Suggestions to prevent water issues in winter

North Tahoe Public Utility District is reminding residents and homeowners to take precautions to make sure homes and water lines are prepared.

- For pipes that are known to freeze, insulate and heat tape them to be sure they don’t freeze. Leave them dripping as a last resort.
- Never completely shut the heat off when you are not at home.
- Leave cabinet doors open in places there are pipes to allow air to circulate.

All homeowners should have a water shut off valve installed in the home in order to completely shut off the water when not at home for any length of time. The shut off should also allow the water system to completely drain leaving no water in the pipes.

Make sure your water district has your most current contact phone number or email so you can reached in the event of a water emergency.

If you see water running out of a neighbor’s garage, down a driveway or anywhere else you don’t typically see running water, call your local water district.

Letter: Barton helps South

Shore homeless

To the community,

On behalf of the Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless, I would like to thank Barton Health employees and physicians for their incredible generosity.

More than 647 employees in 35 departments participated in a fundraising drive for the South Lake Tahoe Warm Room. Employees and physicians raised $2,040 in funds and donated more than 3,000 items – approximately $8,000 in value – totaling more than $10,000 in donations.

Barton Health's contributions will help homeless individuals stay warm, prevent cold-related illnesses, and address some of the hurdles of overcoming homelessness. Examples of items donated include beanies, socks and gloves, instant soups and oatmeal, toiletries, and dog and cat food.

The Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless is working together to end homelessness on the South Shore with community partners, including Barton Health. We aim to provide short term assistance to our friends and neighbors who find themselves without housing this winter, and to provide resource referrals to help break the cycle of homelessness.

The Coalition currently is seeking volunteers and donations for this winter. Call 775.573.0822 or email tahoewarmroom@gmail.com for more information. Volunteer training sessions are scheduled for Dec. 1 from 6-8:30pm and Dec. 8 from 10am-12:30pm.

Together, we can all make a difference in helping members of our community who need our support.

Marissa Muscat, executive director Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless

Electric cars and the coal that runs them

By Michael Birnbaum, Washington Post

ROTTERDAM — In this traffic-packed Dutch city, electric cars jostle for space at charging stations. The oldest exhaust-spewing vehicles will soon be banned from the city center. Thanks to generous tax incentives, the share of electric vehicles has grown faster in the Netherlands than in nearly any other country in the world.

But behind the green growth is a filthy secret: In a nation famous for its windmills, electricity is coming from a far dirtier source. Three new coal-fired power plants, including two here on the Rotterdam harbor, are supplying much of the power to fuel the Netherlands' electric-car boom.

As the world tries to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions and combat climate change, policymakers have pinned hopes on electric cars, whose range and convenience are quickly improving. Alongside the boom has come a surging demand for power to charge the vehicles, which can consume as much electricity in a single charge as the average refrigerator does in a month and a half.

The global shift to electric cars has a clear climate benefit in regions that get most of their power from clean sources, such as California or Norway. But in areas supplied by dirtier power, like China, India and even the Netherlands, which is on track to miss ambitious emissions targets set for 2020, the electric-car jump has slimmer payoffs. In some cases, it could even worsen the overall climate impact of driving, experts say.

Read the whole story

South Lake kids receive free coats

More than 500 students in grades K-12 throughout South Lake Tahoe received a new, warm winter coat through the efforts of the Kiwanis Community Organization Inc.

The project ensures every child here who needs one receives a coat at no charge.

This project is made possible with the support of donations from service organizations, individuals, and businesses, as well as grants from American Century Championship/LTVA, El Dorado Community Foundation and the Antique & Classic Boat Society NC/LT Chapter.

Smartphones overtake desktops for holiday shopping

By Mae Anderson, AP

If the beginning of the holiday season is any indication, it could be a merry mobile Christmas for shoppers.

For the first time, there’s expected to be more people visiting retailers’ websites through their smartphones than on

desktop computers or tablets during the first weekend of the holiday shopping season that begins on Thanksgiving Day.

Mobile traffic during the five-day start to what is typically the busiest shopping period of the year is expected to reach 56.9 percent of total traffic, up from 48.5 percent last year, according to IBM Watson.

And even though everyone who “window shops” on their phones isn’t going to buy, mobile sales are jumping too. Mobile sales are expected to account for 36.1 percent of online sales, up from 27 percent last year, according to IBM Watson Trend.

The bumps in traffic and sales come as retailers try to make the mobile shopping experience easier by improving their mobile apps and adding coupons and other deals. Shoppers also have gotten more comfortable browsing retailers’ web sites as smartphone screen sizes have gotten bigger, making it easier for them to see photos of the items they want to buy. Digital wallets and apps that let shoppers store payment information are helping too.

“It’s very convenient,” said Seth Reineke, 25, an insurance worker from Iowa City, Iowa, who plans to peruse Amazon’s weekend deals from his phone. “It allows me to keep track of time-sensitive sales without being tied to a computer or having to leave a holiday event or get-together.”

Overall spending this season is expected to be somewhat muted. The National Retail Federation, a trade group for storeowners, expects industry-wide sales to be up 3.7 percent in November and December, less than the 4.1 percent of last year’s holiday season.

But online spending figures are stronger. Forrester predicts online sales will rise 11 percent to $95 billion. And mobile sales are becoming a bigger piece of that pie. Forrester expects them to account for 35 percent of e-commerce this year and 49 percent in five years. That compares to 29 percent in

2014.

Adobe, which measures 80 percent of online sales from the top 100 U.S. retailers, predicts 40 to 45 percent of all retail traffic during November and December will come from mobile devices, up from 37 percent last year. Mobile sales are expected to total 20 to 25 percent of total online sales, up from 16 percent last year.

Wal-Mart, the world's largest retailer, expects that 75 percent of U.S. traffic to its website will come from mobile devices this holiday shopping season. That's up from 50 percent two years ago. Likewise, eBay says it expects mobile sales during the holidays will be "significantly" higher than the 41 percent mobile sales made up of total revenue in the third quarter.

Thanksgiving and the day after the holiday known as Black Friday are expected to be particularly mobile-friendly shopping dates because people can use their phones to take advantage of limited-time offers wherever they may be. Adobe predicts mobile will drive the majority of shopping traffic, 51 percent, for the first time on Thanksgiving Day.

"There's a lot of opportunity to do 'shopping under the table' on Thanksgiving Day," said Tamara Gaffney, director of Adobe Digital Index. "In between cooking, watching football and in general hanging around family and friends, there's down time to glance at the iPad and smartphone and do some shopping."

Take Danyell Taylor, 34, a writer in Washington, D.C., who likes the "easy access" of smartphone shopping. Taylor plans to start looking for holiday deals on Wednesday and continuing through the weekend, specifically for Converse shoes and Kate Spade home accessories.

"I'm going to sit on my couch with my phone and my laptop and buy from there," she says. "I don't plan on going into the store at all."

Mobile shopping still has its problems, including security concerns, sluggish apps and hard-to-navigate mobile web sites. And much of mobile traffic doesn’t translate into sales.

But for shoppers, the convenience factor is hard to beat, says Forrester Research analyst Sucharita Mulpuru.

“While retailers may lament their low conversion rates and slow download speeds on mobile devices, shoppers still keep shopping on those devices,” Mulpuru says, adding that shoppers “appear to have greater tolerance for imperfection, much like in the early days of desktop.”

Jill Markiewicz, 38, a personal shopper in New York, says she shops frequently on her iPhone 6s on Saks Fifth Ave and J.Crew’s mobile websites.

“I’m typically on foot running around a lot … don’t get a whole lot of desk time,” Markiewicz says. “You can go from email to checkout cart in a matter of minutes.”

Snow impacts DCSD, more on the way

Douglas County students at the lake will be picked up at the main bus stops today.

Lake Tahoe Community College is open as normal.

Lake Tahoe Unified and Tahoe Truckee Unified school districts, and Incline Village schools were already closed Wednesday for the Thanksgiving break.

A winter weather advisory remains in effect for the Lake Tahoe

Basin until 4pm Nov. 25 Douglas County students at the lake will be picked up at the main bus stops today.. Temperatures will remain below normal for the next few days.

For highway conditions, click on the state icons on the home page of *Lake Tahoe News.*

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Coffee could literally be a lifesaver

By Carina Storrs, CNN

Throughout the ages, coffee has been called a virtue and a vice for our health. The latest study comes down in favor of virtue: It says that drinking coffee, whether regular or decaf, could reduce the risk of death.

Researchers started with data from surveys of adults in the United States that asked how much coffee they consumed, as well as other foods and drinks, and then they looked at their rates of death and disease over the following two decades.

The study was large, including more than 200,000 women and 50,000 men.

Read the whole story

Medical pot regs may cause Calif. growers pain

By Guy Kovner, Santa Rosa Press Democrat

As California prepares to bring in the $1 billion medical marijuana industry from the legal shadows, growers and marketers on the pot-rich North Coast are waiting to see how much the massive regulatory structure will cost them and whether to stick instead with the prosperous but risky outlaw status they have lived with for nearly two decades.

The regulatory scheme, which will cost up to $50 million, must be funded entirely by license fees paid by the industry, while new taxes on the cannabis trade – which some advocates say is one of Sonoma County's major industries – offer the prospect of millions of dollars to help pay for paving roads, hiring police and other public services.

Investors have taken note of the imminent regulation of California's cannabis industry, which accounts for nearly half of the nation's booming $2.7 billion market in legal cannabis, according to one report.

Read the whole story

Opinion: The lessons of gluttony

By Sara Jenkins

As I write this, I'm still full.

I just returned from an extravagant Sunday lunch at my neighbors' house here in this small Tuscan town, where my parents first bought a tumbledown farmhouse in 1971. We feasted to celebrate my successful olive harvest. First we fired up their 300-year-old wood oven and cooked flatbreads. Then, as the oven cooled, we piled in traditional dishes like lasagna, roasted farm chickens, and potatoes coated with olive oil and aromatic herbs from the garden. We sat at a table laid for 15 people and covered with bottles of wine, baskets of bread, and trays of crostini and house-cured salumi. We struggled mightily not to overeat, knowing all the delicious courses that were to follow.

My neighbors and I had not enjoyed a meal this gluttonous together for many years. Harvest traditions have died as this remote hamlet moves into the 21st century. These are the traditions I discovered when I first met my neighbors, the Antolinis, in the early 1970s.

I was 8. My family had arrived for the summer just as the wheat harvest was getting underway, and we were quickly invited over to participate in the *trebbiatura*, or threshing of the wheat—no doubt because it was just assumed that every able-bodied adult in the community would join in the day's labor during the harvest.

Back then, my neighbors seemed to straddle the 19th and the 20th centuries. The old sharecropping system called *mezzadria*, which dated to the Middle Ages, was finally dying off. My neighbors owned their property; the patriarch Agostino bought it with his World War I mustering-out pay. But many people in the village were still tenant farmers who did all the work on the farm and paid half their agricultural production to the landowner.

When my family arrived, we didn't understand what profound changes, good and bad, the demise of *mezzadria* would have on the lifestyles of our neighbors. They went from living without

electricity or indoor plumbing—as basically slaves to the land, whether they owned the property or not—to owning cars, watching TV, and growing cash crops like tobacco to pay for it all.

The Antolinis had three children—the youngest of whom, Arnaldo, was 17 when we first met them. He was the first child to complete high school and remembered a childhood of abject poverty and struggle. Perhaps because they lived so frugally most of the time, feast days were celebrated without restraint.

We ate more food on a harvest day in a single meal then we ever consumed otherwise. There was wine and music and dance, shared freely and with joy, as though the experience cancelled out all the sober times.

Gluttony is about excess, taking more than what one needs or can comfortably consume. Yet excess can be intoxicatingly pleasurable. As a sensualist who believes in pleasure for its own sake, I don't consider it wrong to enjoy gorging on a fine Sunday afternoon after the harvest has been reaped and stored.

Gluttony has its place in a balanced life. It's really just enjoying to excess—and why is that wrong? Is it wrong to enjoy the sweet perfume of a summer's day on a fresh-cut lawn or field? Must we deny ourselves an apex of joy, since we have no ability to control the nadir of misery? Isn't the occasional indulgence in anything—including food—to be respected and enjoyed as part of living?

To me, the idea of self-induced sober deprivation is a sour vestige of puritanical thinking, a remnant of a time when people were expected to suffer the miseries of human existence by consoling themselves with the promise of a hereafter filled with glorious pleasure. We shouldn't deny ourselves the pleasures of the table in this life. We also probably shouldn't have gluttonous meals like the one I just enjoyed

every day. But we can relish them on occasion and enjoy a feast like that for what it is—a sensual pleasure followed through to the extreme.

Sara Jenkins is a chef and the owner of two Italian restaurants in New York City, Porsena and Porchetta. She grew up all over the Mediterranean, mostly in Italy, and still returns to the family home in Tuscany every October to pick and press her family's 150 olive trees.

This essay is part of Why We Feast, a project of Zócalo Public Square.

Thanksgiving a busy day for firefighters

When most people think about Thanksgiving, they envision turkey, pumpkin pie and time spent with their loved ones. Firefighters are thinking about kitchen fires.

"It is critical to not get distracted and to always stand next to what you are cooking. Thanksgiving Day is often one of our busier days responding to home cooking fires," CalFire Director Ken Pimlott said in a statement.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, three times as many home cooking fires
occur on Thanksgiving as on a typical day. NFPA's latest cooking estimates show that there were 1,550 cooking fires on Thanksgiving 2013, reflecting a 230 percent increase over the daily average.

Unattended cooking is the leading cause of home cooking fires

CalFire offers these tips:

- Remain in the kitchen while you’re cooking, and keep a close eye on what you fry. Always stay in the kitchen while frying, grilling or broiling food. If you have to leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove. Regularly check on food that’s simmering, baking or roasting, and use a timer to remind you that you’re cooking.
- Turn pot handles toward the back of the stove. Someone walking by is less likely to bump them or pull them over.
- When using a turkey fryer, be sure to follow instructions closely. Don’t exceed the recommended oil level and only use the device outdoors.
- Make sure a fire extinguisher is handy at all times. Never use water to put out a grease fire.
- Ensure you have working smoke alarms installed in your home.