

Traffic deaths on the rise in Nevada

Preliminary data shows that 284 traffic fatalities occurred on Nevada roads in 2014, an increase of 18 deaths compared to the previous year.

Statewide, traffic fatalities have slightly risen over recent years after trending down from an all-time high of 432 in 2006.

Traffic fatalities in many rural counties have increased, with a more than 200 percent jump seen in Churchill, Lander, Storey and Humboldt counties.

Pedestrian and motorcycle-related deaths have also risen, with a nearly 2 percent increase in motorcycle fatalities and one more pedestrian death than 2013.

“These are so much more than numbers. Every death and serious injury on Nevada roads is a tragedy,” NDOT Director Rudy Malfabon said in a statement. “That is why the state’s traffic safety goal is zero fatalities, and that’s why transportation, safety, enforcement and other groups continue working together to implement life-saving road safety advances.”

The Nevada Strategic Highway Safety Plan brings Nevada traffic and safety advocates together to implement enforcement, engineering, emergency medical and educational strategies for cutting the yearly traffic fatality average in half by 2030, with the ultimate goal of zero fatalities on Nevada roads.

Liability concerns prompt cities to limit sledding

By Scott McFetridge, AP

DES MOINES, Iowa — As anyone who has grown up around snow knows, part of the fun of sledding is the risk of soaring off a jump or careening around a tree.

But faced with the potential bill from sledding injuries, some cities have opted to close hills rather than risk large liability claims.

No one tracks how many cities have banned or limited sledding, but the list grows every year. One of the latest is in Dubuque, Iowa, where the City Council is moving ahead with a plan to ban sledding in all but two of its 50 parks.

"We have all kinds of parks that have hills on them," said Marie Ware, Dubuque's leisure services manager. "We can't manage the risk at all of those places."

A study by Columbus, Ohio-based Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children's Hospital found that between 1997 and 2007, more than 20,000 children each year were treated at emergency rooms for sledding-related injuries.

In meetings leading up to the ban, Dubuque council members lamented the move but said it was the only responsible choice given liability concerns and demands from the city's insurance carrier. They pointed to judgments in sledding lawsuits in the past decade, such as a \$2 million judgment against Omaha, Neb., after a 5-year-old girl was paralyzed when she hit a tree and a \$2.75 million payment when a man in Sioux City, Iowa, slid into a sign and injured his spinal cord.

Some cities have opted for less drastic measures in the last

several years rather than an all-out ban, including Des Moines, Iowa; Montville, N.J.; Lincoln, Neb.; and Columbia City, Ind. By banning sledding on certain slopes or posting signs warning people to sled at their own risk, cities lessen their liability if someone is seriously hurt, but they're still more vulnerable to lawsuits than if they had adopted an outright ban.

And then there's the small central Illinois city of Paxton, where park district officials removed the sledding hill in 2013.

It was more of a dirt mound, created years ago to cover a pile of concrete, metal and other junk, recreation director Neal McKenry said, but given how flat the area is, the 20-foot rise often was crowded with sledders. There was concern someone would slam into trees that had grown on the mound.

"Obviously, many people used this area to sled in the winter, but the park district never promoted it as a sled hill," McKenry said. "It was simply a built-up mound of dirt that people happened to sled on." The area is now being used as a dog park.

In Omaha, the city banned sledding at a popular hill as a test one winter after losing a lawsuit, but decided to allow it again after most people ignored the restriction.

"It wasn't practical," assistant city attorney Tom Mumgaard said. "People wouldn't abide by the ban."

Instead, the city has posted signs warning of sledding risks and workers at the site of the failed ban put pads around posts and hay bales around trees. Mumgaard said courts in Nebraska have decided cities must protect people, even if they make poor choices.

Most people realize that cities must restrict potentially dangerous activities to protect people and guard against costly lawsuits, said Kenneth Bond, a New York lawyer who

represents local governments. In the past, people might have embraced a Wild West philosophy of individuals being solely responsible for their actions, but now they expect government to prevent dangers whenever possible.

“It’s a great idea on the frontier, but we don’t live on the frontier anymore,” Bond said.

That doesn’t sit well with Natasha Koss, 40, who frequently sleds with her 5-year-old daughter Elsa in Marquette, Mich.

Koss sometimes requires Elsa to wear a helmet. When they try a particular hill for the first time, her husband does a few runs solo as a precaution. She said she’d report any safety issues to city authorities but couldn’t imagine filing suit over a sledding mishap.

“I would most certainly take personal responsibility,” she said. “You need to have a mindset to make the best decisions for your own safety.”

However, Steve King, who runs a website that promotes sledding, said he understands why cities impose restrictions. He notes that most sledders don’t wear helmets and it’s near impossible to steer away from trees, rocks or signs.

“We live in a lawsuit-happy society and cities are just being protective by banning sledding in areas that pose a risk for injury or death,” King said.

Letter: Casino workers help

at Bread & Broth

To the community,

Bread & Broth would like to thank the Harrah's/Harveys' HEROs for Adopting a Day of Nourishment. HEROs is an employee based volunteer program at all Caesars casinos.

On Dec. 29, five local HERO team members participated in Bread & Broth's dinner serving over 120 meals to the evening's guests. Representing the local HEROs organization were John Guastella, games manager; Jeff Colameco, hotel manager; Brett Connors and Jackie Andrews, games supervisors; Dale Kawaratani, IT engineer; and Cathy Kawaratani, cashier.

Doing good work for their communities is strongly encouraged by the Caesars organization. The HERO volunteers brought lots of energy with them to help the B&B volunteers pull the dinner and food handouts together so the guests could enjoy the great beef/noodle stroganoff meal and the socializing that accompanies every dinner.

"Everyone was great. The volunteers worked hard and everyone was helpful. Everyone enjoyed the experience," said Colameco.

Thank you to Caesars for funding a B&B dinner and encouraging employees to volunteer in charitable causes that meet the needs of the community. As an all-volunteer, nonprofit organization, Bread & Broth is grateful for the support of our community in easing the burden of hunger experienced by many in our Lake Tahoe South Shore community.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

‘Twelve Recipes’ is a not an ordinary cookbook

By Sam Sifton, New York Times

Cookbooks today fall largely into two camps. There is glossy art-house food erotica assembled by chefs eager to set down markers of regional pride, of particular aesthetic technique, of gastronomic genius. Cooking from those books is like making a paint-by-numbers Ingres or Hockney. You get the shape and the color and the line. But the dish is never really art.

And there are lifestyle bibles, aspirational guides to a better and often more ethical way of being. These cookbooks offer recipes for change, a chance to consider quinoa as a regular ingredient, the ability to alter your diet from selfish to one engaged with a wider story about health and happiness. Was that really what you wanted for dinner?

Rare is the cookbook that acknowledges the simple truth that there aren't really all that many recipes in the world. There is just technique, and practice, and joy and love, and at the end of it something simple and delicious on the plate, something that the reader may not have considered making before cracking the spine of the book.

Cal Peternell's smart new cookbook, "Twelve Recipes," recently published by HarperCollins, is one of the last type, a cookbook written for new cooks, for uncertain cooks, for good cooks looking for simple inspiration, for anyone wrestling with a New Year's resolution to cook more and better. It arose from conversations that Mr. Peternell, a longtime chef at Chez Panisse in Berkeley had with his oldest son as he headed off to college: a kitchen rat who had never learned to cook, who had merely seen it all happen around him, who needed to be taught how to shop, how to warm garlic in a pan, how to make a

vinaigrette, how to braise.

Read the whole story

Names released of victims in fatal accident

Updated Jan. 8 7:30am:

Names of the people involved in the New Year's Day fatal accident on Mt. Rose Highway have been released.

Hugo Soto-Barrios, 40, died in the accident. He was a passenger in the vehicle driven by Manuel Mejia-Verduzco, 34.

Nevada Highway Patrol troopers found Mejia-Verduzco in his apartment, after he had fled the scene on foot. He was hiding in the bathroom suffering from a broken left arm and broken left leg. He was transported to Renown Medical Center in Reno; once released he was booked into jail on charges of driving left of center, hit and run with a death, hit and run with injury, failure to give aid and information, and no valid driver's license.

The vehicle driven by Mejia-Verduzco crossed the center line, hitting an SUV driving by 27-year-old Irma Gouadarram of Sparks, according to the NHP. She was transported via ambulance to Renown with non-life threatening injuries and was released from the hospital the next morning.

Her passengers, Norea Maria Pelayo-Garcia, 45, and Anna Acosta, 38, both of Sparks, remained at Renown on Jan. 6 in serious condition, but are recovering from their injuries, according to the NHP.

Mom was right – bundle up to ward off a cold

By Sonja Elmquist, Bloomberg

Yale University researchers are on your mom's side when it comes to fighting a cold: put on a sweater.

The immune system doesn't combat cold viruses as well at lower temperatures, according to an early study in mice published today in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Doctors have understood for decades that temperature affects the way cold viruses reproduce. Akiko Iwasaki, a Yale professor of immunobiology who led today's study, now has research, as well as motherly intuition, to bolster the case for staying warm that she makes to her kids.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- Laure Penny has been hired as the clerk to the Douglas County Board of Commissioners. Penny replaces Lorraine Kabat who retired last year.

- Citizens for Sensible Development in El Dorado Hills in partnership with Save Our County has filed a petition with the El Dorado County Superior Court to reverse Board of Supervisors' approval of the El Dorado Hills Town Center Apartments.

- Here are the roadwork schedules for Caltrans for the week for El Dorado-Tahoe and Sierra.

Winter music series starting on South Shore

The FNCTN Winter Music Series is a biweekly event that offers a diverse lineup of live music from California, Nevada and the Pacific Northwest.

The series will alternate between Xhale Lounge and Lake Tahoe Golf Course every other Friday night from Jan. 9-April 17.

Doors open at 8pm and admission is \$10 – free on your birthday.

Xhale Lounge will allow EDM artists to shine, showcasing their live electronic skills in an upscale lounge setting. Lake Tahoe Golf Course will highlight the rock and funk bands in the clubhouse.

Panoramic views of Desolation via snowshoes



Sue, AJ, Cody, Rosemary and Donna make their way to Granite Lake. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

EMERALD BAY STATE PARK – Maggie's cleavage took our breath away.

That's what we called the saddle of Maggie's Peak because, well, these two peaks in Desolation Wilderness are named for a woman who was well endowed. And that strip of land in between the peaks has some outstanding views.

Desolation Wilderness appears to go on forever. So expansive it seems a bit foreboding – even though we were immersed in it for nearly the entire snowshoe.

No wonder Eagle Lake is chilly in the summer – it's frozen

right now.

On this particular day Emerald Bay could have been renamed Sapphire Bay because of the rich, deep blue hue that spilled forth.

Snowshoeing to Granite Lake was pretty; making the final push to the saddle of Maggie's Peak was spectacular. Granite Lake was our original destination last Saturday.

Getting there was more of a vertical ascent than a leisurely switchback. I could tell I had been fighting off a cold because I needed to stop more than usual. But this was not a trek to set speed records, so Donna, Rosemary and Sue – and dogs AJ and Cody – were fine with a few extra stops.

The path is well worn with plenty of snowshoers having been there before us. It's single track. At times all we can hear is the crunching of the snow beneath the claws strapped to our boots.

Large boulders near the lake and protruding from the ice provided a lunch spot. Plenty of tracks across the frozen mass proved the ice was thick. Not a cloud could be seen. It was one of those idyllic Tahoe blue skies. One of Maggie's Peaks rises from the far end of the lake.

Donna and Sue peruse the map, figuring out the cleavage isn't that much farther, so we carry on.

The trailhead is at 6,890 feet. Granite Lake is at 7,700 feet and the saddle is at 8,330 feet. It's about 1½ miles to the lake and another eight-tenths of a mile to the saddle.

While there had been wonderful views along the way, the best were definitely at the saddle.

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Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe go north on Highway 89. Park at the Bayview Campground on the left. This is before you reach the parking lot for Vikingsholm. Walk through the campground. There will be a sign going left for Cascade Falls, to the right for Desolation Wilderness. Go right.

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Opinion: Open-office trend is destroying the workplace

By Lindsey Kaufman, Washington Post

A year ago, my boss announced that our large New York ad agency would be moving to an open office. After nine years as a senior writer, I was forced to trade in my private office for a seat at a long, shared table. It felt like my boss had ripped off my clothes and left me standing in my skivvies.

Our new, modern Tribeca office was beautifully airy, and yet remarkably oppressive. Nothing was private. On the first day, I took my seat at the table assigned to our creative department, next to a nice woman who I suspect was an air horn in a former life. All day, there was constant shuffling, yelling, and laughing, along with loud music piped through a PA system. As an excessive water drinker, I feared my co-workers were tallying my frequent bathroom trips. At day's end, I bid adieu to the 12 pairs of eyes I felt judging my 5:04 p.m. departure time. I beelined to the Beats store to purchase their best noise-canceling headphones in an unmistakably visible neon blue.

Despite its obvious problems, the open-office model has

continued to encroach on workers across the country. Now, about 70 percent of U.S. offices have no or low partitions, according to the International Facility Management Association. Silicon Valley has been the leader in bringing down the dividers. Google, Yahoo, eBay, Goldman Sachs and American Express are all adherents. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg enlisted famed architect Frank Gehry to design the largest open floor plan in the world, housing nearly 3,000 engineers. And as a businessman, Michael Bloomberg was an early adopter of the open-space trend, saying it promoted transparency and fairness. He famously carried the model into city hall when he became mayor of New York, making “the Bullpen” a symbol of open communication and accessibility to the city’s chief.

Read the whole story