

USFS withholding name of suspect

The U.S. Forest Service still refuses to release the name of the man who drove his SUV into the meadow near Angora Lakes last month.

No reason has been given why his name has not been released.

He was cited for operating a vehicle off designated routes.

Without a name, though, it is impossible for the public to know what actually happens to the suspect.

“The federal government did not pay the fee for removing the vehicle, the tow company will get reimbursed from the gentleman when he wants his vehicle back I assume,” Heather Noel, spokeswoman for the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, told *Lake Tahoe News* in an email. “As the damage was in the meadow when it was wet, it would have caused additional damage to repair it at the time. The hope is the area naturally repairs itself however we will reassess when it is appropriate to ensure that is the case.”

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Ice carving contest benefits Truckee nonprofit

Truckee River Winery's 2017 Wine n' Ice will take place March 8.

It is a benefit the Truckee River Watershed Foundation, a local nonprofit that “identifies, coordinates, funds and implements restoration, prevention and monitoring projects directly related to the health, beauty, and economy of the watershed.”

Ten competitors will be given the chance to sculpt a 300-pound block of ice into a sculpture. This year’s carving competition will be centered around a theme and each sculpture must be inspired by the Truckee River. The top three contestants will win an assortment of prizes.

Participants must be 18 years or older and provide their own carving tools. Registration is **online** and ends Feb. 20.

January snowfall in Lake Tahoe not a record



People are having a hard time finding places to put snow. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

It seems to depend on how long one has lived in the Tahoe-Truckee area whether the snow brings a smile or a grimace.

For those who have been in the area for decades, the January storms trigger memories of winters gone by – about how this feels normal. For those who are more recent transplants, they are used to the drought years being normal.

With only one week left in the month and based on the current forecast, it's doubtful any records will be set in the Lake Tahoe Basin for moisture – at least for January.

Records have not been kept that long for South Lake Tahoe, so meteorologists look to numbers in Tahoe City as their gauge.

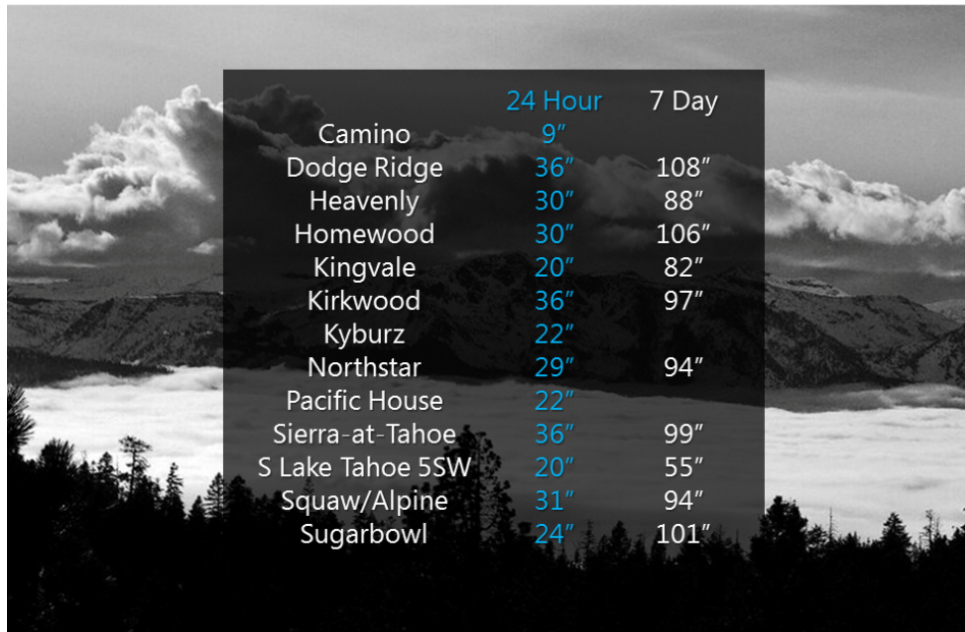
This January is the second wettest on record for Tahoe City. As of Jan. 23 Tahoe City had received 21.29 inches of liquid precipitation. This is a combination of rain and snowmelt. The record of 22.82 inches was set in 1969.

Tahoe City this year has received 135.5 inches of snow (11.29 feet). That's good enough for fifth place in the record book for a January. The record is 238 inches, set in 1916. Fourth place is 162 inches. Forecasters don't believe that number will be touched this month.

Ski resorts will have even higher totals. For example, Sierra-at-Tahoe is boasting about 24 feet of snow in the first 24 days of 2017.

Sierra Snow Totals

Valid January 17th-23rd, 2017 7am

A graphic showing snow totals for various Sierra locations. The background is a black and white photograph of a mountain range with snow-covered peaks and a valley. A semi-transparent black box is overlaid in the center, containing a table of snow totals. The table has three columns: location, 24 Hour, and 7 Day. The 24 Hour column is highlighted in blue.

	24 Hour	7 Day
Camino	9"	
Dodge Ridge	36"	108"
Heavenly	30"	88"
Homewood	30"	106"
Kingvale	20"	82"
Kirkwood	36"	97"
Kyburz	22"	
Northstar	29"	94"
Pacific House	22"	
Sierra-at-Tahoe	36"	99"
S Lake Tahoe 5SW	20"	55"
Squaw/Alpine	31"	94"
Sugarbowl	24"	101"

Source: *National
Weather Service Sacramento*

The last wave of storms was more typical of Sierra winter storms, while earlier this month it was a strong atmospheric river that engulfed much of the West.

"Right now there are no big systems on the horizon for the end of the month," Dawn Johnson, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Reno, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "There are some weak ones, so maybe we'll get a couple more inches."

A few snow showers will be found throughout the region on Tuesday, with a weak system touching the area on Wednesday, according to Johnson. Sunshine should dominate the weekend. An inversion could make the valley areas colder than at higher elevations.

"The really long range forecast is probably the first week of February we are going to get wet again," Johnson said.

It's too early to know where that storm will land and what amount of moisture it might bring.

For the immediate future, temperatures will not be increasing to the point where flooding is a concern. But wet roadways are likely to become icy each night with the melt-freeze ritual. Expect black ice. The daytime highs through the weekend are not expected to be much above freezing, while overnight lows could be in single digits in various parts of the Tahoe-Truckee area.

Impassable roads keep LTUSD closed again

Narrow roads throughout Lake Tahoe Unified School District's area making it impossible for buses to pick up kids today. This means Jan. 24 is another snow day.

Donner Trail Elementary in Tahoe Truckee Unified is closed because the power is out. All other TTUSD schools are open.

Douglas County students at the lake will be picked up at main bus routes.

Snowplow crews will continue to widen roads today, and will keep at it until are passable.

– Lake Tahoe Unified School District

Water conservation hard with snow in Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

It's hard to want to conserve water when it keeps raining and snowing.

That was part of the message delivered to the South Tahoe Public Utility District board last week by Donielle Morse. She is the district's water conservation specialist.

"The sense of urgency is no longer there," Morse told the board.

Participation in the turf buyback program dropped significantly last year and water conservation dropped dramatically from 2015.

2013 was the benchmark year the state of California used for basing water conservation numbers. This is how South Tahoe PUD stacked up against the base year in terms of reducing water use:

	June	July	August	September	October
2015	24.5%	27.4%	20.2%	15.7%	7.3%
2016	12.8%	7.3%	5.8%	7.9%	14.0%

Source: STPUD

Complaints about water abusers dropped from 158 residences in 2015 to 41 in 2016.

"My goal is not to fine customers. It is to work with them and educate them," Morse said.

Fines are reserved for those who defiantly refuse to comply. Two residential customers were fined last years. Ten commercial properties were talked to.

The state is still claiming there is an emergency. Reps from STPUD were in Sacramento this month advocating the state rescind that declaration.

“There are so many agencies stressing to them that they not call it an emergency when it’s not,” Morse said.

The state water board will meet Feb. 2 at which time a decision on the emergency status is expected. While this area of the state is no longer in a drought, parts of Southern California still are. It is up to the governor to declare when the state is and is not officially in a drought. Gov. Jerry Brown has yet to declare the multi-year drought is over.

Despite STPUD customers returning to wanting green lawns and long showers, the district is continuing to remind people water is not an unlimited resource even if it seems like it, especially this winter.

The district has embraced the state’s campaign from 2016 touting efficiency and reducing waste.

Instead of focusing on getting people to remove their grass, for the upcoming season there will be a “suite of options” wrapped into a landscape water efficiency program. The district will work with residential and commercial properties on using less water and perhaps doing less dramatic changes than eliminating all turf.

The district continues to offer rebates for people getting rid of old washers and toilets as ways to incentivize less water use.

Opinion: Can a rocket scientist straighten out EDC?

By Larry Weitzman

For the past five or so years El Dorado County government has been out of control and the buck stops with the elected Board of Supervisors, the only county governing body which is answerable to the people. While it started before the Supervisor Brian Veerkamp regime, because of a politician's desire to be loved by everyone and not knowing how to say no, the downhill rolling boulder (of county government) has appeared to have gathered momentum from the debris that has attached itself to it.

It started gathering momentum in 2013, after then CAO Terri Daly had put in place the first part of her team, the incompetent Kim Kerr. Kerr had left a trail of destruction just prior as city manager of Ione. Kerr got a huge raise too. Kerr couldn't even properly and legally transfer a property tax base from Latrobe to El Dorado Hills Fire. She even had trouble buying snowplows, but she was a friend of Daly's so it's OK. The Veerkamp regime did nothing.



Larry Weitzman

A new contract for miscellaneous employees was in negotiation (that's a euphemism for give away the farm) in the latter half of 2013. The union asked for a three-year contract with raises of 3 percent a year and would probably have settled for 2

percent, but Daly offered them 5 percent annually over three years. Maybe it was because there was a \$54 million cash balance on June 30, 2013, but the union of course took the 15 percent deal.

It was a tens of million-dollar giveaway of taxpayer money. The Veerkamp regime approved the raise, especially Norma Santiago, who said on Daly's none too soon departure, "Daly was a champion for EDC employees." Santiago left out the residents and taxpayers of EDC.

While the Veerkamp regime looked on, Daly hired more incompetents (one of the rules of government bureaucrats is always hire your friends first. It gives you built in loyalty and yes people to support you). She did that with Kerr, Kelly Webb and Pam Knorr attempting to give them all huge raises. In the Webb case, she was appointed interim IT director. After she messed up the county IT billing costing the county millions of dollars, Webb was awarded step increases, permanent IT directorship and Daly tried to get her an illegal retroactive pay bump. The Veerkamp regime said yes to the all of this including the retroactive and the other raises. But Webb didn't meet the minimum qualifications and raises were not paid by the auditor because the BOS acted unconstitutionally. Webb shortly retired with a huge six figure pension and benefits. Webb's total compensation for years 2013 and 2014 during this nepotism exceeded \$200,000 per year.

Knorr, who had no prior human resource experience and who separated from her prior employment under questionable circumstances, got hired in at a \$30,000 annual salary increase over the then current highest salary ever paid to an HR director in EDC. The Veerkamp regime approved it. The hiring was done with a five-day recruitment, the shortest possible time allowed by EDC policy. The Veerkamp regime approved it along with the \$30,000 raise, plus attendant benefits. Never mind never questioning her about all her

aliases she used in the past and her claims against her prior employer. Background checks before and after Knorr was more like a chroma key screen, it was anything you like. While at Alpine County, she claimed her doctor told her that the Alpine BOS should not talk to her and ended up receiving a huge settlement payout, bordering on extortion. And the Veerkamp regime of the BOS hired her. They really vetted that one.

It was Knorr who recommended Larry Combs. The Veerkamp regime hired him too. Combs went on to hire his friends from Sutter County, our recently hired CAO, Corley (who earns \$182,000 plus benefits) and the new risk manager, Marco Sandoval, who earns well into six figures. All this under the nose of the Veerkamp regime.

The following is an excerpt from the Sept. 14, 2015, BOS meeting of the Veerkamp regime at about 2:55pm:

Supervisor Ron Mikulaco: *"CAO, so I know that we met back through draft budget hearings. There was a challenge with being structurally balanced. With what you mentioned, are we going to be able to come out of this structurally balanced?"*

CAO Larry Combs: *"We are structurally balanced. The El Dorado budget is, in my opinion, in good financial shape."*

Mik: *"As we absorb the last of the third pay raise, are we going to be able to maintain a structural balance?"*

Combs: *"In my opinion, yeah."*

Nothing could have been further from the truth. There was plenty of local writings and warnings by the county auditor that considering the growing pension and health cost issues, the new sheriff's facility and crumbling roads of which Combs took road maintenance out of the budget, EDC was heading into an abyss. Combs knew the cliff was near, but the Veerkamp regime didn't want to hear the bad news. The Veerkamp regime didn't properly vet Combs either. Guess who recommend Combs?

Knorr.

Our CDA approved a development deal in EDH a few months ago, writing to the Veerkamp regime that the “development agreement” was still valid. It wasn’t because it expired. No one in CDA caught this. Did anyone lose their job? Of course not, and if they did it would be government musical chairs played with an extra chair.

Elected to the BOS and taking his seat on Jan. 3 was a new District One Supervisor John Hidahl. His resume says he was a rocket scientist, an engineer who worked on propulsion systems for Aerojet who designs and builds rocket motors and he also worked for (Northrop) Grumman, an aircraft design firm with a storied and fabulous reputation. They were and are responsible for the F-14 Tomcat (Top Gun), the B-2 bomber and soon to be B-21 Raider. Grumman, because their aircraft were built so strong and rugged were called the “Grumman Iron Works.”

Hidahl appears to be very intelligent. Will he require the same kind of quality control that the lives of so many of our Navy and Air Force pilots relied on including the pilots and astronauts who flew the Space Shuttle powered by Aerojet/Rocketdyne rocket motors? What goes on in EDC government wasn’t allowed at his former employers. Is he going to demand the excellence of his former employers or get in lock step with the Veerkamp regime of abject mediocrity?

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

Brown declares emergency

because of Jan. storms

By Associated Press

Gov. Jerry Brown has declared a state of emergency for 50 California counties that were drenched by winter storms.

Monday's two proclamations cover counties up and down the state that were hit with flooding, mudslides, erosion and damage to roads and highways from December and January storms.

Brown says "conditions of extreme peril" exist in the counties because of damage estimated in the tens of millions of dollars.

The declarations direct Caltrans to ask for immediate assistance through the Federal Highway Administration's Emergency Relief Program. Brown also directs the state Office of Emergency Services to provide assistance to local governments.

With South Lake Tahoe and El Dorado County declaring local emergencies, and Placer County expected to on Jan. 24, the state declaration paves the way for the local jurisdictions to recoup expenses.

Letter: Proud of SLT's women's march

To the community,

I am so proud to have been part of the Bi-State Women's March on Saturday. And I am proud that Soroptimist International of

South Lake Tahoe sanctioned the opportunity for 500 women, men and children to march, not as a protest, but in unison to affirm that “women’s rights are human rights”.

This march was a very peaceful demonstration, starting out with a few hundred participants gathered at the Hard Rock, proceeding down the walkway to the California line where the walkers morphed into a single traffic lane. And thanks to South Lake Tahoe Police Chief Brian Uhler’s support and the awareness of we mountain people the 2 1/2-mile procession was orderly and very responsive to the encouragement of passing autos and their occupants.

But then, at the beginning and all along the march route, people crossed the highway from motels and shopping venues to join in; others jumped out of cars to march along and other participants waiting at various locales joined in ... and we had 500 women, men and children feeling not a chill but the warmth of the moment.

The snow? It only added to the moment!

And kudos to all the women whose commitment to human rights brought this march to life.

Del Laine, South Lake Tahoe

Tips for clearing snow from roofs

South Lake Tahoe’s Building Division is providing the following information to assist homeowners and commercial property owners in assessing potential hazardous conditions

due to the snow load on their properties.

Flat and low pitched roofs, most often found on industrial buildings, are at greatest risk of buckling under heavy snow and ice accumulations. Lower roofs, where snow accumulates from higher roof areas are also vulnerable to damage and collapse. Also, some commercial properties have sections dedicated to the storage and display of seasonal merchandise protected only by light-weight, corrugated metal roofs that are likely not able to sustain excess snow loads. Air-inflated structures that protect athletic fields or similar facilities may be susceptible to increased roof loads imposed by accumulated snow.



Now is the time to clear roofs of snow while there is a break in the weather.
Photo/LTN

Tips for removing snow and ice from roofs and other areas:

- Use a snow rake for pitched roofs (available at most hardware stores) to remove snow from your roof.
- Start from the edge and work your way into the roof.
- Try to shave the snow down to a 2 or 3 inches on the

roof instead of scraping the roof clean, which will risk damage to your shingles or other roof covering.

- Keep in mind that any metal tool could conduct electricity if it touches a power line.
- Metal tools will do more damage to your roof.
- Shovel snow from flat roofs throwing the snow over the side away from the building.
- Most plastic shovels are better, except for the ones with curved blades—those too will do some damage to your roof.
- Remove large icicles carefully if they're hanging over doorways and walkways. Consider knocking down icicles through windows using a broom stick.
- Wear protective headgear and goggles when performing any of these tasks.
- Consider hiring professionals to do the job. The combination of heights plus ice makes this one of the more dangerous house chores.
- If you don't hire professionals, at least have someone outside with you in case anything does go wrong.
- Keep gutters and drains clean, free of ice and snow and keep downspouts clean at ground level.
- Don't use electric heating devices like hair dryers or heat guns to remove snow and ice.
- Don't use open-flame devices to remove snow and ice.

How to recognize potentially hazardous snow load on roofs:

- Sagging roofs
- Severe roof leaks
- Cracked or split wood members
- Bends or ripples in supports
- Cracks in walls or masonry
- Sheared off screws from steel frames
- Sprinkler heads that have dropped down below ceiling tiles
- Doors that pop open

- Doors or windows that are difficult to open
- Bowed utility pipes or conduit attached at ceiling
- Creaking, cracking or popping sounds.

– *City of South Lake Tahoe*

Pension costs limit local government services

By Brad Branan, Sacramento Bee

In South Lake Tahoe, roads are crumbling, and the city is struggling to find ways to repair years of damage caused by harsh weather and snowplows. Orangevale residents worry that fire crews won't arrive quickly enough in an emergency after their local fire station was closed during the recession.

Despite an economic recovery, local government leaders in California say rising pension costs have made it more difficult to restore some programs they cut during the recession.

Those plans will cost local governments an average of 42 cents for every dollar in current employee salary costs next year, a 25 percent increase over two years ago, the *Sacramento Bee* found in a review of records for 26 of the largest local governments in Sacramento, El Dorado, Placer and Yolo counties participating in CalPERS.

Read the whole story