Disputed alert system upgraded after NorCal fires

By Carolyn Lochhead and Joaquin Palomino, San Francisco Chronicle

A potentially lifesaving emergency alert system that Sonoma County officials decided against using during the deadly fires that swept through the area last month will finally get a long-planned upgrade, after nearly a yearlong delay by the Trump administration.

All wireless carriers will be required to more specifically target the areas where cell phones would receive Wireless Emergency Alerts, or WEAs. Sonoma County officials said they did not send such an alert as the fires raged late on the night of Oct. 8 because it would have hit phones all across the county, possibly causing panic and traffic jams that would have blocked people from getting in and out of the area.

They are among a number of local emergency officials who have found fault with the WEA system since it was put in place in 2012, including some who have declined to adopt it at all. Only about a third of all counties in the U.S. have access to the alert system, which is administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Read the whole story

Jury awards ex-Barton CFO

nearly $800,000

By Susan Wood

After hearing a high-level power struggle among Barton Health executives, an El Dorado County Superior Court jury on Wednesday awarded former Chief Financial Officer Steve Neff with almost $800,000.



Steve Neff

Neff’s lawsuit involved a violation of labor law, fraud and breach of contract.

The Nov. 8 judgment in favor of Neff includes $715,782.50 for “breach of the covenant of good faith, fair dealing and defamation” as well as $71,578.25 in punitive damages for defamation, Neff’s attorney Patricia Kramer said. Nothing further was provided from Kramer on the trial presided over by Judge Daniel Proud.

The civil case stemmed from disputes that occurred in contract negotiations and the seven months leading up to Neff’s termination in March 2015. The negotiations were between former Chief Executive Officer John Williams, then-Chief Medical Officer Clint Purvance – the current CEO. Neff was replacing the retiring Dick Derby, who returned to the job when Neff left.

The complaint filed a year ago this month laid out 11 counts ranging from negligent misrepresentation and breach of

contract to unlawful harassment and defamation of character.

For the jury, there were 19 items they had to rule on. Of those, they determined three in Neff's favor and 16 in Barton's.

It's unclear whether the South Lake Tahoe-based medical group will appeal as Barton attorney Tom Perry declined to speak to *Lake Tahoe News.*

"We are pleased the jury found in Barton's favor on most disputed issues," Barton spokeswoman Mindi Befu said in a statement. Barton added the penalty reflects the remainder of Neff's three-year contract, and punitive damages amounting to 10 percent of the contract sum were inflicted "because some statements that were attributed to Barton were considered defamatory" to the jury.

"Although we are not in agreement with all of the jury's findings, we respect their diligence and conscientious effort in dealing with the many complex issues in this difficult case," the statement reads. "We are glad to move forward and continue focusing our attention on the health of our community."

Neff claimed that he came on board with the notion and alleged promises that his CFO job would eventually lead to him taking over for Williams, with Purvance agreeing to mentor him.

The complaint adds that Neff took the job with the understanding that Purvance as the CMO "had no desire to fill that position and that the CFO position Neff was being recruited for would be the perfect segue for Neff to become CEO of Barton." It reads the CEO position paid about $600,000 a year base salary with potential bonuses that could result in another $300,000.

But that didn't happen. Instead, it appeared Neff and Purvance – who allegedly was supposed to be grooming the plaintiff –

were each vying for the top job.

The jury, though, did not find those claims in Neff’s favor.

Further, Neff listed a barrage of incidents in the complaint in which he was poorly treated and subjected to “frequent religious proselytizing in the workplace” with the “express purpose of receiving Christian indoctrination that conflicted with Neff’s own religious belief system.” He’s Jewish.

This too was not found to be true, according to the jury.

Neff took issue with Barton’s discrepancies posed during the recruitment process and of questionable working conditions and operations at the hospital while he was there. At one point, Neff alleged Williams told him he was “the king” of Barton and that “he was unaccountable to Barton’s board of directors.”

The discrespanices in the recruitment process were not ruled in Neff’s favor.

The contract between the hospital and Neff was a point of contention on several occasions. His tenure appeared rocky throughout the seven-month stint right up to his termination, including a claim he was “humiliated in front of his colleagues” despite the hospital allegedly insisting they were firing him for “no cause.”

The medical executive primarily laments about uprooting his family and enduring financial losses when he in good faith left a 17-month partnership at Renaissance Healthcare Partners in Massachusetts to go to work at Barton on a base salary of $285,000.

In the last few years, Neff has been unable to secure any position as a CFO or CEO and believes he’s “lost approximately $548,420 in income.”

Neff has worked in health care for 32 years. He now operates a BrightStar Care home care franchise in Carson City.

Lake Tahoe News Publisher Kathryn Reed was a reluctant rebuttal witness for the prosecution. She was brought in to testify about the story she had **written in 2015** after Neff was fired and the story **last June** about the lawsuit. Much of the testimony centered on the use of the word “fired.”

Bread & Broth needs donations for Thanksgiving

The Bread & Broth program at St. Theresa Catholic Church is observing its 28th anniversary of serving meals to community members in need by offering a special Thanksgiving dinner on Nov. 20 from 4-6pm in the Grace Hall, 1401 Lyons Ave., South Lake Tahoe.

The meal is open to all members of the community just as it has been every Monday since 1989.

The following donations are needed for the meal: carrots, celery, mushrooms, onions, oranges, fresh cranberries, sausage, fried onion toppings and butter. Cash donations are also appreciated.

Donations will be accepted until Nov. 15 at the Church Rectory office on weekdays between 9am-noon and 1-4pm.

For more info, please contact Kathi at 530.600.3605 or jk.olsen@sbcglobal.net.

Aviation career mentoring for students in Truckee

Truckee Tahoe Airport District will be hosting an aviation career mentoring program for local high school and college students.

The four-session series of mentoring events begins Jan. 18 at the Truckee Tahoe Airport.

The career mentoring program, officially known as the Truckee Tahoe Flight Plan, is designed and conducted by Pathways to Aviation, a nonprofit organization seeking to inform, inspire, and engage the aviation's next generation.

Students will learn about various aspects of the aviation industry in the first three sessions. They'll also receive career planning guidance, particularly in the areas of job searching, skills identification, resume writing, and networking. The fourth session will take the form of a networking reception, where they'll speak face-to-face with aviation industry executives and recruiters.

The Truckee Tahoe Flight Plan is open to all high school and college students and entirely free. To participate, students must register **online**.

Tahoe Fund looking for project ideas

Tahoe Fund is looking to fund projects that help solve the environmental challenges facing Lake Tahoe.

Submit project ideas **online** by Jan. 31.

Projects should improve Lake Tahoe's environment, reduce the risk of wildfire, and address climate change by enhancing water quality, restoring watersheds, creating healthier forests, improving transportation and fostering outdoor recreation.

Since 2010, the Tahoe Fund has raised funds from private donors for more than 25 environmental improvement projects including new bike paths, watershed restorations, removal of aquatic invasive species and environmental stewardship programs.

Eligible projects must be able to demonstrate how any necessary environmental permits will be obtained, enjoy strong community support, and have other sources of funding identified.

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Christmas tree permits going on sale in Truckee

For the 2017 holiday season, the Truckee Ranger District on the Tahoe National Forest will be selling 200 personal-use Christmas tree cutting permits.

The non-refundable permits are $20 and good for one tree. There is a limit of two permits per household and individuals must be present to purchase.

Permits may be used on the Truckee Ranger District between Nov. 17 and Dec. 25. Along with the permit and tree tag,

buyers will also receive a map showing cutting areas, requirements and helpful tips.

Permits may be purchased directly from the Truckee Ranger District office (10811 Stockrest Springs Road) during normal business hours through Dec. 22 or until permits are sold out. For more info, call 530.587.3558.

Calif. dream is becoming a bit nightmarish

By Matt Levin, KQED

The California dream isn't dead. It just upped and moved to South Dakota.

Less than half of people born in California in 1980 are making more money than their parents did as young adults. That's the lowest percentage of children out-earning their parents that California has seen since at least 1940.

By contrast, 62 percent of people born in South Dakota in 1980 out-earn their parents. That's the highest percentage for any state in the country.

Those figures come from a study by Stanford economist Raj Chetty and several prominent co-authors, whose widely publicized work on intergenerational income mobility—the likelihood children will fare better financially than their parents—has transformed what we know about the data behind the American dream.

Read the whole story

Truckee chamber creating grant fund

Truckee Chamber of Commerce has created the Truckee Core Values Fund to help support events that reinforce the town's core values. The fund will be powered by the Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation, with funding provided by the town of Truckee.

The purpose of this fund is to provide grants for events in Truckee that accomplish two things: high local citizen participation, and strong alignment with at least one primary Truckee core value. The values being healthy lifestyle; family friendly; natural beauty; community minded; arts, culture and history.

Unlike past Truckee chamber event grant funds focused on tourism, these grants are available for year-round events as long as they meet the two most important criteria: local engagement and core value alignment.

The process begins by submitting a letter of interest explaining how/why your nonprofit organization would qualify for funding. Letters are being accepted until Nov. 30. For more info, go **online**.

Victims in Kings Beach shootings identified

By Associated Press

Sheriff’s deputies say a long history of conflict between a motel manager and a tenant preceded a murder-suicide at Lake Tahoe where the manager shot a Kings Beach woman then turned the gun on himself.

The Placer County sheriff’s office identified the woman killed Saturday as 34-year-old Isabelle Gallon. The manager of the Northwood Pines on Tahoe’s north shore was 64-year-old Scott Kotter of Kings Beach.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

· El Dorado County Auditor-Controller Joe Harn was presented the award for financial transaction reporting by state Controller Betty Yee.

· Douglas County Sheriff’s Office’s latest deputies are Kendrick Ta, is a resident of the Carson Valley and a 2009 graduate from Douglas High School, and Jose Gutierrez, who immigrated from Honduras and graduated from Reno High School in 2007. Both served in the U.S. military.

· Truckee is having a Veterans Day ceremony on Nov. 11 at 11am at Victory Plaza – Spring Street and Donner Pass Road.

· Conservative Treatment for Neck and Back Pain is the

title of Zachary Child’s Dec. 6 lecture. He is a physician with Barton Health’s Tahoe Center for Orthopedics. The free talk is from 6-7pm in the board room at Lake Tahoe Community College.

· A $5,000 matching gift by Tahoe Blue Vodka has led to more than $10,000 raised to support the League to Save Lake Tahoe’s beach and community cleanups.