screaming and crying."

But Martin praised the response from the Litchfield community. "They were here in no time," Martin said.

Several drivers on the highway pulled over to help the bus passengers, Martin said.

Martin said he went to a hospital in Litchfield, with minor head and neck injuries.

"God is good," said Martin. "I'm ain't saying I deserve to be alive (instead of) nobody else."

Eleanor Klein, a 58-year-old retired Sears accountant from Canaryville, said she was traveling to St. Louis for her first time with a sister and two nephews to take in a baseball game and the zoo.

One 11-year-old nephew, Nicholas Eckstein, was taken to St. Louis for a broken leg along with his mother, who was also injured.

Of the woman who died, Klein said, "She was just sitting in the wrong place."

Klein, who got only three stitches for a cut in her lip, said: "It had to be some sort of miracle. ... It had to be where I was sitting."

"I was thrown into the aisle. My leg went under me," Klein said. "I couldn't get up. Somebody started yelling 'smoke.' I couldn't move. I said, 'Somebody please help me' and three people helped me."

Standing with a bloodstained shirt and jacket, Klein said: "I never was in anything like that and never want to be again.

"It could have been worse. More people could have been killed and hurt.

"It was a full bus. There was nowhere to go even. We seen him swerve and he just hit it, full impact."

Klein said they planned to go ahead with their trip to St. Louis.

On his way to a wedding in St. Louis, Sammy Lee, 30, of Evanston said the crash happened quickly and there was little time to react.

"It was terrible," Lee said. "It happened really fast. You hear the bump and then you see the bus go off road, and people started screaming and started crying."

Phillip Keophaphone, 24, of Kansas City was traveling back home with several others he worked with on a series of photo shoots at Navy Pier and beach sites in Chicago over the last week.

"Honestly, I was asleep," said Keophaphone, a wardrobe stylist. "I just woke up to screaming."

"It was like a movie," he said, describing the scene after the crash. "Just God willing, there was a lot of helpful people."

"I'm not injured at all," he said. "So I just started helping as many people as I could."

His friends were still in the hospital but with no serious injuries.

But thinking about his walking away uninjured? "It's God," he said. "I can't take credit for it. I just have strong faith."

He said "a lot of people were thrown out of their seats."

"I didn't know what to do," said Jaquan Thibo, 17, a South Side resident who received a gash over his left eye that needed a bandage. He hit his head on the seat in front of him.

He said he was traveling with his younger brother on their way to visit their mother in St. Louis.

"Because God is our savior, (he got) a second chance," Thibo said.

The state police said preliminary reports showed at least 33 people were taken to area hospitals.

Authorities said a 24-year-old man was airlifted to St. Louis University Hospital with multiple fractures, and another person was flown to Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis.

Four people were airlifted to Memorial Hospital in Springfield, and another two were taken there by ambulance, according to spokesman Michael Leathers. Their conditions were not known.

Sixteen people were taken to St. Francis Hospital in Litchfield and as many as four more were on the way, officials said. Most of them had moderate fractures, they said.

Three patients were transported to Hillsboro Area Hospital. None of those patients was in critical condition, officials said.

Memorial Hospital in Staunton received five patients, all of them with non-life threatening injuries, according to hospital CEO Sue Campbell. "We're receiving the less severe injuries – bumps, bruises or possible lacerations," she said. "Our doctors and nurses are receiving and assessing patients currently."

Campbell said the hospital anticipates more patients could arrive.

The entire interstate had been closed during the response but by Thursday night had been reopened.

The Litchfield School District sent school buses to transport uninjured people to the community center in the town, about five miles away.

About 36 passengers from the bus were taken on two school buses to the community center in Litchfield, said Janis Johns, transportation director of Litchfield Community Unit School District 12. The passengers were either uninjured or mildly injured and included some children, Johns said. One woman was brought on a stretcher in the school bus.

The school district sent a third school bus to the crash site but it wasn't needed, Johns said. "We're close to the highway. We try to help out when we can," Johns said.

The Red Cross will be notified and coolers of water will be provided, she said. "It was very warm out there," she said, and some crash survivors were overheated.

The bus was on its way to St. Louis from Chicago, then was scheduled to head to Kansas City.

A statement from the megabus.com company said arrangements were being made to get passengers to their destinations.

"The thoughts and prayers of our entire staff go out to everyone involved, particularly the family of the person who has died," according to the statement.

The driver of the bus was undergoing surgery but his injuries did not appear to be life-threatening, the company said, and their staff is cooperating with state police in the ongoing investigation.



Publishers Perish: Ending Unjustified Subsidies for the University Press

By Larry M. Elkin

College professors have long been told that they must publish or perish. The universities that print their books are facing a different ultimatum: stop wasting money on ancillary activities, like publishing, or perish.

While universities around the world operate presses devoted to scholarly work, only the University of Chicago, Oxford and Cambridge University presses are generally believed to be profitable. The rest rely upon their university to fund them through the tuition, endowments, and, in some cases, state subsidies that finance general campus operations.

This practice is beginning to fade. Facing rising costs, about half a dozen schools have closed or suspended their presses within the past three years. **The University of Missouri is the most recent example of school officials confronting their problematic press. The school's new president, Timothy M. Wolfe, has announced that the university will no longer continue to shelter its unprofitable publishing arm. The University of Missouri Press now must operate without the \$400,000 annual subsidy it previously received. To make ends meet, some paid employees will be replaced with students.**

Predictably, professors are horrified. Without amply funded university presses, many fear that the dissemination of knowledge will cease and academia will fall into a Dark Age. Arguing that a university is intended to both educate students and provide faculty an opportunity to engage in important intellectual discourse, college professors claim that this sort of intellectual discourse cannot be sustained by an unsubsidized or commercial publishing house.

I am not arguing that research unsuited to commercial publishing has no value, nor am I arguing that professors should slavishly grade papers into the night without a spare minute to advance their specialized fields of knowledge. I have one simple objection to the current system: It is unconscionable for universities to subsidize their faculty's publications while students are racking up ever-higher debt to pay skyrocketing tuition.

Professors would likely argue that students benefit indirectly from the money they involuntarily contribute to university presses, with better-informed and better-known faculty to teach them. In reality, however, the professors who spend the most time on research and publishing are often the ones who spend the least time teaching undergraduates. Those undergrads help fund the

tenured faculty's research while being taught by graduate assistants and non-tenure-track adjuncts.

Fortunately, there are many ways professors can share their knowledge without financially burdening their students. One way is to rely on private and government grants to finance the publication of scholarly works.

Alternatively, professors might consider making their work more accessible to a larger audience in order to attract commercial publishers. Clear, understandable writing can make even a technical topic interesting to a non-technical reader. And as self-publishing becomes easier, academics themselves could pay for the cost of publishing. They can then recoup their investment if their books sell. At the very least, such self-publication should count for tenure or promotion.

Also, if what truly matters is academic exchange, not nicely printed book jackets with flattering author photos, professors can find cheaper ways to communicate. Progress does not require printed books. Electronic publishing is cheaper, though not always cheap enough. Rice University replaced its traditional press with a digital-only one, was forced to shutter its virtual doors after four years due to costs that were still too high.

Regardless of how professors publish their work, it should not be done at students' expense. The University of Missouri administration has wisely taken away its press's subsidy. That this is such a rare and newsworthy event says a lot about what's wrong with the way American universities are managed.

Prehistoric dining: Mystery of how the Diplodocus managed to strip trees bare of leaves is solved

- **Scientists simulate dinosaur's eating habits using 3D image of skull**
- **Discovery appears to have ended 130-year mystery**

With its 170-foot-long, 12-tonne body, the giant Diplodocus was a dinosaur with a big appetite.

And now scientists believe they have finally worked out how the huge sauropod satisfied its hunger - by clamping its giant jaws onto trees and stripping entire branches of leaves.

The eating habits of the Diplodocus - the longest creature to ever walk the earth has never been properly understood since its discovery 130 years ago.

One school of thought was that it would strip bark from trees by closing its jaws around the trunk.

A second was it would grip branches and strip them of their foliage.

But now researchers from the University of Bristol, Natural History Museum of London, the University of Missouri and Ohio University say a 3D model of the dinosaur's skull has provided the answer.

Professor Casey Holliday, of Missouri, said: 'Since Diplodocus was such a huge animal, its eating habits and behaviour have always been a question in the paleontology community.'

'With the 3D model of the skull, we were able to simulate three eating scenarios using a computer-based analysis to determine the stresses that the skull would experience in each situation.'

The team created the 3D model of the skull, which measured 2.5 feet and sat at the top of a 20 foot neck.

They then measured the stresses put upon it by three different eating behaviours - normal biting, branch stripping and bark stripping.

Prof Holliday said: 'Originally, some scientists in the early 1900s thought that Diplodocus would strip bark off of trees using its jaws to close down on the bark.'

'However, we found that this process places a lot of stress and strain on the dinosaur's teeth and skull, which could result in bone damage or breaking of teeth.'

'The model and the scans showed that branch stripping, which is when the dinosaur would place its mouth on a branch and pull all the leaves off the branch, placed little to or no stress on the teeth and skull.'

He added: 'Sauropods tell us about the evolution of gigantism, or giant body size, because they enable us to understand how much range or space giant animals really need to get around, and how much food they need to survive.'

'The findings on sauropods also help us understand today's giant herbivores, such as elephants and giraffes, and how they interact with their environments.'

Dr Mark Young, of the University of Bristol, said: 'Sauropod dinosaurs, like Diplodocus, were so weird and different from living animals that there is no animal we can compare them with.'

'This makes understanding their feeding ecology very difficult. That's why biomechanically modeling is so important to our understanding of long-extinct animals.'



Mizzou K-12 Online adds courses for coming semester

By Janese Silvey

The University of Missouri's virtual high school is off to a somewhat slow start, but organizers hope new course offerings will attract more students in the coming semester.

Mizzou K-12 Online has added Algebra I, all levels of English and personal finance to a slate of course offerings that already included U.S. government, health and a couple of electives. The deadline for fall registration is Aug. 17.

MU's College of Education launched Mizzou K-12 Online in January. Fewer than 20 students signed up, said Director Monica Beglau.

"The biggest hurdle we face is helping schools and school districts and parents know that it's available and here now," she said.

Right now, the courses are for ninth through 12th-grade students, but the plan is to add middle school classes in 2014 and elementary-level classes the next year.

MU created the virtual program because college leaders saw a need to increase the accessibility and quality of K-12 online education, said Daniel Clay, dean of the College of Education. The original goal was to give students a way to recover course credits or take advanced courses not offered in their home districts, but organizers have found that students also see the program as a good way to resolve scheduling conflicts, Beglau said.

"If a student needs a government course but also is in band or maybe speech and debate, it might be difficult for them to schedule that on top of those other courses," she said. "This gives them an opportunity to take the course and still participate in those school activities."

Mizzou K-12 Online is a tuition-based program: Each class costs \$350 a semester, although school districts that are members of the Missouri School Boards' Association can offer their students discounts.

The College of Education also is working with donors and alumni in hopes of setting up scholarship opportunities in the future, Beglau said.

Courses are taught by Missouri teachers who help develop the curricula. That's different from the Missouri Virtual Instruction Program, a 5-year-old tuition-based online education that contracts with a private company to offer courses, Beglau said.

It's also different from MU High School, which has been available for decades to students across the globe.

Unlike Mizzou K-12 Online, which is set up in a traditional semester-based format, MU High School is a self-paced program, allowing students to complete coursework at their convenience.

"They are really different options for different learning needs," Beglau said.

MU students majoring in education will in the future have more opportunities to observe and co-teach Mizzou K-12 Online classes.

That experience could be critical, Clay said in a statement. Right now, fewer than 2 percent of teacher education programs offer an online teaching component in field experiences.

Through the K-12 program, MU education majors "will be prepared to teach online in all of its forms, including blended, hybrid and fully online," he said. "It's a high priority for us."

Reach Janese Silvey at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jsilvey@columbiatribune.com.



Cantwell advances to finals in shot put

By Joe Walljasper

BY THE TRIBUNE'S STAFF

Columbia's Christian Cantwell advanced to the finals of the Olympic shot put competition today in London with a top qualifying throw of 66 feet, 11½ inches. That mark was ninth-best among the 12 who advanced, but advancing is all that matters, because the throwers start fresh in the finals.

The finals are scheduled to begin at 2:30 p.m. CDT today.

Cantwell told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch that he took a conservative approach to qualifying.

"I feel fine. I'm in peak shape," he told the Post-Dispatch. "I threw the" automatic qualifying "distance in the warmup track in the wind, and I'm not fouling or anything. I always throw better in the evening, anyway."

Cantwell, the silver medalist in 2008, entered the Olympics with the top throw in the world this year at 73-2½, a mark he set three weeks ago.

American Reese Hoffa had today's longest qualifying throw at 70-1. The third American in London, Ryan Whiting, qualified fourth with a throw of 68-2¼.

The finals can be watched live online at www.nbcolympics.com and will be shown on tape delay on NBC's primetime show, which begins at 7 p.m.

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

'Extreme' drought conditions grip most of Missouri

9 hours ago • BY GEORGINA GUSTIN •

MU MENTION P. 2

The numbers are telling Missouri farmers what they already know: The drought of 2012 is getting worse.

On Thursday morning, the U.S. Drought Monitor reported that nearly 93 percent of the state is in "extreme" drought, up from about 69 percent last week.

"That's a pretty big jump," said Mark Svoboda, a climatologist with the National Drought Mitigation Center, which publishes the monitor weekly. "The impacts are dire. People are really hurting out there on the ground."

More than 8 percent of the state, in the Bootheel, is in "exceptional" drought, according to the monitor – a condition that climatologists predict will happen only once in 50 years. Drought conditions in Illinois stayed about the same compared to last week, with a one-percentage point jump to 8.4 percent in "exceptional" drought, and roughly 71 percent of the state in "extreme" drought.

The pain is being felt across all segments of agriculture. Corn growers are facing yields well below average. Soybean growers are waiting to see if the crop produces pods. Cattle ranchers, unable to find forage or pastureland, are selling herds. Dairy production is down. Small-scale farmers are giving up on vegetables and fruits, calling them a loss.

"As I travel around, I can see desperation in faces – faces that have been in this business a long time," said Charles Bassett, a cattle rancher from Dixon, Mo., 140 miles southwest of St. Louis. "They're asking: How much longer do I try to hold on?"

Most of the crop acreage in both Missouri and Illinois is insured, meaning growers will get some compensation for their damaged crops. Cattle ranchers, on the other hand, receive no compensation, because their protections under the current Farm Bill have expired. Many are selling part or all of their herds because pasture is burnt, and hay supplies – already scarce after drought last year – are shriveling.

"We're desperately short on feed stuff," Bassett said. "I'm feeding my next winter's hay already."

Missouri's cattle industry has burgeoned in the southwestern part of the state largely because of fescue, a determined forage grass that can survive neglect and heat. The downside is fescue contains a toxin that makes the cattle especially sensitive to heat.

“If they're on a pasture that has the toxins, those cows have further complications trying to get rid of body heat,” said Eldon Cole, a livestock specialist with the University of Missouri Extension. “It's just another dilemma that farmers face.”

Cole and his colleagues are urging ranchers to watch their herds carefully, as the heat has made some cows go into labor prematurely, well before the fall calving season. Some of those calves are dying under the hot sun.

“They should've stayed in the oven two or three more weeks to get well developed,” Cole said, “so they could stand the rigors of the weather.”

Corn growers say their corn was “made” weeks ago, meaning it's too late to do anything about their crop's condition. In Missouri, 54 percent of the state's corn crop is considered in very poor condition. In Illinois, that percentage stands at 38. The corn that is eventually harvested may be so irregular that harvesting and processing machinery could struggle.

“We have an extremely high number of small or mis-formed ears,” said Darrel Good, an agricultural economist with the University of Illinois. “Harvest is going to be very interesting.”

Soybean yields, meanwhile, could be okay if rain comes in the next week, a critical time in pod setting. “The jury is out on soybeans,” Good said. “But we're still expecting a very low average soybean yield.”

In the Bootheel, which is under “exceptional” drought conditions, much of the farmland is irrigated, so crops are actually doing well. But farmers there say the cost of getting water to their fields will take a toll.

“The yield on stuff under irrigation, that'd be close to our averages, but everything that's not under irrigation, that's burnt up,” said Allen Rowland, a corn and soybean grower from Dexter, Mo., 160 miles south of St. Louis. “We've been pumping water down here for a month, a month earlier than normal, so that's going to be a significant cost.”

While agricultural producers are worried about their crops and animals, water districts and cities are turning their attention to what's underground. Ponds and streams that provide water for livestock are drying up and farmers are turning to irrigation, meaning water supplies are getting tapped. Many communities are asking residents to conserve water.

“Water supply is a concern already,” said Svoboda, of the National Drought Mitigation Center. “We're already hearing reports of shortages.”

Unfortunately, the outlook for the next few months doesn't look promising, with little rain in the forecast, through October, and heat expected to continue.

“The August forecast looks like a continuation of the dry patterns, not just for Missouri, but all over,” Svoboda said. “If anything you could see more intense heat developing in the region.”

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has declared all of Missouri a disaster area, and Gov. Jay Nixon declared a state of emergency late last month. In Illinois 98 of the state's 102 counties have been declared disaster areas as of this week.



Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration