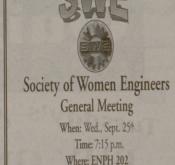
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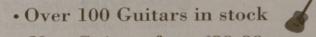
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Tropical Storm Isidore moves north in the Gulf of Mexico

(AP)- Tropical Storm Isidore continued Wednesday to move north in the Gulf of Mexico, bringing heavy rain and high wind to parts of Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia and Florida.

Isidore moved north at 13 mph and was expected to make landfall along the Louisiana coast by early Thursday.

The storm's outer bands drenched southeastern Louisiana, almost all of Mississippi, Alabama, northern Georgia and northwestern Florida. More than two inches of rain fell by Wednesday afternoon in Gulfport and Meridian, Miss. New Orleans and Slidell in Louisiana, and Pascagoula, Miss., received more than an inch Wednesday

The storm closed roads in Gulf Shores, Ala., and rain spread north to Georgia, Tennessee and into the western Carolinas and southwestern Virginia. Showers and storms were reported along the Carolina through north Florida coastlines.

Clouds from Isidore spread into the Ohio Valley and mid-Atlantic region. High pressure brought partly cloudy skies and dry conditions to much of New England.

In the West, clouds spread over the Dakotas, Minnesota and Iowa into the northwestern Great Lakes. Rain and storms moved east into South Dakota and Nebraska and



Gary Moore Jr. delivers bottled water to a Wal-Mart sore in Gulfport, Mississippi, Wedne September 25,2002, as people stock up in preparation for Tropical Storm Isidore

across Minnesota and Iowa into Wisconsin.

Clouds trailed into the northeastern and central Rockies. Scattered showers spread over Wyoming, Utah and Colorado. The remainder was 91 degrees in Deer Valley, Ariz.

of the western and central United States dry under partly cloudy to clear skies.

The afternoon high in the lower 48

Mold causes Farmers Insurance Co. to pull out of Texas market

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) - Farmers Insurance Co., the state's second largest homeowner insurer and the target of a state lawsuit, is leaving the Texas homeowners' market and will stop renewing policies in November, a spokesman said Wednesday.

The company contends it is losing hundreds of millions of dollars in Texas in part because of an upsurge in claims for mold and water damage. The decision to pull out of the Texas market will affect about 700,000 customers, the company said.

The state sued Farmers in August, accusing it of charging customers too much and engaging in deceptive trade practices. A week later, the insurance department issued a cease-and-desist order against Farmers, telling the company to stop what it called unfair pricing practices. The state also said it would seek about \$150 million in restitution from Farmers customers.

State officials offered to settle the ceaseand-desist order this week if Farmers agreed to change the way it prices policies and pay restitution, and the insurance department said it would waive proposed penalties that could have totaled billions of dollars.

But Farmers, which has denied any wrongdoing, said the conditions ordered by the state Department of Insurance would not Deputy Commissioner Karina Casari. of insurance problems.

needs to survive

"We have made every attempt to continue offering homeowners insurance to the people of Texas and we take this action with deep regret," said John Hageman, Texas State Executive Director for Farmers. "We find the grounds for the Department of Insurance's recent legal actions to be without merit.'

We find the grounds for the Department of Insurance's recent legal actions to be without merit.

- John Hageman Texas State Executive Director for Farmers

The Department of Insurance said it hoped Farmers would rethink its decision but said it would not allow Farmers to do business illegally in Texas.

"We will not let Farmers use its sizable

allow the company to generate the money it Farmers issues about 20 percent of the long owners insurance policies in Texas.

"It became clear during the past few that Farmers had no intention of comply with the law or treating their customer agents fairly and honestly," she said.

Homeowners insurance rates increased for some Texas consumers by much as 200 percent. Insurance companies say the higher

miums stem from the rising cost of wal related and mold-related claims, among of Farmers said Texas accounted for 43 per

cent of its total underwriting losses in the half of this year, even though only about percent of its property and casualty premi came from the state.

Insurance has become the key issue gubernatorial race that pits Republican Rick Perry against Democrat Tony Sanch

Perry said Wednesday he wants Farm do business in Texas but added, "The sumers have been getting ripped off b company and I'm not going to put up wi

Sanchez, meanwhile, charged Farmers' withdrawal could have been a ed if Perry had not mismanaged the overs of insurance companies and had acted soo

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