IRS impersonators targeting Washoe County

The Washoe County Sheriff's Office has received dozens of calls from the public reporting telephone scams involving aggressive and threatening criminals impersonating IRS agents.

According to the IRS, there are five things scammers often do, but the IRS will never do:

The IRS will never:

- Call to demand immediate payment, nor will the agency call about taxes owed without first having mailed you a bill
  Demand that you pay taxes without giving you the opportunity to question or appeal the amount they say you owe.
- Require you to use a specific payment method for your taxes, such as a prepaid debit card.
- Ask for credit or debit card numbers over the phone.
- Threaten to bring in local police or other law enforcement groups to have you arrested for not paying.

According to the IRS, fraudulent callers often alter caller ID numbers to make it look like the IRS is calling and will identify themselves by using fake names and bogus IRS badge numbers. The caller may sound convincing and know the victim's name, address, or other identifying information that is often easily obtainable through resources available to the public.

Anyone who receives a scam telephone call is encouraged by the IRS to report the incident to the U.S. Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration at 800.366.4484.

RadioShack moves Black Friday to Wednesday

By Hadley Malcolm, USA Today

RadioShack is on the comeback trail, and its first appeal to holiday shoppers comes Nov. 25, when the electronics retailer plans to run its Black Friday deals a day before any other major chain.

Stores will feature nearly 100 different deals, and stay open an hour later than normal on Wednesday. On Thanksgiving, stores will be open from 8am to 1pm only, giving shoppers a chance to finish their hunt for savings hours before most other retailers plan to open their doors.

Read the whole story

Travelers expected to hit the road for Turkey Day

By Scott Mayerowitz, AP

A stronger economy and lower gas prices mean Thanksgiving travelers can expect more congested highways this year.

During the long holiday weekend, 46.9 million Americans are expected to go 50 miles or more from home, the highest number since 2007, according to travel agency and car lobbying group

AAA. That would be a 0.6 percent increase over last year and the seventh straight year of growth.

While promising for the travel industry, the figure is still 7.3 percent short of the 50.6 million high point reached in 2007, just before the recession.

Like on every other holiday, the overwhelming majority of travelers – almost 90 percent – will be driving. And they will be paying much less at the pump.

AAA says the average retail price for gasoline is now $2.15 per gallon, 74 cents cheaper than the same time last year. With the average car getting 18.5 miles per gallon, that means a family driving 300 miles will save $12 in fuel this holiday.

Airlines for America, the lobbying group for several major airlines, forecasts 25.3 million passengers will fly on U.S. airlines, up 3 percent from last year. (AAA's forecast shows fewer numbers of fliers because it looks at a five-day period while the airline group looks at the 12 days surrounding Thanksgiving.)

Airfare is basically flat compared to last year, with a mere 0.3 percent or 69 cent average increase, according to the Airlines Reporting Corp., which processes ticket transactions for airlines and travel agencies.

Traveler counts are little fuzzier when it comes to other forms of transport.

Bus use will continue to grow, according to the Chaddick Institute for Metropolitan Development at DePaul University. The school expects 1.2 million to take buses, up 1 percent to 2 percent from last year. However, AAA says travel by cruises, trains and buses, will decrease 1.4 percent this Thanksgiving, to 1.4 million travelers.

Since flying can often cause the most disruptions and leave

travelers feeling helpless, here are some tips to cope with any delays. Flights are packed around the holidays and if there is any hiccup, the difference between getting home and not can come down to asking the right questions and acting fast.

CalPERS may lower investment expectations, costing taxpayers billions

By Melody Petersen, Los Angeles Times

Experts have warned for years that the state's largest public pension plan has overestimated how much its investments will earn, leaving taxpayers to pay billions of dollars more than expected.

Now the board of the California Public Employees' Retirement System is reconsidering. As soon as today, the fund's board could approve a plan that would slowly reduce to 6.5 percent the current 7.5 percent it says it expects to earn on its investments.

For taxpayers, that seemingly small change is significant.

Read the whole story

NV Energy seeks to lower rates

NV Energy customers can expect their rates to go down starting Jan. 1.

The company, which provides electricity to people on the Nevada side of the Lake Tahoe Bain, filed a request with the Public Utilities Commission of Nevada on Nov. 13 to reduce rates.

Residential customers using 758 kilowatt-hours a month will see a decrease of about 4.2 percent or $3.61. The overall decrease for Northern Nevada customers will be 4.97 percent.

NV Energy said what it costs to buy fuel and power from other places has gone down.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Old-style cooking demo in Genoa

There will be a Thanksgiving Dutch oven cooking demonstration at Mormon Station State Historic Park in Genoa on Nov. 21.

Park rangers will be cooking up a special Thanksgiving dish that onlookers will get to sample. Learn the basics of Dutch oven cooking and how pioneers used the same cast iron techniques to cook meals in 1850.

The free event is from 1-3pm on the lawn in front of the museum.

Groups try to build support for Nev.’s school choice program

By Ian Whitaker, Las Vegas Sun

As lawyers duke it out over the constitutionality of Nevada’s landmark education savings account program and state officials iron out much-needed regulations, a major question facing ESAs has been who will do the work of building the robust public support the program needs to be successful in the long term.

The answer is a group of dedicated school choice advocates, who have quietly been putting a lot of hours into building a movement around the voucher-style program.

In Las Vegas, a grass-roots effort is being spearheaded by Coco Llenas, a longtime resident with a history of working for nonprofit organizations like the Public Education Foundation.

She is the founder of the newly formed Nevada School Choice Partnership, whose goal is to raise awareness and build support for the program in low-income neighborhoods that need it most.

Read the whole story

TTD considering operating BlueGo in house

By Kathryn Reed

INCLINE VILLAGE – The Tahoe Transportation District board might take over BlueGo, the South Shore bus service, instead of relying on a third party.

When George Fink with TTD last week told the board going this route would give "the board more control", board member Nancy McDermid, replied, "Been there, done that." She represents Douglas County.

Adam Spear, attorney for the district, said the board is already liable today, but he would look into the nuances to see if there would be more exposure with direct operation of the system.

The last time this happened the system declared bankruptcy, board members were personally drawn into the ensuing litigation, as were the agencies they represented, and hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent on attorneys. The TTD board members were also the now defunct **South Tahoe Area Transit Authority** board, which is the entity that declared bankruptcy and was drawn into court by MV Transit, which operated the bus system.

TTD's five-year contract with Keolis ends June 30, 2016. This firm has been responsible for operating BlueGo, including handling all labor and maintenance issues. TTD staff believes it could get more for its money by having operations and maintenance done in house.

“So much of the fleet is down. It’s been a challenge in the last year,” TTD Executive Director Carl Hasty told the board. “Accident rates tend to be more than they have been in the past.”

Fink said contractors often have short-term views on maintenance, which can shorten the lifespan of vehicles.

“It comes down to, do we want to take on employees,” Fink said.

TTD is interviewing firms that handle human resource issues. That is the one area TTD is deficient in.

Will Garner, who represents Placer County on the TTD board and runs the TART bus service on the North Shore, cautioned how much time is spent on HR issues. And he added that with a bus service it is seven days a week, nearly around the clock.

Andrew Strain, Heavenly Mountain Resort’s rep on the board, is concerned about how things deteriorated in five years to the point to want to abandon the current type of operation and said it’s not good if staff is worried where money is going.

The staff report from the Nov. 13 meeting says, “Another problem is the difficulty in determining how funding is being spent or focused in the contract. The contractor’s compensation is normally a fixed fee. There is a limited ability to track contractor spending on maintenance, training, and employee performance. That makes it difficult to assess what value the contractor is actually providing for the money it is receiving.”

No actual numbers were provided in the report or by staff at the meeting in regards to where money might be spent differently if TTD took over operations. The current TTD transit budget is $5,465,200.

“As we prepare for action it would be good to see a solid

financial plan," Strain said. "We want to make sure we go in with our eyes wide open. We need to have information before we make a decision."

It was agreed staff will put together a workshop in December where third parties not involved in the outcome would give input. It will be on the South Shore so people who actually use the transit system would have an easier time to voice their opinion compared to last week's meeting that was in Incline Village.

Letter: Harrah's-Harveys workers help Bread & Broth

To the community,

The HEROs from Harrah's and Harveys lived up to their name and mission by hosting a Bread & Broth dinner on Oct. 26. HEROs, a Caesar Entertainment employee organization, is committed to having members volunteer at charitable causes and give back to their community. Through their generosity they are heroes to those who benefit from their support and concern.

Representing the casinos and their fellow HEROs members at their Adopt A Day dinner were Steve Campbell, Pat Frega, Debbie Neall, Nathan Scott and Darlene Winkelman. These five HEROs were a vibrant and helpful group. From packing the give-away bags to cleaning up after the dinner, the HERO volunteers were there for the benefit of the evening's dinner guests.

"It warms my heart to serve our community," said Winkelman. "I really enjoy being a part of the Bread & Broth experience."

The HEROs have been longtime supporters of the B&B program and generally sponsor two Adopt A Day of Nourishments dinners annually. Bread & Broth truly appreciates the HEROs commitment to our program and their help in continuing B&B's role of providing nutritious and well-balanced meals to those on the South Shore who struggle with filling just the basic needs in their lives.

For more B&B information, go **online** or find us on Facebook.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Small fire in LTCC's theater

The show will still go on despite a fire in Lake Tahoe Community College's theater.

A spotlight on the catwalk caught fire Tuesday night.

"The only thing damaged is the spotlight. Everybody is safe," LTCC President Kindred Murillo told *Lake Tahoe News.* "We are working to get everything fixed up again."

LTCC is in the middle of seven performances of **"Death of a Salesman"**. There was no performance scheduled for Nov. 17.

Murillo said the college has been going through a series of safety drills. Those procedures were tested and worked on Tuesday.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report