Swarm of 90 earthquakes near Mt. Rose Highway

By Mike Wolterbeek

UNR’s Seismological Laboratory reports an ongoing swarm of earthquakes near south Reno, in the area of the Mt. Rose Highway and I-580. Since Thursday night, more than 90 events have been located. The largest recorded are four magnitude 2 quakes.

There have been no reports of damage, and about 38 people have reported feeling the small earthquakes.

“The activity notably increased late last night and this morning,” Ken Smith, seismic network manager and associate director of the seismological lab, said. “We’re monitoring the swarm closely and updating local emergency management officials in case this sequence evolves to a larger, damaging earthquake.”

Updated information for activity associated with this earthquake is available **online**.

The Nevada-Eastern California region has a history of large damaging earthquakes and citizens should always consider earthquake preparedness.

“When we feel these small earthquakes, it’s nature’s way of telling us that Nevada, and Washoe County, is earthquake country,” Washoe County Emergency Manager Aaron Kenneston said. “Today would be an ideal day to walk through your house, or place of work, and do a hazard hunt. Secure bookshelves, water heaters and items that can easily fall and hurt you.”

As a public safety reminder local and state agencies urge the public be prepared in the event an emergency causes you to be self-reliant for three days without utilities and electricity, water service, access to a supermarket or local services, or maybe even without response from police, fire or rescue.

The Nevada Seismological Laboratory, a public service department at UNR, is a member of the USGS Advanced National Seismic System and operates a network of about 150 real-time seismograph stations throughout the region providing earthquake information to Nevada citizens, the USGS, and local and state officials.

Mike Wolterbeek works for UNR.

Calif. wind speed record set at Alpine Meadows

By Amy Graff, San Francisco Chronicle

A 199-mph gust that blasted a mountaintop at the Alpine Meadows ski resort last February was the strongest wind ever recorded in California, federal scientists reported.

It was also the strongest non-tornado wind in the United States last year, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

By comparison, 140-mph winds have been known to pick up and hurl baseball-size rocks.

Read the whole story

Fresh Ketch restaurant closes its doors

By Kathryn Reed

Once one of the busiest restaurant and bars on the South Shore, the Fresh Ketch has closed.

As one of the few South Lake Tahoe eateries right on the water, its location was always one of its biggest selling points.

While the message on the voice recorder says it will reopen in mid-April, doing so in shoulder season could be problematic to be successful.

Business at the Ketch has been dwindling ever since it changed owners nearly five years ago. The food quality became inconsistent, the hours of operation cutback, a **water issue** closed it for a bit last summer.

There was a time when it was hard to get a seat – inside or out. Musicians regularly set up next to the fireplace. The pray for snow parties each fall were legendary.

Longtime owner **Bob Hassett in 2013** sold the restaurant to the majority owners of the Tahoe Keys Marina, Donna and Robert Krilich. The El Dorado County Assessor's Office at the time listed the value of the property and business at $1,224,913.

The Krilichs bought the Tahoe Keys Marina in early 2009 for more than $20 million.

Donna Krilich had a separate business listed with the California Secretary of State as LT Food and Spirits, which reportedly operated the restaurant. The status is listed as suspended.

The Tahoe Keys Marina Management Inc., with Robert Krilich Sr. as the registrant, is also listed as suspended by the Franchise Tax Board.

According to the Sacramento Real Estate Lawyer Blog, “The FTB usually suspends a business either because the business failed to file one or more tax returns or the business failed to pay its balance. This balance can include the penalty incurred by not filing your Statement of Information in a timely manner.”

The restaurant has been in operation since at least the 1980s, and was popular with locals and tourists.

Tahoe City Lodge’s TAU issue a done deal

Some call it prudent economic strategy, others call it a gift of public funds.

On Jan. 9 the Placer County Board of Supervisors unanimously voted to approve the execution of a loan agreement with Kila Tahoe LLC to convey 60 tourist accommodation units for the Tahoe City Lodge.

The TAU transfer agreement structures the transfer as a forgivable loan, with a 15-year repayment term with an interest rate of 1.59 percent. The $879,000 loan value includes the cost of the TAUs as well as reimbursement of county staff time spent processing the project’s permit application. It will be paid down by transient occupancy taxes generated by the project.

The Tahoe City Lodge is expected to generate nearly $1.2 million a year in tax revenue.

Not everyone believes this is the right project at the right location, nor do they believe the county should be so generous with its resources to a private developer. Public meetings throughout the process have had naysayers.

The hotel will be a 118-unit lodge, with three buildings consisting of a mix of hotel units; one-, two- and three-bedroom condo hotel suites; hotel amenities; a restaurant and rooftop bar; and parking.

Placer's transfer of 60 TAUs, along with 58 TAUs secured separately by Kila, complete the total 118 TAUs needed for the project.

— Lake Tahoe News staff report

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

· On Jan. 17, Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe will honor 11 young women for their academic and community achievements. These recipients are chosen by the staff at their respective schools. From South Tahoe High school recipients are Jessie Brown, Lulu Gutierrez, Celeste Holmes, Shelby Lyon, Evelyn Munguia Reyes, and Theresa Sandborn. From Whittell High School recipients are Tatum Bunnett, Madison Evans, Madison Peterson, Makena Snipes, and Gabriela Trachsel.

· Kirk Walder and Bryan Oland have been appointed to the Douglas County Planning Commission.

· Zephyr Cove Library on Jan. 24 at 3:30pm is showing "Despicable Me 3" (rated PG). "Fargo" (rated R) will be shown Jan. 27 at 2pm. This movie is geared toward adults. The movies and popcorn are free. These events are sponsored by the Friends of the Douglas County Public Library.

· The annual polar plunge benefiting Special Olympics will be March 17 at Zephyr Cove Resort. For more info, go **online**.

· Jim Holmes is now chair of the Placer County Board of Supervisors.

Mother Nature messing with Tahoe's economy

Mount Tallac is a reminder it really is winter in Lake Tahoe. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

The economy in the Lake Tahoe Basin is in the toilet from many, on par for some, and better than average for others.

The phone recording at Adventure Mountain Lake Tahoe is from Jan. 2. It says the sledding hill atop Echo Summit is “closed because of low snow conditions.” This is at 7,382 feet, while lake level is 6,200 feet.

The sledding hill in the lot next to MontBleu in Stateline has been able to keep making snow with the cold nights. The lines of people wanting to play in the white stuff is remarkable. It’s easy, convenient and they don’t care it is manmade.

While skiing and snowboarding dominate the reason to travel to Tahoe this time of year, plenty of people come just to play in the white stuff.

“It’s surprising the number of people who have never seen snow or played in snow,” Jerry Bindel, who operates Lakeland Village in South Lake Tahoe, said. “We have a significant number of guests here for snow playing more than going up the mountain. Some go up the mountain because that is where the snow is. During the holidays (Heavenly) saw sightseeing passes at the gondola selling out by noon every day.”

Lodging numbers for this season on the North Shore are about what they were last year when all it did was snow – or so it seemed.

“Reports are that the holidays were strong and this period, early January, is usually slower, but the numbers look strong for this weekend’s occupancy,” Cindy Gustafson, CEO of North Lake Tahoe Resort Association, told *Lake Tahoe News.* “The most recent occupancy forecast numbers I have for the winter season based on reservations on the books as of Nov. 30 for the November to April period is just over 1 percent ahead as compared to the same period last year. So while not much of a total increase, the business activity based on room reservations looks pretty comparative to last year.”

For the South Shore lodging community, advance bookings are saving the season.

“Due to last year’s great snows, we have seen some good advance group bookings for the winter months, and currently most properties are reporting pacing ahead of last year,” Bindel, who is on the South Lake Tahoe Lodging Association board, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Open roads are helping as well. Of course we all want some of the white stuff on the ground at lake level, just enough to allow for our guests to have some snow play while keeping the roads open and clear. The mountains can get all the big dumps of feet of snow – that would be the perfect mix.”

But not everyone is full for the weekend. Local hoteliers were on social media Thursday touting room availability.

Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, which is responsible for marketing the South Shore, is not changing its message because there are heads in beds.

“We haven’t changed our winter strategy at this point. The board may want to have that discussion, but we’re hopeful that this (weather) pattern changes and we see some accumulation, like (this week) at the higher elevations,” LTVA Executive Director Carol Chaplin told *Lake Tahoe News.*

No ski resort in the greater Lake Tahoe area is fully open – and we’re heading into what is usually one of the busier three-day weekends.

This is bad news for those who’ve been laid off or were never put on the payroll. It’s not good for the resorts’ bottom lines or the secondary businesses that rely on skiers/snowboarders rolling into town.

“We are adapting to the amount of snow that Mother Nature has given us,” Thea Hardy with Sierra-at-Tahoe told *Lake Tahoe News.* “We welcome the holiday crowds and want to be clear on our offering of limited terrain. We ask that all closure signs are obeyed in an effort of providing a safe sliding on snow experience for all.”

All of the resorts have been receiving snow while it’s been raining at the lake. Still, some of the lower slopes at some resorts were rained upon or it was wet, heavy snow – well beyond the typical Sierra cement.

Early season natural snow and snowmaking (plus grooming) have made for better conditions that one would expect from looking at lake level. At lake level it looks more like fall than winter.

However, as was mentioned in the **snow survey** last week, there is a lot of winter still to be had, with now through March when the most amount of snow usually falls.

One industry that does well when the slopes are more hardpack than powder is healthcare with so many people needing to go to the emergency room. And with more people crowded onto fewer runs, it means more opportunity to run into someone else.

Other businesses are also doing well. People are looking to do something besides play in the snow – like ride bikes, get on the lake, and eat out more.

For now, with temperatures supposed to be in the 50s through the weekend in Tahoe, winter seems more like what the calendar says and not what it’s like stepping outside. When one can play tennis in Tahoe in January, you know the weather isn’t normal.

Opinion: A California giant hides in plain sight

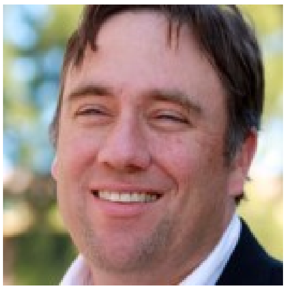
By Joe Mathews

California is so big that you don't need to be a mouse to hide here. You can be a giant elephant—or a huge corporation—and still escape notice.

For example, here's a trivia question that stumps even Californians who know the state well: What's the second-richest company in California after Apple?

"Google?" Wrong.

The answer: McKesson.



Joe Mathews

Never heard of it? You're not alone. McKesson is "a massive corporation hiding in plain sight," Fortune wrote recently. Its headquarters hides in a conspicuous place—at Post and Market streets in San Francisco. That a company can be both so big and so unknown shows how the tech sector has warped Californians' sense of what matters in business.

McKesson is not only California's second-largest company, with nearly $200 billion in annual revenues, but also the fifth-largest company in America. A massive healthcare middleman, McKesson distributes pharmaceuticals and other supplies from manufacturers to doctors and hospitals.

This is an unsexy, low-margin business—which is one reason why, despite its massive revenues and reach, McKesson's market cap of $32 billion badly lags Apple ($772 billion) and Facebook ($542 billion). And while other California giants dominate the headlines, McKesson almost never makes state news.

When I called McKesson to explain I was writing a column about the company, the polite executive who called back seemed genuinely puzzled about my interest. On recent visits to McKesson Plaza, the space outside the headquarters, I encountered two sets of protestors—one opposing Sen. Dianne Feinstein, who has offices in the building, and the other supporting higher wages for janitors who work there. Not one protestor, however, knew anything about McKesson, the company.

This is unsurprising. McKesson is so ubiquitous, it hasn't put the great efforts into branding that startups do. McKesson also happens to be one of the country's oldest companies—a longevity worth studying in a state that worships high-flying startups.

McKesson began in 1833, when an entrepreneur named John McKesson opened a drug import and wholesale business in Manhattan, which went on to pioneer the development of gelatin-coated pills in the 1870s. By the early 1900s, it had created a nationwide distribution network that moved medicines and other products, from chemicals to liquor.

McKesson became a California company through its 1967 merger with Foremost, a food-centric conglomerate co-founded by retailer J.C. Penney. By 1970, the firm had set up its San Francisco headquarters.

In 1984, the company was renamed McKesson Corporation, and for two decades it acquired businesses that distributed health-related products, while jettisoning food and chemical companies that were part of the conglomerate.

That devotion to health care, in an aging country with rising health spending, has paid off. A company that had less than $20 billion in annual revenues two decades ago is now pushing $200 billion. The company has burrowed itself into every corner of healthcare, but the heart of the operation remains its distribution centers, a system that rivals Amazon's in scope and in revenues. The company's slogan is: "It's not just a package, it's a patient."

Of course, McKesson is not just a logistics company. It's also a technology company that uses advanced health data and analytics with to making all kinds of healthcare systems—from those that get you prescriptions, to those that allow you to pay your bill—more efficient.

When McKesson draws critical notice, it's usually because something has gone wrong in American health, which means the ubiquitous McKesson bears some piece of the blame.

The most recent example involves the opioid crisis. While the lion's share of criticism has gone to drug manufactures, doctors and pharmacists, McKesson and other distributors have faced scrutiny from media and the government for not effectively tracking and responding to suspiciously high orders of opioids to certain parts of the country. (In 2017, McKesson agreed to pay a $150 million civil fine related to how it handled suspicious orders.)

But in today's California, McKesson is perhaps mostly noteworthy among our richest companies for sins it has not committed.

McKesson does not keep us glued to screens, and thus ignoring our loved ones. It does not spread hate through social media. It has not collaborated in the government's mass surveillance. Its CEO does not announce each year that he's going to visit all 50 states, learn Mandarin or eat only meat that he kills. And it did not help the Russians steal the 2016 presidential election.

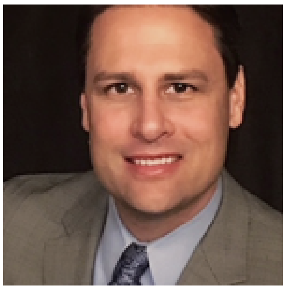
McKesson also hasn't whined constantly about the California business climate, or publicly threatened to leave the state, or forced San Francisco to give it massive tax breaks, as Twitter and Zendesk did.

There’s something to be said for a California-based business that is old, boring, and predictably corporate in this, our era of disruption.

Joe Mathews writes the Connecting California column for Zócalo Public Square.

Placer County hires executive officer from Colorado

Placer County Board of Supervisors this week voted to hire Todd Leopold to be the next county executive officer.



Todd Leopold

Leopold has more than 20 years of public sector experience, with more than 17 years in county government organizations in Colorado. He was the county manager for Adams County, Colo., from 2013 until last April.

Since then he has been a vice president for Aon Hewitt, a global professional services firm in the Denver area. He has been interviewing for various county leadership positions for about a year.

Leopold has spent all but one year of his professional career in the Denver area. The other year was in New Mexico right after he earned his bachelor's degree in political science. The Colorado native has a master's in public administration from the University of Colorado, Denver.

Leopold's starting salary will be $241,259. He and his wife have two teenage daughters.

Placer's previous county executive officer, David Boesch, retired effective Jan. 5 after five years. Leopold is expected to start Jan. 22. Until then, County Counsel Gerald Carden will be interim CEO.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Californians ditching coastal cities, moving inland

By Michelle Robertson, San Francisco Chronicle

Researchers have uncovered a surprising trend in California migration: The populations of inland counties are growing faster than that of urban coastal counties.

Phuong Nguyen, a research specialist at the California Department of Finance, began noticing the influx of Californians to inland regions, like San Joaquin and Sacramento, around 2014.

"We were surprised at that," Nguyen said. California's coastal regions have historically drawn in-state migrants who leave their provincial hometowns in search of employment opportunity and urban environments.

Read the whole story

Nevada 3rd most popular state for movers

By Jason Hidalgo, Reno Gazette-Journal

Nevada is moving up as a popular destination for folks looking to, well, make a move.

The Silver State ranked among the top places in the nation that posted a higher rate of people moving in versus people moving out last year, according to separate reports from two moving companies.

In one of the studies, Washoe County posted a higher rate of inbound relocations than the state as a whole. Reno-Sparks is also outpacing the nation for its influx of younger people moving into the area in the last decade, according to an analysis from UNR.

Read the whole story