

Death of EDC infant ruled a homicide

An El Dorado County man was arrested Dec. 29 on murder charges.



Michael Swope, 29, is accused of killing a 6-week-old child on Dec. 18.

“The infant’s mother has been cooperating with authorities throughout the investigation and is not considered a suspect,” El Dorado County sheriff’s detectives said in a statement. The mother lives in Pollock Pines.

Swope has listed Pollock Pines and Lodi as his hometowns.

Authorities have not released how the child died nor what the relationship between Swope and the youngster’s mother was.

Bail has been set at \$1 million.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Kingsbury Grade sink hole

growing daily

By Kathryn Reed

The gradual sinking of part of Kingsbury Grade has Nevada transportation officials concerned.

“Our NDOT roadway maintenance staff have been monitoring it numerous times each day to ensure traffic safety and evaluate any changes to the roadway itself,” Meg Ragonese, Nevada Department of Transportation spokeswoman, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Safety is our top priority, and if we feel there are any immediate safety concerns to drivers, we will close this section of Kingsbury Grade for safety.”

The troublesome area is on the Carson Valley side of the road near mile marker 4.3. It was first noticed last week.

A drainage pipe and culvert cross under the road at this location.



NDOT is keeping an eye on a growing hazard on Kingsbury Grade. Photo/Lisa Huard

“Roadway sinkholes like this can progress at different rates, based on a number of factors,” Ragonese said.

A sign to the side of the road says “bump.”

“Every time we drive it it is worse,” Lisa Huard told *Lake Tahoe News*. The South Lake Tahoe resident said it started like a ripple, but now is more pronounced.

NDOT plans to repair the road in the next few weeks. Contract documents are in the works. This will mean Kingsbury Grade at times will be closed to motorists. (About 5,600 vehicles travel on Kingsbury Grade every day.)

Even before this trouble arose NDOT was planning a \$5 million erosion control project for this area of Kingsbury Grade in 2019.

Editorial: Prop. 47 – A failure to learn history's lesson

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the Dec. 22, 2016, Sacramento Bee.*

In their laudable effort to reverse mass incarceration, California policymakers have been too slow to provide felons with necessary care and treatment upon their release.

That's among the conclusions to be gleaned from an important reporting project by newspapers in Palm Springs, Ventura, Salinas and Redding analyzing Proposition 47, the 2014 initiative that cut penalties for drug possession and property theft, and reduced many crimes to misdemeanors.

"Thousands of addicts and mentally ill people have traded a life behind bars for a churning cycle of homelessness, substance abuse and petty crime," says the report by the *Desert Sun* of Palm Springs, *Ventura County Star*, *Redding Record Searchlight* and *Salinas Californian*.

Read the whole story

SnowGlobe – music to some,

noise to others

By Kathryn Reed

SnowGlobe again is a mixed blessing – fun for those attending, a money-maker for businesses and the city of South Lake Tahoe, and an intrusive disturbance for some residents.

The three-day music festival started tonight. Attendees were out and about spending money at stores and restaurants, and could be seen walking to the Al Tahoe Boulevard venue.

It is sold-out all three nights, with 20,000 people expected each night. Last year 14,000 was the capacity. With the event being on the city's new fields and not on Lake Tahoe Community College's soccer field, there was enough room to increase guests by nearly 50 percent.

As of 9:30pm Dec. 29 the city had received 13 complaints on the hot line.

"It's so loud and bass-y this year with the tree removal and expansion of the area. Worst year yet," resident John Spinola told *Lake Tahoe News*.

According to the city's website, acts on the main stage will end at 11:30pm Thursday and Friday nights and at 1am Sunday.

City Manager Nancy Kerry said that even though the music is within the allowable decibel range, the promoter scaled back the sound Thursday night.

"They have a contract; they have to adhere to our sound level," Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*. People with decibel readers walk the grounds, the perimeter and the level is measured from the stage. She said the sound readings are within the allowable level.

Some people wonder if the allowable level should be

reconsidered.

Another contributing factor to the loudness outside the venue is that there is no snow. Snow absorbs the sound. Without the white stuff, the sound is traveling farther into the neighborhoods.

“In the house it alternates between wailing banshees and wondering if it’s time to find the tornado/hurricane shelter. It is remarkably loud out on the street and in my garage. Interesting to hear the difference with/without double pane windows, also sound dynamics of being upstairs or downstairs,” resident Diana Hamilton-Smith told *Lake Tahoe News*.

In previous years two stages were enclosed by a tent. This year only one of the three stages is in a tent. The smaller outdoor stage is pointed toward South Tahoe PUD instead of the mountains.

Beer in 2016 was bigger, better than ever

By Blair Anthony Robertson, Sacramento Bee

As we take stock of the year in beer, now might be a good time for a bit of context: We’re living in the Golden Age.

There has never been a bigger, better or more creative, productive, socially engaging and delicious year than 2016. There are more beer bars and restaurants emphasizing beer, more breweries and tasting rooms, more brewery dogs wagging and sniffing and snoring, and more kids at breweries playing corn hole and Jenga and learning by osmosis about the wonders

of things such as Galaxy hops, brettanomyces and barrel-aged sours as their parents taste and talk among friends.

The good breweries got better and bigger.

Read the whole story

Weather, traffic to challenge drivers in Sierra

Caltrans is alerting motorists traveling in the Sierra foothills, to mountain areas or over the Donner or Echo summits during the New Year's weekend to be prepared for travel delays.

Roads in the basin are already clogged with visitors. Plan on lots of extra time to get to your destination.

Cold temperatures and alternating bands of precipitation are predicted to arrive Friday night and continue through Tuesday morning, resulting in winter driving conditions, even at lower elevations.

The National Weather Service is predicting up to 1 to 2 feet of snow for summit passes with snow levels dropping to foothill elevations on Monday. Chain controls on Interstate 80 over Donner Summit and on Highway 50 over Echo Summit should be anticipated as well as possible chain controls on local roadways as snow levels drop. Very cold temperatures are likely to create icy and slippery conditions, just as holiday travelers are heading out for New Year's activities or heading home after the holiday weekend.

Caltrans' snow removal crews will be working throughout the

storm on summit passes and impacted Caltrans roadways. Caltrans permitted and trained chain installers on Interstate 80 can be identified by a reflective sign with their bib number.

Boy dies after car tumbles into river near Hwy. 50

By Jessica Hice, Sacramento Bee

An 11-year-old Galt boy died in a car crash early Wednesday near Ice House Road on Highway 50, the El Dorado County coroner's office reported.

A driver lost control of a vehicle just after midnight, ejecting a 13-year-old girl and killing Tonino Trujillo, the California Highway Patrol reported.

The BMW was westbound and went out of control at a curve on Highway 50, the CHP reported.

Read the whole story

Quakes near Tahoe could have been a disaster

By Patrick Perron, Bay Area News Group

A trio of significant earthquakes that struck a remote part of western Nevada early Wednesday were big enough to cause as much as \$1 billion in damage if they had been centered beneath a big city, a leading expert said.

The first of two magnitude-5.7 quakes that began shortly after midnight and a third that registered 5.5 resulted in no injuries or reports of significant damage. The epicenter was east of the Sierra range and the Nevada-California line near rural Hawthorne about 100 miles southeast of Lake Tahoe and 90 miles south of Reno.

“Thankfully, it’s not underneath a big city because a sequence of 5.7s could certainly do a lot of damage,” said Graham Kent, director of the University of Nevada’s Seismological Laboratory.

“If you put this underneath Reno, we are probably looking at a \$1 billion event, probably with some fatalities and many casualties,” he told the *Associated Press*. “It’s much better to be beneath a ranch 20 miles outside of Hawthorne.”

Bodie State Historic Park sustained damage and is closed while officials assess the buildings.

Read the whole story

Douglas County issues warnings for NYE

Due to the high volume of celebrants within the Stateline casino core on New Year's Eve, Highway 50 may be closed to vehicle traffic.

If that should occur, vehicle traffic will be diverted around the Stateline casino core area using upper and lower Lake Parkway Drive.

Drivers anticipating traveling through the Stateline casino core area on New Year's Eve should allow themselves additional time to make it to their destination on time.

Incidents that will most likely result in an arrest include acts that place celebrants or law enforcement officers in jeopardy, including acts of rowdy behavior, fighting, throwing projectiles, vandalism, theft, narcotic violations, severe public drunkenness, possession of or discharge of fireworks, minors consuming or possessing alcohol, or any other act that disrupts the goal of achieving a peaceful and safe environment for all in attendance.

Glass or metal containers, regardless of contents, are prohibited in the casino core area on New Year's Eve.

The curfew in Douglas County is midnight on Dec. 31. Those younger than 18 are subject to citation for being in violation of this ordinance. Those under the age of 21 who are in possession of alcohol or who have consumed or are under the influence of drugs or alcohol will be subject to arrest.

Nevada is one of 20 states that decriminalized marijuana possession effective Jan. 1, 2017, but residents will still have to be 21 years older to purchase and consume. It will still be illegal to smoke marijuana in a public place.

Deputies of the Douglas County Sheriff's Office will be present in the Stateline casino-core area throughout the evening, supplemented by officers and representatives of numerous other law enforcement agencies, including Nevada Highway Patrol, Nevada Department of Corrections, South Lake Tahoe Police Department, El Dorado County Sheriff's Office, California Highway Patrol, and the FBI. Supporting agencies include the Douglas County Sheriff's Search and Rescue, Douglas County Communications Center, Tahoe-Douglas Fire Department, Cal-Trans and Nevada Department of Transportation.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- Caltrans is working to let motorists know about road issues in a timelier manner. Check out this **video**.
- Regarding Question 1, or the Nevada Background Check Act, Douglas County Sheriff's Office says: To summarize the AG opinion the act is not enforceable and therefore citizens are excused from compliance with the act until the issues identified in the opinion are remedied. The Douglas County sheriff is advising residents that they may proceed with private party firearm sells and transfers as they did prior to the passing of ballot question No. 1.
- Waste Management will collect clean trees for recycling at the curb on trash service days from Jan. 9-13. Trees must be cut into 3-foot or smaller lengths. Recyclers may drop off trees of any size at Preston Field until Jan. 29. North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District will chip these trees for local erosion control projects.

- According to LosAngelesHotels.org, South Lake Tahoe is the most expensive destination in California for New Year's Eve.