

Sierra Nevada, Death Valley and the rain shadow effect

By Judy Lehmberg, CBS News

The beautiful Sierra Nevada's name translates very literally from Spanish as "mountain snowfall," meaning snow-covered mountains. The reason why the peaks are snow-covered and why hot, dry Death Valley is east of the Sierra Nevada range is the same: They are both the result of the rain shadow effect.

To understand how this terrain-induced meteorological effect causes precipitation to occur in one place and dry, hot deserts in another, a little knowledge of relative humidity is needed.

The Earth's atmosphere contains water molecules in the gaseous state, and these create pressure; the more water molecules, the greater the pressure. The higher the temperature, the greater maximum amount of water the air can hold, and therefore higher vapor pressure.

Read the whole story

Prescribed fires planned for North Shore

If conditions allow, the North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District may conduct prescribed fire operations on Jan. 9.

Operations may take place near Tahoe City and Incline Village.

To receive prescribed fire notifications, send an email to pa_ltbmu@fs.fed.us.

Before prescribed fire operations are conducted, agencies post road signs around areas affected by prescribed fire, send email notifications and update the local fire information line at 530.543.2816.

Smoke from prescribed fire operations is normal and may continue for several days after an ignition depending on the project size and environmental conditions.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



- Tahoe Truckee Unified School District Superintendent Robert Leri will give the first state of the district address on Jan. 11 at 5:30pm in the Palisades Ballroom at the Village at Squaw Valley.
- The Thunderbirds will return to the Minden-Tahoe Airport on Oct. 7-8.
- Tahoe Beach Retreat's Tahoe's Got Talent auditions and show have been postponed. It will be rescheduled later this spring.
- Douglas County Sheriff's Office is now on Twitter – @DouglasSheriff.
- Free sand bags are available at Truckee Fire Station 92 located at 11473 Donner Pass Road as well as the Department of Public Works at 10969 Stevens Lane.

Letter: Help at warm room appreciated

To the community,

Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless would like to thank Champion Floors to Go for their donation of carpet and floor runners to the South Lake Tahoe warm room. This donation helps keep our guests cozy and comfortable in our facility this winter. With recent extreme weather patterns in Tahoe, we are proud to offer overnight refuge from the elements to men and women who are experiencing homelessness.

TCH opened the South Lake Tahoe warm room for the winter 2016-17 season on Dec. 18 and served 56 different individuals in December, providing 455 shelter bed nights. The Warm Room plans to remain open through early April. In addition to warm beds and light food and beverages, TCH provides access to social workers and resource referrals to assist our neighbors without housing.

Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless is seeking volunteers and donations. We have one final training on Jan. 9 at 7pm at Unity at the Lake at 1195 Rufus Allen Blvd. Email Rachel@tahoehomeless.org for more information. We can be contacted at tahoewarmroom@gmail.com or 775.573.0822. Donations are welcomed to aid in funding. Checks can be made payable to Tahoe Coalition for the Homeless and mailed to PO Box 13514, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96151.

Sincerely,

Marissa Muscat, executive director

Future of EDC courthouse being decided

By Ben van der Meer, Sacramento Business Journal

Placerville is taking feedback about reuse options for the El Dorado County courthouse in the city's downtown.

On the city's website and in utility bills, a survey lists several options, including a visual/performing arts center, public market, hotel and college campus extension. There are 11 choices, including one for those taking the survey to suggest their own ideas.

Placerville City Manager Cleve Morris said the survey results will be part of an ongoing study by a blue ribbon committee to figure out the best use.

Read the whole story

Steadman revolutionized orthopedic medicine

By John Meyer, Denver Post

VAIL— When a teen-aged Richard Steadman answered the phone one fateful weekend morning in 1955 at his family's home in Sherman, Texas, the voice at the other end of the line was that of Paul "Bear" Bryant, calling with a scholarship offer

to play football for him at Texas A&M. Steadman planned on going to Harvard until Bryant called with what he thought a better offer.

Bryant would go to win 323 games, including six national titles at Alabama. Steadman would go on to revolutionize orthopedics and sports medicine. Six decades later Steadman still tells the story of Bryant's recruiting pitch with a sense of awe.

Today the walls at the Steadman Clinic in Vail are lined with framed jerseys of athletes Steadman got back on the field including NFL stars Dan Marino and Bruce Smith and hockey legend Mario Lemieux. He fixed tennis great Martina Navratilova and pop singer Rod Stewart.

In the early days of his orthopedic practice in South Lake Tahoe, Steadman had an intuition that putting a reconstructed knee in a cast for eight weeks was the wrong thing to do, even though it was the common practice.

Read the whole story

Court upholds Calif. pension credit buying law

By Bob Egelko, San Francisco Chronicle

A state appeals court has upheld a 2013 California law that eliminated a pension benefit for hundreds of thousands of state and local government employees in an effort to reduce the pension system's mounting deficits.

The lawmakers' action in eliminating the right of public

employees to buy additional retirement credits was “wholly reasonable” and did not violate any binding promises made to the employees, the First District Court of Appeal in San Francisco said Friday.

A lawyer for a firefighters union that challenged the law said it would probably seek review by the state Supreme Court, which has already agreed to consider another case cutting back on public pensions.

Read the whole story

Ability Bash to raise funds for adaptive sports

Achieve Tahoe, a leading provider of winter and summer adaptive sports instruction at all ability levels for adults and children with disabilities, will host its annual Ability Bash fundraising event on Jan. 28 from 6-10pm at the Squaw Valley Conference Center.

This evening caps a weeklong Military Sports Camp for disabled veterans and celebrates their achievements as well as those of all the participants with disabilities who work with Achieve Tahoe throughout the year.

Tickets for the Ability Bash can be purchased **online** for \$150 per person, or a table for 10 for \$1,500. Led by master of ceremonies, Andy Wirth, president and CEO of Squaw Valley Alpine Meadows, the evening will feature dinner, fine wines, craft beer, silent auction and raffle, as well as personal stories from Military Camp and Achieve Tahoe participants and more.

SLT evacuations possible; mudslides on 50, 80

Updated 9:30pm:

The 2,700 Liberty Utilities customers in the Heavenly to Al Tahoe areas who were without power have lights again. A blown breaker at the South Tahoe substation caused the outage.

In Douglas County, Waterloo is closed from Highway 395 to Tires Plus due to flooding. People going to the Community Center should use 756-Centerville and turn east on Waterloo. Kingslane Court in Gardnerville is now under a voluntary evacuation to the Douglas County Community Center.

Highway 395 from Lee Vining to the Nevada state line and Highway 182 from Bridgeport to Nevada are closed due to flooding and rockslide.

Updated: 7:30pm:

Douglas County schools at the lake will be closed on Monday.

"Only essential employees are to report to work if it is safe. Essential include me, directors, principals, VPs, head secretaries, head custodians and maintenance staff," DCSD Superintendent Teri White told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Lake Tahoe Community College, which was to start a new quarter on Jan. 9, will be closed.

Mudslides and road closures are hampering Liberty Utilities' efforts to restore power. The estimated restoration time for

customers from Meeks Bay to Tahoe City has been extended to midnight. Customers south of Homewood should plan on being out of power beyond midnight due to falling trees and mudslides; there is no estimated restoration time for this area. Customers with damage to service wire feeding their home should plan on being out for 24-48 hours.

Evacuations are in order for the 49 mobile homes of older section of the Aspen Mobile Home Park on 1380 Centerville Lane in the Carson Valley. Douglas County will provide transportation for those who may need it. Dresslerville Lane from Highway 88 to the Ranchos is closed.

An evacuation center is now open at 1300 Waterloo Lane, Gardnerville.

North Tahoe Event Center in Kings Beach is an evacuation center.

Mount Rose Highway is closed in both directions because of a mudslide.



A sump pump works to remove water Jan. 8 from a flooded driveway in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/Susan Wood

Updated 6:30pm:

South Lake Tahoe officials are evaluating whether the state streets and potentially the Tahoe Keys area will have to be evacuated because the Upper Truckee River keeps rising.

City Manager Nancy Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News* the flow is starting to slow down a bit. "We hope that means it is freezing at higher elevations."

The river is within 6 inches of flood stage. It is already causing minor flooding in the city limits and in Meyers.

"We are deploying resources into those areas now to evaluate conditions and evacuation at this point is precautionary; not required," Kerry said in a statement.

An evacuation center has been set up at South Tahoe High School.

Lake Tahoe Unified School District has canceled classes for Monday. UNR has also canceled classes.

The fire damaged Tahoe Queen has been pulled out of the water at Zephyr Cove and is now on the beach.

Interstate 80 near Truckee is closed because of a mudslide. Pyramid Highway southbound is closed because of flooding between Eagle Canyon and Dolores. A mudslide is blocking Highway 50 west of Kyburz.

The Truckee River in the Reno area is at 15.86 feet. Should it reach the forecast 21.2 feet, it would surpass its crest of 20.04 feet on Dec. 31, 2005.



The California Tahoe Conservancy lots by the Knights Inn in South Lake Tahoe are flooded. Photo/Hal Cole

Updated 4:30pm:

South Lake Tahoe officials have opened the airport up as the command post for the office of emergency services because of widespread flooding in town.

Most of the problem areas are in the state streets and Tahoe Keys area. Colorado Street is flooded, with water crossing Tahoe Keys Boulevard, going through houses and covering parts of Jeffery Street. The city reports severe flooding near the Knights Inn on Highway 50.

"The drainage system is at capacity and is pushing the flow into the streets," City Manager Nancy Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*. "That melting snow is bringing in additional water."

Lake Tahoe Unified School District is still assessing whether schools will be open Monday.

"We are watching the (Upper) Truckee River near the bridge. If it floods, that will split the district," Superintendent Jim Tarwater told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Water has been coming into the multipurpose room at South Tahoe Middle School. A pump has been placed there to get rid of the water. Water also came into the district office, but is now being diverted. There has also been flooding in the parking lots at Al Tahoe and Tahoe Valley elementary schools. A few leaks in buildings have also been reported.

The hesitation in calling off school is that the storms behind this one could mean even more days off.



Trout Creek behind the houses on El Dorado Street in South Lake Tahoe looks more like a river on Jan. 8 and it keeps expanding, including into back yards. Photo/Lisa Huard

Reports are that the Sawmill Road-Lake Tahoe Boulevard area has 2 feet of standing water. Sawmill is closed now.

At least 3 feet of water is being let out of Lake Tallac in the Tahoe Keys.

The Pope marsh area is already a lake.

The flood watch for the basin is in effect through 4am Jan. 12.

There is minor localized flooding, but no major flooding in Truckee. Public works continues to work to clear snow filled drainage ditches. The Truckee River in Truckee has hit flood

stage, according to officials there.. Old Highway 40 (Donner Pass Road) from South Shore Drive to Sugar Bowl is closed. There is a large amount of water across the roadway and concerns for undermining of the roadway.

The Truckee River has hit flood stage in Sparks.

Road closures in Douglas County in the Carson Valley include: Nye Drive, Centerville between Highway 88 and Foothill, and the dirt road alongside Power Dam.

People are being advised to stay away from Muller, Mottsville, Genoa Lane, Power Dam area, Foothill between Jacks Valley and Genoa, and East Valley near Powerline Road.

Snow is falling between the 8,000 and 10,000 foot levels.

Numerous wet deep slab avalanches occurred either Saturday night or Sunday morning in the Carson Pass area, according to the Sierra Avalanche Center. The avalanche warning has been extended to Jan. 12 at 4am.

Alpine Meadows and Squaw Valley will remain closed on Monday.



Water is accumulating in the Carson Valley, with several

roads closed on Jan. 8 because of flooding. Photo/Suzy Allione

Updated 1pm:

Lake Tahoe Boulevard between Sawmill Road and Tahoe Mountain Road in the unincorporated area of El Dorado County is closed because of flooding. Sawmill is also closed.

"It was starting to flood before this storm," El Dorado County sheriff's Lt. Matt Underhill told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The meadow at Sawmill is prone to flooding.

The Nevada Highway Patrol told *Lake Tahoe News* there is a boulder on Highway 50 near Lakeview that the Nevada Department of Transportation will be removing.

The right lane westbound lane of Interstate 80 near Floriston is closed due to mudflows and falling rock.

It has been raining heavily all day in the basin. Residents near the Tahoe Keys in South Lake Tahoe are reporting more than a half a foot of water under houses. There is flooding in the state streets.

The wind has been strong at times, with a 159 mph gust registered at Squaw Valley at 8,700 feet at 9am.

Liberty Utilities has outages in Tahoe City, Truckee, West Shore and the Interstate 80 corridor because of multiple power lines that have tripped. From Meeks Bay Avenue to the greater Tahoe City region is without power as a result of fallen trees that have downed three strands of wire. Highway 89 is reduced to one lane so crews can safely make repairs. Estimated restoration is at 9pm Sunday.

"Additional problems are expected as wind/rain continue to increase. We have re-opened our emergency operations center and called all crews in who will patrol the lines looking for

problems,” spokeswoman Kathy Carter said in a statement.

Upper Truckee River in South Lake was at 8.4 inches as of 12:30pm, crest is at 10 feet.

There has been some flooding in Soda Springs around Old Highway 40 in the Truckee area.

All Washoe County schools will be closed Monday, including those in Incline Village. Lake Tahoe Community College will make decision about classes at 6am Jan. 9.



A sump pump works to remove water Jan. 8 from a flooded driveway in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/Susan Wood

Updated 9:40am:

The Sierra Avalanche Center is telling people not to go into the backcountry now.

“Natural and human triggered avalanches are certain today due to the significant amount of rain and snow expected below 9,300 feet and heavy, wet snow loading above 9,000 feet. Large, deep, destructive wet slab, deep slab and wind slab avalanches will occur (Sunday) as well as loose wet avalanches. Avalanches could run farther than expected and involve almost the entire snowpack,” the agency’s website says.

An avalanche warning is in effect for the backcountry through at least 7am Monday.

Northstar, Kirkwood, Mt. Rose, Sierra-at-Tahoe, Heavenly, Squaw Valley and Alpine Meadows are closed Sunday. Before heading to any resort, check their website for conditions.



Sand is still available in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/Susan Wood

The National Weather Service in Reno’s flood watch for the

Lake Tahoe Basin remains in effect through Monday afternoon.

The Upper Truckee River is starting to crest in locations on the South Shore. The river is taking in about 6 inches an hour, authorities told *Lake Tahoe News*.

“A combination of intense rain on saturated soils and melting snow will lead to excessive runoff. Flooding along the Truckee River, Carson River including the east and west forks, creeks, streams, urban areas, and farmland is likely,” the Weather Service said. “Travel could be very difficult with some roads covered by water and impacted by rock and mud slides.”

The National Weather Service in Sacramento has issued a flood warning for small streams in El Dorado, Placer and Alpine counties through 6am Tuesday.

Liberty Utilities is working to get power to 100 customers in Placer County.

For road updates, click on the state icons on the home page of *Lake Tahoe News*.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Cross country ski becomes learning experience



Grass Lake is a haven for cross country skiers.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Keep me away from hills and groomed trails. Flat, scenic and free equals perfect cross country ski conditions.

Grass Lake was serene in late December, as it is much of the winter. The snow could not have been better. The powder was like sugar, so easy to glide through. Others has been there before us so we didn't have to break trail if we didn't want to.

Waterhouse Peak (9,497 feet) is the highest, nearest landmark. And while that may sound like it is towering, remember that Luther Pass – where Grass Lake is – is at 7,740 feet.



Renee and Rosemary snowshoe and cross country ski through Grass Lake on Dec. 26. Photo/Kathryn Reed

When there isn't much snow at lake level, this is an ideal place for cross country skiing or snowshoeing. Plenty of dogs were out getting exercise on this particular day, too.

When snow isn't on the ground this is a marshy area. It's not a true lake.

Even though Highway 89 is so close, it's only noticeable if you want it to be. That may sound odd, but I'm a firm believer people have the capability to tune out at least some distractions. The din of traffic is one of them.

Ironically, the three of us welcomed that traffic when we were done. You see, we committed one of the bigger mistakes while playing in the woods. No one paid any attention to our starting point. That meant when we got back to the road we didn't know which way to go.



The expansive area is ideal for those who don't want to climb. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Rosemary was right – we needed to keep heading toward Meyers. Renee and I were on the road while she kept skiing, almost parallel to us. We got around a bend and as far as the eye could see there were no parked vehicles, just another bend. We thought we should turn around and head toward Hope Valley.

Then the three of us were on the road. It was time to hitchhike. After Rosemary got in the vehicle with the couple, their son and granddaughter (of course we didn't know this makeup or that they were super helpful at the time), I asked Renee if she got the license plate number or knew the make of the vehicle. Neither of us had those answers.

We knew Rosemary had been correct after they stopped to tell us they were going to try the other way. Then she came up in her vehicle.

I share this story because combined the three of us have lived on the South Shore for decades. We are experienced at outdoor play in all seasons. We are normally smart women. But for some reason we weren't that Monday. It was a good reminder that communication is necessary, it's essential to look in all directions when starting off, and to have a focal point to

know what to look for when returning. We were never going to be in danger based on where we were that day, but that might not always be the case.

We were lucky. This was an experience we could laugh about as we shook our heads.



AJ and Jackson have tons of open space to run in.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe go west on Highway 50. In Meyers, go left onto Highway 89. At the crest of Luther Pass is Grass Lake to the right. There are several pullouts for parking.