

Caltrans meeting in Meyers

Caltrans is having a public meeting in Meyers on Feb. 21 from 5:30 to 8pm at the Lake Valley Fire Protection District building.

The main topic will be the proposed changes to the speed limits in the area. Also to be discussed is the issue of pedestrian crossings in Meyers.

Winter wildfires in Tahoe-Reno area could become more common

By Jeff DeLong, Reno Gazette-Journal

It happened not once, but twice.

Two rare winter wildfires roared through Reno-area neighborhoods, destroying more than 50 homes, changing lives and leaving some wondering whether the destructive events might be a sign of things to come.

November's Caughlin Fire was followed almost two months to the day by the Washoe Drive Fire on Jan. 19. The fires were strikingly similar – both the result of high winds associated with a dry cold front pushing flames through brush and grass made ready to burn by an early winter of record dryness.

The combination was explosive.

"The fire behavior was intense as it can probably get," Reno

Fire Chief Michael Hernandez said. “Those two fires were more destructive than any other fires we’ve had along the Sierra front in 50 years.”

The combined disasters would be remarkable in the heart of summer but instead occurred at a time of year more closely associated with problems such as trying to keep passes open that snowstorms likely closed. For the Reno-Tahoe area, the situation was unprecedented.

Dry and windy conditions lined up perfectly as a fuse for the fires but with a warming climate, invading vegetation and more people living in fire-prone areas, could big winter wildfires become the norm?

It’s impossible to say for sure, but some experts say the possibility is there.

Read the whole story

Birth-control fight turns into political tool

By Lisa Mascaro and Kathleen Hennessey, Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration’s new requirement that most health insurance plans provide contraceptive services has exploded into a high-octane political weapon, with combatants on both sides scrambling to score points among the electorate and gin up fundraising from their most ardent supporters.

In Congress and on the campaign trail Wednesday, Republicans attacked the rule as another example of government overreach, Exhibit A in the case against President Obama’s healthcare

law, while Democrats asserted the GOP was trying to turn back the clock on women's rights.

House Speaker John A. Boehner, R-Ohio, a Catholic, fueled the political firestorm by making a rare floor speech vowing to block the requirement that most faith-based employers, including Catholic ones, offer contraception, regardless of their religious beliefs. Churches and other houses of worship are exempt.

The campaign of Mitt Romney, a leading candidate for the GOP presidential nomination, said the rule "compels religious institutions to violate the tenets of their own faith," and Romney vowed to strike it down.

Democrats and Republicans used the controversy to appeal for contributions from their traditional political bases, a strategy that carries risks as well as rewards. At a time when independents and moderates can sway general elections, turning up the heat on a social issue could prove distracting and annoying to voters who are more concerned about unemployment and the sluggish economy.

Amid the rising clamor, administration officials are exploring the possibility of implementing the rule so that religiously affiliated employers could offer supplemental policies, known as riders, for contraception or direct workers to insurance companies that sell such riders.

Even if Catholic voters and independents agree with the White House on substance, the administration doesn't want to appear insensitive to the concerns of the Catholic Church.

Women's groups would be likely to vigorously oppose any alteration of the rule.

Read the whole story

People rarely pay for starting fires in Northern Nevada

By Martha Bellisle, Reno Gazette-Journal

Fire officials are continuing their investigation into the cause of the Washoe Drive Fire, which burned 3,200 acres and 29 homes last month, but they have yet to decide whether to file charges against the man who admitted starting the blaze.

Although some fire-starters have served time in prison, officials have had little luck collecting funds from the people who ignited some of the area's wildland blazes, even though Nevada law allows fire districts to go after those responsible.

But if officials identify the man who admitted starting the Washoe Drive blaze, his neighbors may find some relief through his insurance company, a Reno lawyer said.

One man who started a 2007 blaze continues to serve time in prison but has paid little of the restitution he was ordered to pay. Another man responsible for a large Reno fire settled the lawsuits filed against him for less than \$1 million, and has since filed for bankruptcy.

The Washoe Fire first broke out in an area off Washoe Drive and U.S. 395 about noon on Jan. 19. High winds ahead of a winter storm quickly spread the blaze in different directions, forcing about 10,000 people to evacuate.

An elderly man, who has not been identified, contacted

officials late in the afternoon to report that he had started the blaze by disposing fireplace ashes improperly. Fire Marshal Joan Presley has declined to say whether they'll seek charges, and only said the blaze is under investigation.

The estimated cost of the Washoe Drive Fire has yet to be calculated, but the Caughlin Fire in November burned 1,935 acres and caused more than \$7.6 million in property damage, according to a new report.

Read the whole story

2 Truckee residents jailed on multiple drug charges

Two Truckee residents were arrested this week on drug charges after a four-month investigation.

Conrado Rodriguea-Quintero was arrested on charges of possession of narcotics, sales of cocaine, criminal conspiracy, and child endangerment. Salvador Ruvalcaba-Munoz was arrested on charges of sales of cocaine and criminal conspiracy. Both booked into the Nevada County Jail on Feb. 7.

Truckee police detectives recovered one-half pound of cocaine packaged for distribution, along with \$10,000 in cash. The cocaine was located in an area of the residence that was accessible to children living at the residence, officers said.

— Lake Tahoe News staff report

Fingerprinting for children on West Slope

The El Dorado County Sheriff's Office S.T.A.R. volunteers will soon begin providing fingerprint service for children in accordance with the National Child Safety Council's Young People Prints.

This service will be provided free of charge at the Sheriff's Town Center Substation in El Dorado Hills to children under the age of 18. A parent or legal guardian must accompany the child.

To ensure prompt service, call (530) 642.4728.

Nutrition and exercise lecture

Maximizing Nutrition & Exercise for the Busy Life is Paula Crenshaw's topic on Nov. 7 from 6-7pm at Kahle Community Center, 236 Kingsbury Grade, Stateline.

Breast cancer awareness talk

Breast Cancer Awareness & Women's Health is the topic of Patience Wenck's Oct. 3 6-7pm lecture at Kahle Community Center, 236 Kingsbury Grade, Stateline.

Lecture about running performance

Maximizing Your Running Performance is the topic of the Set 5 6-7pm lecture by Alan and Caroline Barichievich at Kahle Community Center, 236 Kingsbury Grade, Stateline.

Sports concussion lecture

Sports Concussions is the topic of Jonathan Finnoff's lecture on Aug. 1 from 6-7pm at Lake Tahoe Community College in South Lake Tahoe.