

Frozen pipes cause damage at 4 Stateline casinos

By Kathryn Reed

After three days of record-breaking low temperatures, many pipes in the Lake Tahoe Basin had enough and started doing some breaking of their own.

The four major casinos in the Stateline casino corridor have all had burst pipes. The damage started Jan. 13 at Horizon when a pipe near the loading dock froze and broke.

Harrah's, Harveys and MontBleu each had frozen pipe issues Monday. This has kept maintenance departments as well as Tahoe Douglas firefighters busy.

At Harrah's Lake Tahoe at about 8am Jan. 14 a stand pipe that is a fire department connection broke on the 18th floor and flooded the tower with several thousands of gallons of water.

"It incapacitated the elevators for some time," Tahoe Douglas Fire Marshal Eric Guevin told *Lake Tahoe News*.



Stateline casinos are mopping up after pipes burst from extreme cold. Photo/LTN file

Water went into the restaurants on the upper floors and down the elevator shafts. Most people chose to stay in their rooms.

Three hours later a sprinkler head froze and discharged in the

high limit gaming area. Some of the high rollers had to be evacuated.

“The engineering department was quick to respond in all the issues and make it safe for everyone and minimize the water damage and get the fire system back online for the safety of patrons,” Guevin said.

The role of the fire department is to make sure the fire lines are working as soon as possible, help maintain the safety of everyone during the crisis, assist with evacuations and set up contingency plans in case there is a fire when the sprinkler system is inoperable.

The next pipe to go was at 11:30am at Harveys. A fire head discharged over an employee at a jewelry store. The gaming floor then began to flood.

At 3pm another head froze at Harveys; this time near the elevator lobby of the casino floor.

Harrah's-Harveys spokesman John Packer was unavailable for comment.

“The cold definitely got inside the building and affected those pipes. Those systems have held up well over years, but this definitely challenged them,” Guevin said.

The record cold in South Lake Tahoe on Jan. 14 was minus 11 degrees. The previous record of minus 7 was set in 1997. (The National Weather Service in Reno predicts a warming trend – with the low on Jan. 15 forecast to be 5 degrees above zero, which would be 12 degrees off the record.)

At MontBleu on Monday afternoon a zone near the casino area by the front doors had frozen pipes.

“They were designed not to freeze,” Guevin said.

He expects crews will be working into Tuesday morning to get

those systems working. In the meantime, a “fire watch is in place,” Guevin said.

Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course had issues on Monday, too. At 8am a frozen sprinkler head broke in the maintenance shop.

“The main significance of all of this is that it’s very cold and it affects the fire lines that are designed to save lives and property. This time they did discharge, but they are still important systems to have to save lives. That is undisputed,” Guevin said.