

Hazardous driving conditions expected in Sierra

Caltrans is warning motorists traveling over Donner or Echo summits to be prepared for travel delays through Monday morning.

The National Weather Service says snow levels may be as low as 2,000 feet and that up to 3 feet of snow could fall in the higher elevations.

Windy conditions are also forecast, so low-visibility, whiteout conditions may occur.

Motorists are required to carry chains even if driving a four- or all-wheel drive vehicle with mud and snow rated tires.

Motorists using cable (ladder) chains may be turned around on Highway 267 at the Northstar and Kings Beach chain control checkpoints. Although cable chains are legal traction devices, they've proven to be ineffective when attempting to drive over Brockway Summit during heavy snow storms.

Highway 50 traffic over Echo Summit may be held intermittently for avalanche control. Highway 89 over Emerald Bay is currently open, but may be closed due to avalanche hazards. Traffic on Interstate 80 may also be held intermittently to clear traffic incidents or if low-visibility conditions occur.

Traffic alert for Highway 50

in Carson City

Highway 50 and south Carson Street will be reduced to one lane in each direction March 6-9 from about 9pm to 6am.

Freeway signs are being installed in anticipation of the connector opening.

The detours include:

March 7: South Carson Street will be temporarily closed directly south of the Highway 50 intersection between approximately 1-4am. Traffic will be detoured via Clear Creek and Snyder avenues.

March 8: South Carson Street will be temporarily closed directly north of the Highway 50 intersection between approximately 1-4am. Traffic will be detoured via Clear Creek and Snyder avenues.

March 9: Highway 50 will be closed directly west of the intersection of South Carson Street between approximately 1-4am. Traffic needing to travel between Lake Tahoe and Carson City during the three-hour closure period will need to detour through Kingsbury Grade or Mt. Rose Highway.

The project is expected to complete, opening the final segment of freeway to traffic, in late summer 2017.

Rethinking pain management to curb drug abuse

By Kathryn Reed

Understanding drug addiction – by the user, health care professionals and loved ones – is the first step.

Terri Cherry, retired pharmacist from Barton Health, this week gave a talk about prescription drug abuse. She emphasized that it is a disease, not a weakness – and certainly no one makes a conscious decision to become addicted.

“Addictive habits have common physical attributes. They release the chemical dopamine. It’s a feel good drug; a euphoric feeling, positive reinforcement so you want to do it again. That’s part of the addiction cycle,” Cherry said.

In 2015, 10.3 million people in the United State were using opioids for non-medical reasons, Cherry said. Between 2004 and 2011, visits to emergency rooms for misuse or abuse of opioids increased 153 percent.

Opioids are both legal and illegal. They include OxyContin, Vicodin, codeine, morphine, fentanyl, and heroine.

One of the problems with pain management is that people want to get to where they don’t have any pain. That, according to Cherry, can be an unrealistic expectation. It is also one of the ways to become addicted – people erasing the pain with just one more pill.

“People need to accept there may be some level of pain. They need to work toward regaining function rather than strive for being pain free,” Cherry said.

People also need to take some responsibility. It starts with family and friends often being the first supplier. They have

some leftover meds and willingly share them. Cherry said that must stop for a variety of reasons. When those run out, it's a trip to the doctor's office. Patients need to ask questions – to question the dosage and quantity, to make sure it's appropriate for them.

“Start low, go slow” is Cherry's mantra for drugs. She also advocates for non-pharmaceutical practices such as massage, using heat and/or ice, aromatherapy, music, anti-inflammatories and anti-depressants.

Naloxone is a drug that reverses an opioid overdose. Pharmacists are allowed to prescribe it without going to a doctor.

“It effectively blocks opioid receptors. The goal is to try to save some lives,” Cherry said. Seeking immediate medical care is still necessary.

She said the pharmacies in South Lake Tahoe require a prescription because the pharmacists have not gone through the training to be able to dispense the drug on their own. Rite-Aid, Cherry said, will administer it without a doctor's prescription, but it must be ordered.

Cherry said those more prone to becoming addicted to prescription meds have a family history of abuse, use multiple providers, take multiple drugs, have medication with high doses, have a mental illness, are low income, lack education and live in a rural area.

Addiction, though, is a disease that can strike anyone – any age, ethnicity, income level or profession.

Opinion: Reno housing not keeping up with jobs

By Mike Kazmierski

I hate to sound like Chicken Little, but this is not a new message. In July 2015, yes, over 18 months ago, I wrote an article titled "The Impending Housing Crisis." That article talked about the 50,000 new jobs we were expecting in the region and the 30,000 to 40,000 new housing units we would need to accommodate that growth.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, we have added more than 20,000 new jobs since then, but added just 4,000 new housing units over the same 18 months. This is a problem. At 1.5 jobs per housing unit, a common jobs to housing ratio, we should have produced 13,000 new housing units. Is there any wonder why our housing prices have doubled, our rental rates are up 30 to 50 percent and our vacancy rates are at record lows?



Mike
Kazmierski

So, yes, the sky is actually falling and the adverse impacts of failing to meet these growing housing needs will hurt us all. So what can we do?

The first thing we must do is understand that this is not a bubble. We need to acknowledge that this is not the last

housing boom, which was built off of speculation, but one based on real sustainable job growth. Additionally, we must recognize that this has become a genuine crisis and we have frittered away the time we had to slowly accelerate our construction efforts to accommodate this growth. There is little doubt we will add nearly 30,000 additional jobs to the region in the next three years, so our failure to address this very real need, as a community, is a recipe for disaster. It would be as if we just got notified by the weather service that due to the heavy rains in the mountains we could expect to see a major flood in a week, but then we choose to do nothing to prepare for it.

Some may say fine, we don't want this growth anyhow. To those that ignore the warnings, like a flood, failure to prepare will just make the impacts of this critical shortage of housing that much worse. Those who will be hurt the most are the vulnerable in our community; minimum wage citizens; the working poor, our elderly, the retired, and our college students. The affordable housing they are now in will soon be gone.

The market is all about supply and demand, and as a community we have failed to keep up on the supply side, so as demand continues to go up, so will the prices. As prices go up, we also encourage more urban sprawl and associated traffic with the longer commutes. A growing housing shortage can build a real pricing bubble that will at some point make it too expensive to live here, driving the jobs and our talent away and forcing us into a localized recession of our own doing.

There are many things we can do to avert this crisis. The key players must get on the same sheet of music and work together to find a way to get our new housing starts up – dramatically. We were at over 6,000 housing starts in 2005 and averaged over 5,200 new housing units in the six years before the recession. Yet over the past eight years we averaged just 1,350 units a year with our peak of just under 3,000 last year, which is

still a fraction of our pre-recession rate.

Here is what we are hearing from our construction and development industry. “The costs of everything are going up. There is an increasing shortage of construction workers, land prices are increasing and the land that was ready to go has been absorbed, so it will take longer to get more housing developments and apartment projects through the planning process. Additionally, it is taking much longer to get government approval to build housing and the increasing scrutiny by our elected officials, even after approvals are received by their planning commissions, is further slowing the process and increasing the costs. It is almost like charging triple and requiring weeks of paperwork to draw and fill sandbags just days before the flood.”

So now is the time to embrace this challenge as a region. We did it when our schools were overcrowded and falling apart by passing WC-1. It will take the same community effort and government’s realization that it can no longer be “business as usual” when it comes to housing.

Reducing fees, fast tracking housing developments and encouraging, even incentivizing infill of housing projects, are all things to consider.

The development and construction industry must also look at ways to get affordable housing up as fast as possible. It will take a collaborative effort between local governments and the private sector to address this crisis. Now let’s start filling those sandbags because the flood is coming.

Mike Kazmierski is president and CEO of the Economic Development Authority of Western Nevada.

Anderson second at Burton U.S. Open

By USSA

VAIL — Jamie Anderson (Meyers) scored her 11th Burton U.S. Open podium on Friday, with a second-place finish on the challenging Vail slopestyle course. Chris Corning (Silverthorne, Colo.) was the top American finisher for the men, with one of the best runs of his career, landing in fifth.

Anderson, who has never missed the U.S. Open podium in 11 attempts, was happy to make the podium, considering she was riding with an injury.

“I’m riding with a broken elbow right now, so I’ve been super mindful this week,” she said after her second run. “I wasn’t sure I was even going to compete, so I’m super happy to put a run down.”

Anna Gasser of Austria took her first U.S. Open title and Spencer O’Brien of Canada rounded out the podium in third. Julia Marino (Westport, Conn.), who qualified through to the final in fifth, was forced to drop from Friday’s competition after a hard crash in warm ups. She finished sixth overall.

Corning scored his best U.S. Open finish with fifth, but he rode much better than the scoreboard conveyed. His first run received the highest score, despite the fact that Corning upped the difficulty in his second, stomping a frontside 1620 off the final jump.

Mark McMorris of Canada took the win over Canadian teammate Mikey Ciccarelli and Sweden’s Sven Thorgren in third. Red Gerard (Silverthorne, Colo.) also made the final, finishing seventh, while Brandon Davis (Big Bear, Calif) was 10th.

Injured Vail skier sues snowboarder after collision

By Kirk Mitchell, Denver Post

A California woman has sued a snowboarder who plowed into her from behind at Vail Ski Resort, causing severe injuries, including broken bones.

Hsu Chiang Chou sued Philip Moroco II in Denver U.S. District Court on Thursday for a collision that happened Jan. 17 on Vail Mountain, according to the lawsuit filed Thursday by Denver attorney Russell Hatten.

Hsu Chou is seeking reimbursement for economic and non-economic damages and lawsuit costs including attorneys fees. Damages exceed \$75,000, according to the lawsuit. Hsu Chou suffered clavicle and rib fractures, the lawsuit says.

Read the whole story

12 weeks of parenting classes in S. Lake Tahoe

Live Violence Free will start a new parenting class on Wednesdays, beginning March 8, 3:45-4:45pm.

The course is 12 weeks. It is designed to help parents provide a nurturing, structured environment for their children.

Participants in the course will be taught how to encourage their children and expand their emotional intelligence. Parents will also build skills to set limits, manage tantrums, and help little ones regulate their own emotions.

Live Violence Free is located at 2941 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

To sign up for the class, contact Marta McLean at 530.544.2118.

Tools not adequate to measure Sierra snow

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

One sure sign the Sierra Nevada is experiencing a historic winter is the snowpack is getting too deep for devices scientists use to measure it.

It's a problem that cropped up Wednesday when researchers sought to confirm snow depth at a data site on Slide Mountain at Mount Rose Ski Tahoe near Reno.

"We're not even close," hydrologist Jeff Anderson said after jamming an aluminum tube more than 16 feet into the snowpack hoping to reach the ground below.

Read the whole story

Letter: SLT fire appreciative of coat donations

To the community,

This year was South Lake Tahoe Fire Rescue's second year hosting a coat drive for kids. It ran from mid-December to the end of January, and was once again a success.

I am inspired by the generosity and compassion displayed by our residents who stopped by one of our two stations and donated many coats and other miscellaneous items.

We received 138 children's coats, 54 adult-sized coats and 18 miscellaneous items including scarfs, ski bibs and hats. Many of all these items were brand new with tags.

Kid sizes went to Choices for Children and adult sizes went to Tahoe Youth & Family Services for high school kids. Eight went to El Dorado County Child Protective Services. There is a real need in our town for coats for our youth, particularly due to our adventurous weather this year.

It is so inspiring and admirable to witness how people care within the South lake Tahoe community.

Thank you to all who donated.

Kim George, South Lake Tahoe Fire Rescue

Tribal officer in car

accident in Markleeville

A Washoe tribe police officer was involved in a traffic collision on Friday morning.

A 19-year-old Markleeville woman was driving north on Diamond Valley Road just before 11am March 3 when she pulled onto the shoulder. As the 25-year-old male officer as passing the woman's vehicle she "immediately made an abrupt U-turn, directly into the path of the police," according to the California Highway Patrol.

Both vehicles sustained extensive damage. No injuries were reported. The names of the two drivers have not been released.

The accident is under investigation.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*