

Drivers spinning out; more snow coming



Several vehicles spun out in the North Upper Truckee area of Meyers on Dec. 20. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

California Highway Patrol in Meyers is reporting numerous fender benders today because of the icy roads.

Dispatch said people have been spinning out, and with the snow drivers are trying to figure out how to maneuver with chains.

Several wrecks were seen in the North Upper Truckee area on Dec. 20. This is often a route people take to avoid chain controls over Echo Summit.

South Lake Tahoe police and Douglas County sheriff's offices said it has been a quiet Sunday in their jurisdictions.

The roads are bound to get worse as the temperature drops and the storm arrives. The National Weather Service in Reno has issued a winter storm warning for the Lake Tahoe Basin for the

24-hour period starting Dec. 21 at 10am. Up to 3 feet could fall at elevations of 7,000 feet and above, with 4-12 inches at lake level.

“Snowfall rates will exceed plowing capabilities at times,” the NWS said in a statement.

For current road conditions, click on the state icons on *Lake Tahoe News*’ home page.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Report: Gray water risks need to be studied

By Matt Stevens, Los Angeles Times

As water utilities and their customers increasingly look to gray water and runoff from storms to supplement their supply amid drought, more guidelines and research are needed to ensure that the water is safe, researchers said in a report released Wednesday.

These sources “have substantial potential to contribute to local water supply needs,” according to the 326-page study, but “additional examination of risk is necessary” as use of stormwater and gray water becomes more widespread.

Gray water is untreated wastewater from washing machines, showers or bathroom sinks.

“This is water you have now that you can take advantage of,” said Richard Luthy, a Stanford professor and one of the report’s authors. But, he added, “there’s the opportunity

there for exposure to pathogens. And that's something that needs to be studied more carefully."

Read the whole story

Calif. cops on the prowl for drunken drivers

As part of the national Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over enforcement campaign period, police, sheriff and the CHP will be deploying DUI checkpoints and DUI saturation patrols now through Jan. 3.

El Dorado County DUI Coalition reminds everyone to follow these tips:

- Plan a safe way to get home before you attend the party. Alcohol impairs judgment, as well as reaction time. If you're impaired you're more likely to choose to drive drunk.
- Designate a sober driver; take public transportation, a car service, or a call a sober friend or family member to get home.
- Walking while impaired can be just as dangerous as drunken driving. Designate a sober friend to walk you home.
- Use your community's sober ride program.
- If you see someone you think is about to drive while impaired, take their keys and help them get home safely.

Congress refuses to pay the bill to fight fires

By Darryl Fears, Washington Post

As Congress headed home for the Christmas break after passing a budget deal, Agriculture Department Secretary Tom Vilsack presented lawmakers with an angry ultimatum: Put up more cash if you want the U.S. Forest Service to keep putting out huge wildfires.

Vilsack is fuming because Congress set aside \$1.6 billion to pay for wildfire suppression in 2016 despite the service, which he controls, spending \$100 million more than that to fight blazes this year. Year after year, Congress has underfunded the firefighting effort, forcing the Forest Service to borrow hundreds of millions of dollars from other departments in the agency to pay for equipment and firefighters.

Congress allocated \$1 billion for fire suppression in 2015 – a year fast approaching another record for most acres burned.

[Read the whole story](#)

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



. The children's memorial is South Lake Tahoe is decorated for the holidays.

- Truckee is offering free curbside pickup of Christmas trees from Jan. 11-15. Trees must be cut into 3-foot segments and be clean of all decorations including tinsel, flocking, lights, stands, and nails.
- Here is the Sierra roadwork schedule from Caltrans for the week.
- Tahoe City and North Tahoe public utility districts are considering forming one district.
- Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care now has three cubs. The latest bear arrived Dec. 18 after his mom was hit by a car near Fresno and had to be euthanized.

Casinos explore use of robotic dealers

By Daniela Wei, BloombergBusiness

She has an hourglass figure, an unflappable manner and a friendly face. Meet "Min," the robot whose creators say could revolutionize card-dealing in the world's casinos.

The svelte brunette is a prototype of a human-like electronic croupier, which Paradise Entertainment Ltd., a

Hong Kong-based gaming machine manufacturer and supplier, says could cut labor costs and open up new markets for casino operators. While her function is currently limited to dealing cards, planned enhancements could have her recognizing customers' faces and speaking to them in multiple languages, Chairman Jay Chun said.

After making her debut at a gaming show in Macau last month, Min and her clones will initially be introduced in the U.S., where labor costs in casinos are proportionally higher than in Asia and where humans, but not machines, are prohibited in some states from working as croupiers. Paradise is talking to potential overseas buyers, Chun said, declining to say how much the robots will cost.

Read the whole story

Hard Rock-contractor unable to resolve dispute

Mediation between Lake Tahoe Hard Rock owners and the construction firm that remodeled the Stateline hotel-casino have failed. The lawsuit is moving forward toward a trial.

Earlier this fall it looked like a resolution had been found, but brothers Jon and David Park wanted their lending institution to sign-off on the deal before they inked their names to the documents. That didn't happen.

The brothers put in \$60 million to renovate what was the

dilapidated Horizon.

SMC Contracting was hired to do the bulk of the work. In May the company sued the Parks because they had not received nearly \$10 million in payment.

Cost overruns associated with needing to make the Jan. 28 opening date are being blamed for the construction costs going up. SMC says the Parks approved those bills. The brothers say otherwise and in part blame Warner Hospitality, the management firm at the time, for approving cost overruns. The Parks have since fired Warner.

At a court hearing on Dec. 18 the judge denied a partial summary judgment proposed by SMC.

SMC's attorney has the right to amend its complaint after Neva One, the parent company of the Hard Rock, turns over what is expected to be 5,000 more pages of documents.

Also on Friday, the \$820,000 mechanics lien filed by plumbing firm Savage & Sons against Neva One and SMC was consolidated into the larger lawsuit.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Burning Man's revenues, salaries revealed

By Jenny Kane, Reno Gazette-Journal

For the first time ever, Burners can see what kind of money Burning Man rakes in each year.

Although Burning Man – a San Francisco nonprofit that hosts a more than 70,000-person annual arts gathering in the Black Rock Desert – pulled in about \$32.4 million in 2014, it spent more than \$30 million the same year, according to its 2014 tax documents.

The \$2.4 million difference – which would be considered profit were Burning Man a for-profit company – must be reinvested into the organization's programs supporting the arts-focused mission of the organization, per federal policy.

Read the whole story

4 U.S. men in top 20 at Val Gardena

By USSA

VAL GARDENA, Italy – Bryce Bennett electrified the crowd with an attack from the back to lead the U.S. men and score a career-best sixth-place finish at Saturday's Audi FIS Alpine Ski World Cup downhill.

Long after Norway's Aksel Lund Svindal won yet another downhill this season, Bennett, wearing bib 57, stepped into the starting gate and looked Svindal-esque as he capitalized on his large six-foot-seven-inch frame to keep his skis on the snow and carry speed through key sections where other skiers were thrown off line and forced to make recoveries.

Crossing the finish line 1.04 seconds back in sixth place, the once hush crowd erupted in cheers as Bennett lifted his goggles in sheer disbelief before letting a well-deserved fist

pump fly.

“I’m still surprised. I crossed the finish and saw sixth and I was like, what? No chance! The timer is broken!” an exhilarated Bennett said in the finish. “I just got in the zone somehow. I’ve been working on it, and it clicked a little bit. I just laser beamed the whole course, just focused every section and it was fast.”

Bryce Bennett skis from bib 57 to sixth place.

The victory for Svindal was his fifth in seven World Cup starts this season. Guillermo Fayed of France was second, followed by Norway’s Kjetil Jansrud in third.

For Bennett, finding the maturity to shake off a bad performance in yesterday’s super G was the key to how he was able to channel his inner self and come away with a stunning result.

In addition to Bennett’s stellar performance, Steven Nyman (Sundance, Utah), who was gunning for his fourth career win in Val Gardena, finished ninth, Travis Ganong (Squaw Valley) was 13, and Andrew Weibrecht (Lake Placid, N.Y.) was 17, giving the Americans an impressive four skiers in the top 20. Marco Sullivan (Squaw Valley) was 35.

Then and now: Laurel Avenue disappears

South Lake Tahoe is missing a street – Laurel Avenue.



The Thunderbird Lodge was prominent on Laurel Avenue in the 1960s.
Photo/South Lake Tahoe

The Thunderbird Motel stood at 4123 Laurel Avenue near the state line.



Laurel Avenue ran diagonally between Friday Avenue, where the yellow X is, and Stateline Avenue, at about mid-Harveys. Photo/Google



The remains of the Thunderbird at 4123 Laurel Ave. on April 19, 2007.
Photo/Bill Kingman

In 2007, the Chateau project called for the removed of all buildings on Laurel Avenue and the avenue itself. At that time the development was to be two hotels, a convention center, retail and open space. At more than \$400 million it was to be the most expensive development project in the history of South Lake Tahoe. That was pre-bankruptcy.



The X marks where Laurel Avenue was. Photo/Google/April 2015



Renamed Zalanta, one of the hotels is under construction. Photo/Bill Kingman



The last Laurel Avenue street sign. Photo/Bill Kingman

The final vestige of Laurel Avenue – its street sign – was removed in November 2015.

– Bill Kingman