

Nev. bill would punish contractors who employ illegals

By Sandra Chereb, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – Conservative Assemblyman Ira Hansen wants to prohibit licensed Nevada contractors from hiring people who are in the country illegally.

The Sparks Republican is the sponsor of Assembly Bill 133, which would require the state Contractors' Board to investigate and take disciplinary action against contractors who knowingly employ workers who are in the country illegally.

Employers who violate the law could be put on probation and subject to quarterly reporting on new hires. Subsequent violations could result in revocation of a contractor's license.

Read the whole story

Amgen bike race looking for volunteers in Tahoe

The Amgen Tour of California Women's Race at Lake Tahoe is seeking cycling aficionados to volunteer during the two stages, May 8-9.

The two Lake Tahoe stages cover 124 miles in two days. The start and finish line for both Tahoe stages are located at

Heavenly Mountain Resort's California Lodge.

Volunteer registration is now open for about 300 positions for the first stage and 200-250 for the second. Four to six hours are anticipated each day.

To register, go online. Registrants must be at least 18 or accompanied by an adult.

For more info, contact Mike Frye at mike@ltva.org or 775.588.5900, ext. 309.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- There will be a meeting March 16 from 5:30-7pm about the Lake Tahoe Airport Master Plan at the airport. For more info, go online.

- April 30 is Reno's fifth annual Dining Out For Life event. Dining at a participating restaurant will help to end HIV in Nevada. Go online for a complete list of restaurants.

- Tipsters may text anonymous information, including photographs, to the Californians Turn in Poachers and Polluters (CalTIP) program via "tip411" (numerically 847411). Wildlife officers can respond directly, resulting in an anonymous two-way conversation. Users must start the text message with the word "Caltip".

- Following upgrades and restaurant remodels, Tahoe Donner Association gave refrigeration units to the Urban Roots program, a local nonprofit committed to the education of

sustainable agriculture in the community.

- Squaw Valley Public Service District has chosen to pursue the eight-mile pipe to import water from Martis Valley as a redundant source of water for Olympic Valley. Here is a description of the seven options that were considered.

Drought brings early start to wildfire season

By Kate Schimel, High Country News

When Jim Stimson first spotted a fire burning 20 miles northwest of Bishop, California, on Feb. 6, he didn't think much of it. Stimson, a 40-year resident of the area and a local photographer, was leading a workshop in the hills outside of town. He couldn't remember the last time a fire in February did much damage.

But it didn't take long for him to realize this wasn't a typical February fire.

The Round Fire, as it was named, burned 7,000 acres and 40 homes before local firefighters, aided by a rainstorm, brought it under control.

For local residents, it drove home a message Westerners may finally have to get used to: Fire season isn't just confined to the months of July and August anymore, or even May through September. Over the last four decades, the season across the West has gotten two and a half months longer. Last year, rare January fires swept across southern California. And just last week, the Round Fire wasn't the only abnormally early burn to

hit the West. A spate of wildfires broke out in northern Utah Feb. 8 and 9, burning a few hundred acres.

Read the whole story

SLT accepting applications for Citizens Academy

South Lake Tahoe is accepting applications for the spring 2015 Citizens Academy.

The Citizens Academy is open to all community members. It is an opportunity for residents to increase their knowledge about the workings of local government and have a desire to become more involved in the shaping and development of their community.

The academy will be on seven consecutive Wednesdays from 5:30-8pm beginning April 8 and running through May 20. The application and additional information is available online.

SLTFD training citizens to help in a crisis

The South Lake Tahoe Fire Department will be hosting the second session of STAT: South Tahoe Action Teams on April 2-23.

Classes will be four consecutive Thursdays from 6-8pm at the Fire Department Training Center located at 1100 Al Tahoe Blvd. Curriculum will include eight hours of instruction taught by members of the South Lake Tahoe Fire Department.

Applicants will be expected to commit their time and will be called upon in times of natural disaster, large scale emergencies and times of need in the South Lake Tahoe area.

The application and additional information is available online.

Road beat: Noticeable improvements to Sonata



The 2015 Hyundai Sonata has been upgraded since the last iteration in 2010. Photos/Larry Weitzman

By Larry Weitzman

Hyundai claims the 2015 Sonata is all new. While every body panel has changed and more than a face-lift has occurred, the resemblance to the prior generation is remarkable. Even the chassis dimensions have changed marginally all in the name of refinement and polish. In that respect Hyundai has accomplished its goal of a vehicle that has improved in most every way, so much so that it offers a ride and quiet that was only in an engineer's dream 10 or 15 years ago.

Size-wise there have been changes in every chassis and body dimension like wheelbase is up 0.4 inches to 110.4 and length has grown by 1.3 inches to 191.1 inches. Width is up by an inch to a wide 73.4 inches, while chassis designers saw fit to widen the track by about the same amount, improving balance, stability and handling.



Specifications

Price \$21,150 to about \$32,500

Engine

Four cylinder inline 16 valve 185 hp @ 6,000 rpm
178 lb.-ft. of torque at 4,000 rpm

Transmission

Six speed torque converter automatic with a semi manual mode

Configuration

Transverse mounted front engine with front wheel drive

Dimensions

Wheelbase 110.4 inches

Length 191.1 inches

Width 73.4 inches

Height 58.1 inches

Track (f/r) 63.1/63.3 inches

Ground clearance 5.3 inches

Cabin volume 106.1 cubic feet

Trunk volume 16.3 cubic feet

Fuel Capacity 18.5 gallons

Weight 3,371 pounds

Steering lock to lock 2.78 turns

Turning circle 35.8 feet

Wheels 17X7 inch alloys

Tires 215/55X17

Co-efficient of drag 0.27

Performance

0-60 mph 7.82 seconds

50-70 mph 4.25 seconds

50-70 uphill 6.56 seconds

Top Speed Beyond sanity

Fuel economy EPA rated at 24/35/28

city/highway/combined.

Expect 27-28 mpg in suburban driving and 37 plus mpg on a level highway at 70 mph.

When the prior generation Sonata was introduced five years ago, it was a bombshell with cutting edge looks and class leading four cylinder performance, never mind an interior that blew away the competition. You can see the evolution from the prior generation. The shape of the new Sonata is uncannily similar, but it is different. You need to study the new body to discover why it is so improved. First, the new aggressive grille has much similarity to the new World Class Genesis. A huge curving body character line has been lightened and made almost straight while the window line has been improved in a similar manner without the curved lower line and a less radical top line. It all fits and flows smoothly without any gimmicks. It certainly matches the effort of the new Genesis.

A side benefit of the redesign was a 3-cubic-foot increase in cabin volume, making the new Sonata a true full size car interior with the largest trunk and interior cabin of any midsize sedan.

Even the Sonata's co-efficient of drag has improved from a slick 0.28 to an even slicker 0.27.

Where things haven't changed much is in the engine room. The power comes from the same state of the art 2.4L direct injected, DOHC 16 valve Theta four cylinder engine, now producing 185 hp at a lower 6,000 rpm and 178 peak pounds of twist at a lower 4,000 rpm. Power is sent to the front wheels via a six speed auto cog swapper. The unit operates extremely quietly and with absolute smoothness.

Performance hasn't changed much since the prior generation's intro five years ago as this 2015 unit knocks off 0-60 mph in 7.82 seconds. Passing performance times in simulated 50-70 mph runs on a level highway and a six percent grade were 4.25 and 6.56 seconds respectively which are virtually identical to the (2014) prior generation's times which had times of 7.79, 4.25 and 6.64 seconds respectively. The Road Beat would place the Hyundai mid-pack, but mid-pack in the mid-size sedan class is

a good performing automobile. A 1960 performance sedan like a 300 hp 6.4L (389 cubes) Pontiac Bonneville couldn't match this level of performance while drinking at least two to three times more fuel. Boy, do we have it good.

Speaking of drinking fuel, by comparison the Sonata barely sips it, averaging exactly what the EPA says it should, about 28 mpg. EPA predictions are 24/35/28 mpg city/highway/combined. On the highway at 70 mph the Sonata did slightly better at 36.8 mpg with the engine spinning just 2,000 rpm. With the Sonata's 18.5 gallon fuel tank, 600 plus miles on the highway would be a piece of cake, at least for the Sonata. The driver and/or passengers might have to stop earlier.

As with Sonata's performance, fuel economy remains the same compared to the 2014 model. Mention should be made of the new turbo engine, which while producing slightly less hp (245 hp at 6,000), provides more real world performance with less turbo lag and a more responsive, linear power curve.

More improvements have been made to the Sonata's structure and suspension. The use of advanced high strength steel has increased bending and torsional rigidity by about 40 percent. Revised dual lower arm rear suspension (over the prior single arm system) has improved the Sonata's responsiveness, handling and stability. Even overall weight has been pared by a few pounds.

Other improvements include a revised quicker electric power steering rack and when you couple that with the wider track, handling has become a bit sharper almost to the level of a sporting sedan. Most drivers won't notice these changes unless you push the car hard, but it will be noticed in the ride quality. In normal driving, the Hyundai handles easily and beautifully.

Sonata is a quiet, refined automobile. It handles bumps with

reduced harshness and a sublimely compliant ride. It could call it almost luxurious (as in near luxury car). It is that quiet and smooth. There is no float. In a drive with a friend, even he remarked about the extremely smooth, quiet ride.

Of course Sonata comes with about every safety acronym in the book and in my Limited tester; blind spot detection, rear cross traffic alert and a rearview camera were standard. And the optional Ultimate Package (\$1,500) comes with a lane departure warning system. Braking is also slightly improved with the Sonata's four wheel discs (front ventilated) stopping the Sonata in 40 feet from 40 mph. Part of the improvement is due the Sonata new rear suspension. HID headlights were excellent.



The 2015 Sonata has been improved.

Inside you are greeted with a leather interior with sublime front chairs that are both powered. Everything you touch exudes quality with soft touch trim pieces. Full instrumentation (tach and speedo included) plus a trip computer are standard. The center stack is well done and the controls and touch screen sound system are easy to use. Because there is no engine, wind or road noise and because of its accurate steering, good fuel economy and high comfort level, Sonata is a wonderful long distance over the road vehicle.

It feels like most of that new interior volume can be found in the copious rear seating area. Legroom is huge as is the better than 16 cubic foot trunk.

More good news from Hyundai is pricing. The new Sonata bases \$300 less than last year at \$21,150, plus \$810 for transportation from its Montgomery, Alabama assembly plant. The base price on tested leather Limited is \$26,525. My tester was equipped with the \$3,500 Tech Package which added the panoramic sunroof, Nav, HID lighting and more plus the aforementioned Ultimate Package. Carpeted floor mats were \$125. After the transportation charges the total was \$32,510. You will find the base car will offer most of the virtues of the Limited while the Limited offers a near luxury experience.

Larry Weitzman has been into cars since he was 5 years old. At 8 he could recite from memory the hp of every car made in the U.S. He has put in thousands of laps on racetracks all over the Western United States.

Mental health a growing concern on South Shore

By Kathryn Reed

Mental health issues are a problem for educators, law enforcement, medical professionals and others. The illness tends to permeate nearly every facet of the population and not always in ways that are obvious.

When Barton Health conducted its Community Health Needs Assessment in 2012 mental health was one of the three priorities that needed to be addressed. Access to care and

substance abuse rounded out the top concerns. (Barton is in the process of doing its second needs assessment.)

“Mental Health is multi-faceted, so there is not a quick or simple answer. Ideally having options for prevention, maintenance and acute crisis during different developmental phases would help support people when they need that support,” Kindle Craig, executive director of Barton Health Foundation, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Mental health can be difficult to treat because of limited funding and facilities, especially in an area like Lake Tahoe because it is nowhere near a metropolitan area that has more resources.

“The adult populations experiencing the greatest barriers to mental health care in El Dorado County, and particularly in South Lake Tahoe, include low-income populations, the Hispanic community, ex-offenders, homeless and co-morbid mental health and substance addicted adults. According to the patient panel of the county Mental Health Division, dual-diagnosis patients (mental illness and substance abuse) comprise approximately 80 percent of the population served, and the county has reported an increase in the number of youth with this dual diagnosis,” the mental health assessment concluded.

Law enforcement is often interacting with people who are mentally unstable. It’s an issue South Lake Tahoe Police Chief Brian Uhler regularly brings up. He did so again at Saturday’s strategic planning workshop – saying more resources are needed and attention paid to mental illness in the community.

“A February 2012 report to the California Department of Health Care Services indicated that approximately 5 percent of the El Dorado County population needed mental health services based upon the serious mental illness definition. Within households below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, this rate increased to approximately 9 percent. When a broader

definition of mental health needs is utilized, the percent of population that had a need for mental health services increased to approximately 12 percent of the population, and within households below 200 percent FPL, the need increased to approximately 20 percent. This indicates that over 21,000 county residents may need mental health services, many of whom are likely not seeking treatment," the mental health assessment states.

According to the National Institute of Mental Illness, mental disorders affect tens of millions of people each year, with only about half of those affected receiving treatment.

In September 2013 a group came together for the inaugural mental health forum on the South Shore. The next gathering is March 5.

"The goals of the mental health forum are to continue to raise awareness, identify gaps in service/access, and build a community care flow map allowing all parties – caregivers, providers, schools, and first responders – to understand the appropriate pathways for patient access with regard to patient age and insurance coverage," Craig said.

She said the first forum provided greater understanding by those who participated of the mental health system, the deficiencies and why they exist.

"A specific positive outcome was developing a way to work across state lines to be able to transport certain patients to appropriate facilities in Nevada, as well as California, depending on the need," Craig said of the 2013 gathering.

Barton, law enforcement, paramedics, El Dorado County, Lake Tahoe Unified School District and nonprofits were part of the first forum.

Invited to this year's gathering are: Barton Health, LTUSD, Douglas County School District, Family Resource Center, city

and county officials, El Dorado County Mental Health, South Lake Tahoe Police Department, South Lake Tahoe Fire Department, Drug Free Coalition, Lake Tahoe Collaborative, Live Violence Free, Child Protective Services, and others.

Next week's all-day forum is designed to create achievable goals.

"South Lake Tahoe is in need of a more collaborative, effective approach to addressing mental health. Working cooperatively with the social services agencies and community members is essential to understanding the issues, identifying gaps, and solving problems," Craig said. "As a healthcare provider, Barton offers an array of medical services including child psychiatry, bereavement counseling, and tele-psychiatry. Patients come to Barton through a variety of access points in need of assistance related to mental health. If it is not a medical need, Barton works with the appropriate agency to refer patients to the best location to receive appropriate services like counseling."

Opinion: The promise and failure of community colleges

By Eduardo Porter, New York Times

There are two critical things to know about community colleges.

The first is that they could be the nation's most powerful tools to improve the opportunities of less privileged Americans, giving them a shot at harnessing a fast-changing job market and building a more equitable, inclusive society

for all of us. The second is that, at this job, they have largely failed.

When President Obama stood at Pellissippi Community College in Knoxville, Tenn., last month and offered every committed student two years' worth of community college at the government's expense, he focused on the first point.

With open enrollment and an average price tag of \$3,800 a year for full-time students, community colleges are pretty much the only shot at a higher education for those who don't have the cash or the high school record to go to a four-year university. And that's a lot of people: 45 percent of the undergraduate students in the country.

Read the whole story

Final comments sought on Heavenly's summer plans

Heavenly Mountain Resort's Epic Discovery is inching closer to reality.

The U.S. Forest Service is seeking comments on the final environmental impact statement and draft record of decision. People who submitted project-specific written comments during scoping or other designated comment period are allowed to comment this time around. People have 45 days to submit comments.

The documents may be found online.

Epic Discovery is the resort's proposal to turn the mountain into more of a summer destination, including additional ropes

courses and a mountain bike park.