

WCSO helicopter grounded after laser strike

Washoe County Sheriff's Office helicopter pilot had to make an unexpected landing at Stead Airport in Reno after the pilot and tactical flight observer were struck several times by a laser in their eyes.

They were taken to a local hospital for treatment and have since been released.

On Sept. 1 at approximately 8:30pm the Raven helicopter was on routine patrol over downtown Reno when it was struck by a laser coming from the area of Rampion Drive in Sun Valley. While attempting to determine an exact location the laser struck the two on board.

According to Raven Chief Pilot Deputy Doug Russell, "Laser strikes on aircraft is an increasing problem in the Truckee Meadows area." CareFlight and commercial airlines have also reported laser strikes in recent months.

Aiming a laser at an aircraft creates a serious safety risk that violates local and federal law. It is a felony in the Nevada to aim a laser at any aircraft.

Secret Witness is offering a \$1,500 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the individual responsible for Tuesday's incident. Anyone who may have information useful to the investigation is asked to call the Washoe County Sheriff's Office Detective Division at 775.328.3320 or Secret Witness at 775.322.4900.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Skill-based slot machines inch closer to Nev. casinos

By Kimberly Pierceall, AP

Arcade-style slot machines that might require skill to win could be in Nevada casinos as early as next year, according to one game maker's estimate now that a single regulatory vote remains.

The Nevada Gaming Control Board on Wednesday recommended legal language that would allow slot machines requiring skill to win or a combination of talent and luck.

The changes still need approval by the Nevada Gaming Commission before taking effect. That five-member regulatory board is expected to discuss the new language at a Sept. 17 hearing, a couple weeks ahead of the annual Global Gaming Expo, where slot makers will show off their latest innovations in Las Vegas.

If the changes are approved, "the store is open for business, so to speak," said Gamblit Gaming CEO Eric Meyerhofer. His company has been developing skill-based games that can be played by multiple players in the style of "Angry Birds" and "Battleship," among others.

Meyerhofer estimated that once the game submission process is approved and technical standards are written, casinos could offer skill-based video gambling by early or mid-2016.

The changes would also simplify rules that have governed the themes of casino games for years and were primarily aimed at limiting their appeal to children. Under the proposal, nothing

will be allowed that is obscene or offensive based on race, religion, nationality, gender or sexual orientation, and game makers can't use themes based on products that are primarily marketed to people younger than 21 years old.

Casino revenue has fallen from a peak of nearly \$12.9 billion in 2007 to about \$11 billion in 2014, with slot proceeds alone plunging 20 percent, and the industry is betting gamblers, particularly younger ones, want to do more than press a button and passively watch reels spin. They want skill-based games like the popular titles on their smartphones or video game consoles, except with real money on the line, video game and slot machine makers say.

In order to deliver on arcade-style games, the Association of Gaming Equipment Manufacturers pushed lawmakers this year to encourage innovation and direct the Gaming Control Board to make the regulations that govern games of chance more nimble and to allow elements of skill.

It's not yet known what the games may look like except for what companies have shown off in development, including a digital pinball machine and first-person shooter games that award points for targets hit.

Of a few adopted suggestions the manufacturer's group made to the board, one allows the chairman flexibility to waive the technical standards for a game if shown a good reason to do so, "since we don't truly know how radical some of the new concepts may be," said Marcus Prater, the executive director of the Association of Gaming Equipment Manufacturers.

Barton hires CEO from within

A familiar name is about to be president and CEO of Barton Health – Clint Purvance.



Clint Purvance

For the past eight years he has been the chief medical officer for the South Shore health care collective. He is board certified in emergency medicine and has practiced at Barton Memorial Hospital since 1999.

Purvance will take over on Nov. 1 for the retiring John Williams. Williams was hired in November 2006. He will stay on until early 2016.

“Dr. Purvance has the skills, knowledge, and leadership to guide us through Barton Health’s next chapter of health and wellness in our community,” Barton board President Kirk Ledbetter said in a statement.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Squirrel at Kiva tests

positive for plague

A dead squirrel found at Kiva Beach on the South Shore has tested positive for plague.

The animal was discovered in the picnic area on Aug. 17, with confirmation of the test results coming this week.

Signs warning people to report sick or dead animals have been posted in this area. El Dorado County Environmental Management is the agency to call – 530.573.3450.

Last year in El Dorado County one rodent tested positive for the disease and three tested positive in 2013. The four positive rodents were all located in the Tahoe area. There were no reports of illness to people, just like with this latest case.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

King Fire restoration to begin this fall

After nearly a year of planning and public involvement a record of decision for the King Fire Restoration Project signed. It is a modified version of the original proposed action.

“Balancing the goals for public safety, timber removal and

fuels reduction with my goals for protection of wildlife habitat is a particularly difficult challenge given the complexity of a post-fire landscape of this size,” Laurence Crabtree, forest supervisor for the Eldorado National Forest, said in a press release. “I believe my decision is both responsive to the comments I received and achieves the broadest range of goals in order to best serve the public interest in the long term recovery of the King Fire area.”

The selected alternative will treat approximately 16,688 acres or 26 percent of the National Forest System lands that burned in the King Fire. It includes salvage and fuels treatments on 15,739 acres, roadside hazard tree removal along 198 miles of roads, erosion control and rehabilitation treatments on 227 acres of watershed sensitive areas, and reforestation on 10,609 acres. Approximately 2,100 acres of these treatments will involve future prescribed burning in the Rubicon Canyon.

Implementation of the project will begin this fall. The three initial timber sales will salvage dead trees from 2,035 acres several miles north of Stumpy Meadows Reservoir.

Labor Day drivers enjoy lowest gas prices since 2004

By Jonathan Fahey, AP

It has been more than a decade since U.S. drivers paid so little to fuel up for that last road trip of summer.

The national average price of gasoline this Labor Day weekend will be its lowest at this time of year since 2004, a result of low oil prices and a quiet hurricane season that has

allowed refineries to churn out gasoline and diesel.

"The year of cheap fuel continues," said Tom Kloza, chief oil analyst at the Oil Price Information Service.

The national average price of gasoline fell to \$2.44 Thursday, nearly \$1 a gallon cheaper than last year.

That means drivers will save about \$15 on a typical fill-up. For the four big driving days of the weekend, Friday through Monday, Americans will spend \$1.6 billion less than last year, according to an analysis by Kloza's OPIS. They are expected to drive more miles, encouraged by low fuel prices, but not enough to burn up their savings.

Gasoline prices often rise toward the end of the summer driving season as supplies dwindle and rough weather disrupts production along the Gulf Coast, where much of the nation's fuel is made.

But crude oil prices have plunged because producers in the U.S. and around the world have been furiously pumping oil while at the same time economic weakness in China, Japan and Europe raises concerns that future demand growth will slow. At around \$47, oil is down 23 percent from its June 10 high and around half the price it was last year at this time.

The low crude prices and humming refineries have helped the national average price of gasoline fall 17 days in a row, according to AAA. Refinery production has remained high because refiners' raw material costs are have fallen faster than the price they get for their products. U.S. supplies of gasoline are above where they were at this time last year.

September can be a choppy month for gas prices because refiners conduct maintenance while switching over to winter blends of gasoline and supplies can get tight. But prices are expected to drift lower and then drop sharply in the late fall and winter as demand for gasoline declines but refineries keep

running to meet demand for heating oil and diesel. They can't make one type of fuel, like diesel, without also turning out gasoline.

"For most of the country, below \$2 is in our future for November and December," Kloza says.

By this weekend, 10,000 stations around the country, mostly in the Southeast, will be selling gasoline for less than \$2 a gallon. South Carolina's average has already sunk to \$2, lowest in the U.S. California drivers had a difficult summer, often paying far more than drivers elsewhere because of refinery problems in the state. Midwest drivers suffered through a short spike because of a refinery problem in Ohio.

Now prices everywhere are falling, but Western drivers are still paying far more than the national average. California and Nevada drivers are both paying more than \$3 per gallon on average, and the top 11 state averages are all out west. The lowest prices are found in the Southeast and near the Gulf Coast.

Forest Service's mission goes up in flames

By Jodi Peterson, High Country News

We've written quite a bit lately about "fire borrowing" – what happens when the Forest Service runs out of the funds it's budgeted for firefighting, which are based on average wildfire costs over the last 10 years. Then it's forced to start dipping into money meant for other programs, including those intended to reduce the risk and intensity of wildfires.

Agency chief Tom Tidwell recently told the *Coloradoan*, “The reality of the last two years – and where we’ll be headed this year – is that we have to use almost all the (prevention) funding (to pay for firefighting instead). ...This is also the time of the year we do a lot of the planning for next year. That planning (won’t) get done.”

But not only do these budgetary borrowings, usually to the tune of about \$500 million per year, hurt current projects, there’s a huge long-term cost as well. Critics ranging from members of Congress to agency staffers have charged that the Forest Service is rapidly becoming the Fire Service, an agency whose duty to “sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation’s forests and grasslands” has been utterly overrun by its need to put out fires.

Now, a new report from Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack lays out the problem created by the rapidly-rising cost of fighting forest fires, which have gotten much more severe in recent years thanks to climate change, drought, disease and insects, development near forests, and the overgrowth of flammable shrubs and small trees. Firefighting now consumes 42 percent of the Forest Service’s budget (if you count all fire-related expenses, it’s 51 percent), compared to just 16 percent in 1995.

Read the whole story

Letter: Heavenly practically regulars at B&B

To the community,

"We love serving our community and participating at Bread & Broth's dinners. Everyone is so thankful and we can't wait to come back soon!" That was the group quote written by the Heavenly Mountain Resort, the Adopt A Day sponsor crew on Aug. 24.

Volunteering their personal time to help the B&B volunteers at the dinner were Tom Maugeri, security manager; Barb Knapp, senior accountant; Jesse Plate, marketing specialist; Peter Spellman, financial operations manager; and Frank Papandrea, environmental manager.

Dana Tucker, a B&B volunteer, said that the Heavenly sponsor crew members "were great and they could come back anytime." Heavenly volunteers are always great to work with and come so frequently that they just jump right in and know what they need to do to help the dinner go smoothly.

It was a very busy night with 122 community members showing up for the hot nutritious meal prepared by the B&B cooks who served a main course of roasted chicken. Thanks to the generosity of Heavenly Mountain Resort and their great employees, B&B and our tireless volunteers were able to provide these very thankful dinner guests with a great meal, a safe place to gather and lots of food to take home with them for future meals or to share with those who are unable to attend the dinners.

To help B&B as a donor or sponsor, contact me at 530.542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Boat racing at Tahoe subject of talk

In the 1980s Dan Foster worked with his famous father on the development of a surface drive system for fiberglass boats. In addition, he spent three years working with Don Philbrick to build his own 19 foot utility Philbrick.

Foster will be speaking Sept. 7 at the Tahoe Maritime Museum in Homewood about the life and careers of his father, Dan Foster, and Dan Arena. Together these two men designed their own three-point hydroplane in the late 1930s and named her Miss Golden Gate. Foster's last victory was in a secondary race at the 1965 Lake Tahoe World Championship regatta with Miss Smirnoff.

The talk is free and starts at 4:30pm.

For more info, call 530.525.9253.

Free prescription drug drop-off day in EDC

El Dorado County Sheriff's Office and South Lake Tahoe Police Department will be hosting prescription drug disposal event on Sept. 26.

Expired or unused prescription drugs (excluding sharps) may be dropped off for safe disposal at no charge and anonymously.

Times and locations:

- Meyers: 11am-5pm, Lira's Market
- Cameron Park: 11am-5pm, Safeway at 3380 Coach Lane
- Cool: 11am-5pm, Holiday Market, 5030 Ellinghouse Drive
- El Dorado Hills: 11am-5pm, sheriff's substation, 4354 Town Center Drive
- Georgetown: 8-11am, Fire Station 61, 6281 Main St.
- Grizzly Flat: 8-11am, post office, 4991 Sciaroni Road
- Placerville: 11am-5pm, sheriff's office, 300 Fair Lane
- Pollock Pines: 11am-5pm, Safeway, 6498 Pollock Pines
- Somerset: 11am-5pm, Holiday Market, 4653 Mt. Aukum Road.

Black out patient name or remove label prior to drop off.

For more info, call 530.621.5300.