

Rethinking alcohol: Can heavy drinkers learn to cut back?

By Allison Aubrey, NPR

The thinking about alcohol dependence used to be black and white.

There was a belief that there were two kinds of drinkers: alcoholics and everyone else.

“But that dichotomy – yes or no, you have it or you don’t – is inadequate,” says Dr. John Mariani, who researches substance abuse at Columbia University. He says the thinking has evolved, and the field recognizes there’s a spectrum.

Problems with alcohol run the gamut from mild to severe. And there are as many kinds of drinkers along the continuum as there are personality types.

People with severe problems, such as those who keep on drinking even after they lose jobs or get DUIs, need treatment to stop drinking completely.

But there are other drinkers, including some who are in the habit of drinking more than one or two drinks a day, who may be able to cut back or moderate their consumption and reduce their risk.

Women who consume eight or more drinks per week are considered excessive drinkers, according to the CDC. Breast cancer, liver disease and heart disease have all been linked to excessive drinking over time.

In fact, a recent study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that the majority of Americans who drink more than one or two drinks a day are not alcoholics. They don’t report symptoms of dependence.

Read the whole story

Stolen moose returned to Sunnyside

The moose that was stolen from Sunnyside in Tahoe City two months ago has been recovered.

“He suffered a broken antler and some minor damage, but we are happy to say he will soon be remounted,” the restaurant said via its Facebook page on March 23. “Many thanks to a longtime local and friend of Sunnyside for finding our beloved entryway icon.”

Thieves made off with the icon from the on Jan. 22.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Letter: Ex-hotel employee documents tree removal



A tree in July 2014 is illegally removed from the Landing Resort. Photo/Isaac Walker

Publisher's note: This letter with photos and video (Landing Tree cutting July 2, 2014) was sent to Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and Lake Tahoe News on March 23 in regards to illegal tree removal at the Landing Resort.

Video was shot from my cell phone, while I was the banquet manager (of the Landing Resort in South Lake Tahoe).

None of the management on site knew what was happening with this particular tree. The day before the tree cutting the lift showed up. On the afternoon of July 2, 2014, Brent Truax, regional manager and second to Jim Demetriades, showed up and said we would need to close the patio that night. Just after 5pm, private contractors showed up and removed the tree, which was in front of the restaurant patio, and Jim's favorite room. This was in preparation for the Fourth, they were hoping for a better view of the fireworks!

I would love to see the trees go back in this spot.

Please let me know if you need any more information.

Thank you for your concern in this matter,

Rollover days on ski pass come with restrictions

By UnofficialNetworks

In an attempt to sell more season passes to the skiers in drought-stricken California, Lake Tahoe's Squaw Valley/Alpine Meadows resort is offering up a new deal. They will give you credits of unused days that can be put towards the following season. They are calling it the "worry-free guarantee".

To get this rollover credit you need to buy your pass by May 7. You may have also noticed the deal only applies to gold and silver passes and if you ski more than 5 days you get nothing. If you don't ski at all next season you will get a little more than half your money back. KSL has put up a calculator you can use to see what kind of credit you will get based on how many days you ski.

The the top shelf adult Gold Tahoe Super Pass gets skiers unlimited access to Squaw Valley/Alpine Meadows, plus four additional days at both Sierra-at-Tahoe and Sugar Bowl, as well as 50-percent off lift tickets at the eight resorts that are part of the Mountain Collective, including Jackson Hole, Alta-Snowbird, and Sun Valley. that pass will set you back \$789.

[Read the whole story](#)

Calif. overtime tops \$1 bil., hits pre-recession high

By Associated Press

Overtime for California's state workers rose 20 percent last year and topped \$1 billion even though there are 20,000 fewer employees than in pre-recession 2008, the last time the state paid out so much, according to new payroll data.

The increase comes after years of recommendations from the state auditor and budget analyst calling for reducing vacancies, using more relief staff and negotiating less-costly labor contracts for workers in state prisons and hospitals, which generate the most overtime pay.

According to the state controller's payroll data reviewed by the Associated Press, California spent \$1.13 billion in 2014 in overtime pay for its 220,000 workers, compared to \$947 million in overtime for roughly 215,000 workers in 2013. Overall payroll went up 7 percent from \$15.3 billion to \$16.4 billion as California enjoys a second year of budget surplus.

Some of the increase in overtime can be attributed to unanticipated costs, such as last year's severe wildfire season. But departments with the highest overtime were not able to explain what drove the spike beyond usual challenges to fill vacant positions and cover critical shifts when employees take time off.

One taxpayer advocate said it's unfortunate that because the economy is doing well, politicians lack the incentive to adopt personnel practices to restrain overtime.

"California remains the land of milk and honey for public employees," said Jon Coupal, president of the anti-tax Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association. "It's always been that way."

State officials acknowledged that more needs to be done to minimize overtime, particularly at institutions that treat patients and inmates for psychiatric and medical care. Half of all the overtime billed in 2014 came in the chronically understaffed Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

Jim Evans, a spokesman for Gov. Jerry Brown, said the administration is trying to make sure vacancies do not become an issue that drives overtime, but noted that some types of workers are difficult to recruit and retain because there's a shortage of workers for some positions, such as psychiatrists.

Some overtime costs are difficult to budget. CalFire had \$139 million in overtime last year, the most in the past 10 years, according to payroll data. The state battled 5,620 fires in 2014, nearly 1,000 more than the state's five-year average.

But the bulk of overtime charges stem from long-standing vacancy and staffing problems at the 34 adult prisons run by corrections. In 2014, the main department logged more than \$542 million in overtime pay, up 31 percent from \$414 million in 2013. Bill Sessa, a corrections spokesman, said the state experienced a high rate of retirement in recent years while budgets were slashed with the recession. As a result, the department stopped training recruits, further exacerbating the vacancy problem, he said.

Since August, the academy has graduated 3,000 officers, and the goal is to hire 7,000 more over the next three years.

"Our ambition is to minimize overtime, in part, because officers work better when they're not working 16-hour shifts," Sessa said.

The federal court-appointed receiver overseeing inmate health

care is also in the process of reviewing telemedicine capabilities to reduce costly overtime billing by physicians and nurses at prisons, said Joyce Hayhoe, a spokeswoman for receiver J. Clark Kelso. In one year, overtime has more than doubled for this branch of corrections, from more than \$12 million to nearly \$30 million. In all, about 1,500 correctional-related staff billed more than \$100,000 in overtime in 2014, including physicians, psychiatrists, nurses, lieutenant, sergeants and officers.

Hayhoe said California struggles to find enough primary care physicians despite competitive pay, in part, because of the location of prison health care facilities. The Department of State Hospitals, which serves mentally ill patients, most of whom have committed serious crimes, is taking to social media and created a dedicated recruitment unit to attract applicants, spokesman Ken August said. The department charged nearly \$104 million in overtime last year, up 5 percent from 2013.

For years, the California state auditor and Legislative Analyst's Office have made governors and lawmakers aware of staffing inefficiencies and issued recommendations such as hiring more staff, increasing the use of relief staff similar to how substitute teachers are used in schools and re-negotiating labor provisions that require overtime shifts to be offered to senior officers first. Some of the recommendations don't appear politically viable.

"No union will give up the right of seniority," said Nichol Gomez-Pryde, a spokeswoman for the California Correctional Peace Officers Association, which represents correctional officers. The union is among four labor contracts up for negotiation this summer.

Boulder Bay to break ground in May

By Associated Press

Developers say they have secured financing for a major resort at the site of the Tahoe Biltmore in Crystal Bay and hope to begin construction in May.

Boulder Bay was originally approved in April 2011.

The development company had been struggling to come up with financing since winning approval from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency four years ago and had faced an April deadline to either move forward or let the project permit expire. Terms of the agreement weren't disclosed.

TRPA approved plans for construction of an eight-structure complex at Crystal Bay offering a mix of uses including a casino, 300-room hotel, health and fitness centers, shops and restaurants.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- Fodor's Travel lists Homewood Mountain Resort's mountaintop dinners as one of the world's most unique dining experiences.

- The Douglas County Public Library is retiring its collection of VHS tapes. These items will be on sale March 31-April 2 from 10am-5pm at the Minden library. All videocassettes will be sold for 25 cents each.
 - Tahoe Toastmasters Club, part of Toastmasters International, meets every second and fourth Monday at 6:30pm at the South Tahoe Public Utility District board room and Meadow Crest Drive. For more info, call 530.542.4896.
 - Kiwanis Ham Bingo is March 28 at 5pm at the South Lake Tahoe Recreation Center. One ham will be given away each hand. Cards are 25 cent each. Proceeds benefit Gene Matteucci's fourth-grade class' Sutter Fort Project.
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Thinning Sierra forest may help water supply

By Edward Ortiz, Sacramento Bee

With the state entering its fourth year of drought, some conservationists are looking at thinning Sierra forests to increase the amount of water that flows into area rivers.

The Nature Conservancy issued a report Friday that argues that thinning forests on public lands can reduce wildfire risk in the Northern Sierra. The report also found that such action brings a bonus: water conservation.

Thinning dense forests may lead to a 3 percent to 6 percent increase in mean annual stream flow to some watersheds, according to the report.

The conservancy based its estimates of stream flow on gauge

records across 11 watersheds from 1980 to 2000 and found that the Feather River watershed would show the greatest increased water flow due to thinning.

This not the first time tree thinning has been examined for water conservation. However, the conservancy report is one of the first to look into the effect that ecologically based forest thinning would have on water yields in the Sierra Nevada and the economic benefit that could come from it.

Read the whole story

How depression warps your sense of time

By Carolyn Gregoire, Huffington Post

Time may fly when you're having fun, but it can feel as though it's screeching to a halt when you're depressed.

People with depression actually perceive time as going by more slowly than people who are not depressed, according to a review of studies published in the Journal of Affective Disorders in January.

To investigate the link between depression and time perception, German researchers analyzed data from 16 previous studies on more than 800 depressed and non-depressed people. Most of the studies assessed time perception by asking participants to gauge the length of time that they had engaged in different activities, such as watching a short film or pressing a button. The analysis revealed that people with depression reported a slower subjective experience of time –

they often felt as though time was slowly dragging by.

Read the whole story

Burning man founders could get \$1.18 mil. tax break

By Jenny Kane, Reno Gazette-Journal

Burning Man's founders are getting tax write-offs for their donations to the new nonprofit organization.

But how plump will the write-offs be?

They could be as much as \$1.18 million.

Each of the six founders donated the majority of each of their shares of the event to Burning Man, which converted to a nonprofit umbrella organization in December 2013.

The sale did not become official until Jan. 1, 2014, so the complete details, most notably the organization's total income, is not present in tax documents released earlier this year.

Read the whole story