# Report: Capt. fell from truck because of coat issue

**Updated Sept. 14:**

**By Kathryn Reed**

An internal investigation by Lake Valley Fire Protection District revealed the captain who fell out of a moving engine was taking off his coat and his gear got hung up on the door lever.

The firefighter, whose name has not been made public, had to be airlifted to a hospital after the Aug. 27 incident. While he was released a couple days later, he has not returned to work. He sustained a concussion, and injuries to his head, face and hands.

Lake Valley isn't saying if he isn't at work because of the injuries or if he was placed on leave.

The crew was on their way home after being at a vehicle accident near Strawberry that afternoon. The truck was going about 25 mph. The engineer who was driving was able to pull over about 54 yards from where the captain landed.

Fire Chief Tim Alameda would not answer questions. He merely said read the online report.

That report says, "Fire district personnel tested numerous scenarios related to how the passenger door opened. Based on a series of scene reconstructions, it is likely the movement of the fire captain in the seat resulted in the protective cargo pant covering to catch on the outer lip of the passenger door handle. This caused the handle to unlatch the passenger door, ejecting the fire captain."

The state has not made a finding yet. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has six months to each a ruling. “This is still an open investigation,” Jeanne-Mairie Duval with CalOSHA told *Lake Tahoe News.*

The Lake Valley report states the captain had taken his seat belt off. This violates local and state law. It must be fastened at all times when a fire truck is moving.

Because Alameda isn’t talking, it’s not known if the captain or either of the two other firefighters who were in the engine were disciplined. The captain had the most seniority of the three.

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# Opinion: EDC pension prognostication pitfalls

**By Larry Weitzman**

In the *Sacramento Bee* was a recent front page article showing that 33 percent of metro fire retirees earn more than $100,000 a year in retirement, 216 out of 657 retirees. In fact, 13 of those retirees received more than $200,000 a year. It is an unsustainable system. And situations like this are occurring all over the state. It’s a result of unions controlling government. Thank you Gray Davis.

Larry Weitzman

El Dorado County has its own pension mess and our pension plan isn't even as generous as many jurisdictions in the rest of the state. But El Dorado County is in deep trouble because of the rapidly rising pension contributions that are going to be required. It means the cutting of senior programs, the further decay of our county maintained road system and reductions in public safety based on current projections. This isn't going to be a train wreck; it's going to be a train catastrophe.

It's a result of too optimistic rates of return (called the discount rate) that CalPERS based its generous growth upon. That discount rate was recently revised downward marginally but it's still not even close to real discount rate recommended by conservative actuaries of 6.2 percent. The projections as done in the most recent actuarial report projects a drop in the rate of return (discount rate) to 7 percent over a three-year phase in starting in the 2017-18 fiscal year where the rate is reduced to 7.375 percent which reduces to 7.25 percent for 2019-20 FY and 7 percent for the 2020-21 FY.

Because of EDC's huge unfunded accrued liability, pensions contributions will skyrocket for miscellaneous employees and public safety employees. Actuaries projected EDC to spend roughly $96 million in total miscellaneous employee salaries (17-18 FY) and about $30 million in public safety employees annually.

Miscellaneous EDC contributions grow

Salaries for this group is expected to grow by $5 million for 18-19 and by $3 million for every year thereafter through the fiscal year 24-25 at which time projected salaries will be about $121 million. But adding to these projections is a 56 percent growth in the employer contribution rate from 19.6 percent for the 17-18 FY to 30.7 percent for the year 24-25. The actual contribution from the taxpayers of EDC will grow from about $19 million (17-18 FY) to a little over $37 million for the year 24-25.

But it is a continuing growth in between as 18-19 grows to $22 million and so on. The total increase in pension contributions that will be required from the taxpayers over the next seven years is now estimated by the actuaries to total about $81 million alone. The growth in salaries is estimated to be $104.5 million. These numbers combine for a total increase in salary and benefits of $185 million.

And I haven't even told you of the bad news from the public safety side of the equation.

Public safety growth

The current contribution for pensions on public safety is 38 percent of the salaries which is projected at $30.5 for the year 17-18, which amounts to $11.6 million. Salaries are expected to grow to $38.5 million by FY 24-25.

The gorilla in the room becomes the projected 53.4 percent pension contribution or $20.5 million for year 24-25 in addition to the salaries. The increase in total public safety contributions will be $41.2 million from the base year of 17-18 through year 24-25.

When you add the two increases in pension contributions (miscellaneous and public safety) together, they total is $122.2 million in additional pension contributions that will be required over the next seven years alone over the base year (17-18). If pension contributions remained constant for the next seven years, the total would be about $214 million from county taxpayers. With the new actuaries, that new number projects to be about $336 million. And that is not including salary growth.

Salary growth is projected to be an additional $126.5 million or an amount just about equal to the amount of pension growth ($122.2 million) over the next seven years. The total growth will be about $248.7 million. That means county revenues would have to grow by an average of more than $35 million a year. Current General Fund revenue growth using the new EDC budget numbers show a growth rate of about 3 percent or $8 million annually from 2017-18 revenues of $248 million to $278 million for the year 21-22.

Projecting that growth to the year 24-25 the total extra revenue over the base year of 17-18 is about $212 million. In other words, EDC will still be upside down by about $37 million at the end of seven years just from additional salaries and pensions contribution requirements. There will be other cost increases as well, so $37 million may turn into well over $100 million.

And if the actuaries are correct and the rate of return should be at 6.2 percent, that $100 million will double or more.

Life expectancies are also considerably understated as well, further exacerbating the problem with unknown consequences.

As Rep. Tom McClintock, R-Garden Valley, said CalPERS enhanced pension benefits were based on “wildly unrealistic predictions of CalPERS future performance.” And as you can see even with the new lowed discount rate, it is still wildly optimistic.

It is so bad that the California state government identifies unfunded CalPERS liabilities at about $242 billion, while economists at the Hoover Institute calculate the real number at $769 billion, over three times the amount. Someone is not telling the truth and the size of the lie is about four times the state’s annual total budget. One Stanford study says the gap is almost $1 trillion, or about $77,000 per California household.

In a prior column from 2016, I wrote that the total increase in pension will grow by about $63 million over the next six years. Well, as you can see the problem just almost doubled (to $122.2 million) in just one year as EDC’s total unfunded liability to CalPERS have grown to $346 million as of June 30, 2016, an increase in just one year of $65 million or about 25 percent of total unfunded liabilities. The numbers have become mind boggling as well as unfathomable. The situation might become the biggest fiscal disaster ever to face any state government, a Hurricane Harvey in dollars, maybe more. And making matters even worse is the CalPERS discount rate is still way too optimistic meaning even with these increased contributions, it will not solve the problem. It will continue to get worse. And EDC in better shape than most other jurisdictions.

Several solutions are necessary in combination. Work forces all through the state have to be cut. Salaries have to be cut and finally the CalPERS pension system is in need of immediate reformation. This is a perfect example of an irresistible force meeting an immovable object. Otherwise, the best business to be in for lawyers will be chapter nine (municipal/county) bankruptcies. There will be hundreds of them.

*Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.*

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# Opinion: Improving lake clarity is a group effort

**By Joanne Marchetta**

Lake Tahoe is known around the world for its crystal-clear water. For several decades, Tahoe's clarity, which measured more than 100 feet in 1968, was declining each year because of stormwater pollution from poorly planned development and the lingering effects of historical activities such as cattle grazing and logging.

Joanne Marchetta

Clarity reached an all-time low of 64 feet in 1997, sparking fears that Tahoe’s clarity could be lost forever. But it also galvanized the federal government, the states of California and Nevada, local governments, and the private sector to launch the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program, a collaborative partnership to invest in projects that reverse clarity loss and address other environmental problems.

Partners in the Tahoe basin are working together to restore the lake’s clarity by reducing stormwater pollution from roads and communities and by restoring meadows, wetlands, and streams important to the lake’s health. That work is paying off. As of last year, Tahoe’s five-year average clarity measured 73 feet.

We still have a long way to go in restoring Lake Tahoe’s clarity to historic levels, but the long-running, year-after-year declines in Tahoe’s clarity have been halted. Scientists estimate that without all the work done over the last two decades clarity would have continued to decline each year and be 20 feet worse than it was in 1997.

Tahoe met a major milestone this summer through the total maximum daily load (TMDL) program, a science-based plan administered by the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Water Board and Nevada Division of Environmental Protection to reduce stormwater pollution and restore Tahoe’s water clarity back to its historic level of 97.4 feet by 2076.

Through the program, local governments and highway departments are making significant progress to reduce stormwater pollution. Every option is being pursued: Upgrading roads with curb, gutter, and infiltration basins; area-wide projects that capture and treat stormwater; more street sweeping; better management of traction abrasives applied to roadways; and restoration of natural areas that help improve Tahoe's water quality.

Working together over the last five years, TMDL partners have reduced fine sediment pollution by 12 percent. That's 268,500 pounds of fine sediment particles—about 70 dump truck loads—that will no longer wash into the lake and cloud its waters.

In that same five years, TMDL partners reduced the amount of phosphorus pollution entering the lake by 8.5 percent and the amount of nitrogen pollution entering the lake by 6 percent. It is important to keep these nutrients out of Lake Tahoe, where they fuel algae growth.

Through the TMDL program, partners around the lake have taken proactive steps to reduce stormwater pollution. They have shown that we can reduce pollution to restore Lake Tahoe's famous clarity, and the lake is responding favorably.

While we are making significant progress, we face many challenges. Foremost among them is climate change. Each of the last three years was among the warmest on record for global surface temperatures, and this summer is on track to be one of the warmest on record in California.

Warming air and water temperatures at Tahoe threaten to disrupt the lake's environment and ecosystems, and upset the delicate balance that has governed the lake for thousands of years. This poses major challenges for restoration initiatives and makes it all the more important to keep fine sediment, phosphorus, and nitrogen out of the lake.

Please join us in working to protect and restore Lake Tahoe's famous clarity. Install best management practices at your home or business to prevent soil erosion and stormwater runoff. Walk, bike, or take the bus instead of driving. If you have a lawn, don't over-fertilize or use phosphorus-only fertilizers, and consider getting rid of the lawn for native vegetation that doesn't require excessive watering or fertilizers. Pick up after your pet while enjoying Tahoe's trails and beaches. Join the League to Save Lake Tahoe's Pipe Keepers program to help monitor stormwater outfalls, or the Eyes on the Lake program for training on how to identify and report aquatic invasive species in the lake.

By working together and everyone doing their part, no matter how small, we build on our progress. Together we can make sure Tahoe's treasured clear waters are not only passed on, but improved, for future generations to enjoy.

*Joanne Marchetta is executive director of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.*

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# Calif.'s poverty rate remains nation's highest

**By Jim Miller, Sacramento Bee**

One in five Californians lives in poverty, the highest rate in the country, according to new data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

The "Supplemental Poverty Measure," factors in cost of living and shows a stubbornly high share of Golden State residents in poverty even as the national rate has dropped slightly.

Under the methodology, an estimated 20.4 percent of Californians lived below the poverty line in a three-year average of 2014, 2015 and 2016. That is virtually unchanged from the 20.6 percent average for 2013, 2014 and 2015, according to Tuesday's release.

**Read the whole story**

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# Funnel cloud over Lake Tahoe

**By KCRA-TV**

A funnel cloud was spotted Wednesday over Lake Tahoe as a tornado warning expired, the National Weather Service said.

A severe thunderstorm produced a funnel cloud about 4:05pm Sept. 13 over Lake Tahoe.

**Read the whole story**

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# Snippets about Lake Tahoe

· Chris Croft is leaving Tahoe Youth & Family Services effective Nov. 15. The interim executive director will be Virginia Berry.

· Camp Rich isn't the only place people don't like the new light system. Check out this **story**.

· El Dorado County Senior Legal Services reps will present on issues regarding scams directed toward seniors and how to prevent loved one from being abused financially by these scam artists. It will be Oct. 9 from 1-3pm at Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel in South Lake Tahoe. It is free.

· Tahoe Donner PUD and the Truckee Hometown Sears have partnered to promote recycling of older, working refrigerators. The $30 rebate applies to every qualifying refrigerator. To schedule the pick-up, call 530.550.0110; for info on the rebate, call 530.582.3931.

· The women's cancer support group meets Sept. 26 and Oct. 26, 6-7pm in the board room at Barton Memorial Hospital.

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# Learn infant CPR for free

Barton Health has added a free infant CPR class to its list of offerings.

It will be Sept. 16 from noon-1pm at 1077B 4th St., South Lake Tahoe.

Infant CPR is for new parents, grandparents, babysitters, nannies, and anyone who wants to learn lifesaving infant CPR and choking relief skills. This course does not offer a course completion card to meet a job requirement.

Register **online** under Parents & Family Education. Call 530.543.5549 or email fit@bartonhealth.org for more information.

# Drivers needed for senior meal program

The El Dorado County Senior Nutrition Program is looking for dedicated, caring volunteers for the home delivered meal program.

Volunteers generally works one day each week on an assigned route, delivering meals between 10:30am-noon.

Volunteers who cannot provide a weekly commitment may serve as back-up drivers.

Orientation sessions for new volunteer drivers are:

- Sept. 25, 1-2pm at the Placerville Senior Center, 937 Spring St., Placerville.
- Oct. 17, 1:30-2:30pm at the Placerville Senior Center, 937 Spring St., Placerville.

For more information, call 530.621.6160.

# Nev. may be home to pot motels, bars, clubs

**By Jenny Kane, Reno Gazette-Journal**

Nevada's local governments have the green light to license certain businesses that want to allow marijuana consumption on-site, according to an opinion released Sunday by the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

Businesses may establish lounges at which patrons can consume marijuana, and municipalities may create ordinances that require those businesses to purchase a license to do so. The privilege would also extend to events and concerts.

The opinion, requested by state Sen. Tick Segerblom, D-Las Vegas, noted that marijuana consumption must be in compliance with the state law, which limits the possession amount to an ounce of marijuana or an eighth-ounce of concentrate. Consumption within the facility cannot be visible to the public, nor can it be open to anyone under the age of 21.

**Read the whole story**

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# LGBT films to be shown at LTCC

The goal of the OutWest Film Fest featuring LGBT films from around the world is to educate and bring awareness about the LGBT community.

There will be two blocks of short films on Sept. 21. The first block is a 45 minutes. “Coming Out” is geared more toward education and begins at 6pm. The second block is also 45 minutes. “Proudly Living” is more for older audiences. It will start at 7pm.

The movies will be shown in the Duke Theatre at Lake Tahoe Community College.

Tickets are good for both. A portion of ticket sales will be donated to the LTCC Foundation earmarked for the Tahoe Pride

Equality Scholarship. Tickets are $10 for adults and $7 for students and are available **online**.