CalFire: Create defensible space before a fire occurs

Publisher's note: ***This is the first of three articles from the Amador-El Dorado Unit of CalFire regarding the "Ready-Set-Go!" fire and life safety campaign.***

By Teri Mizuhara

CAMINO – Unit Chief Kelly Keenan believes living in the Sierra Nevada foothills is a dream come true but with that dream comes a responsibility that many urban/suburban dwellers do not face. Fire is a natural part of our ecosystem. It helps clear out the weeds and brush and creates a healthy forest dynamic.

But with so many homes scattered throughout the rural foothills, naturally occurring fire is not allowed to do what it should because fire agencies must suppress fires that threaten lives and property. So people must do their part and create a space around their homes where fire can be better controlled as it approaches.



Defensible space is critical to being fire safe. Photo/CalFire

Creating a buffer zone between your home and the wildland greatly reduces the risk of your home catching on fire from radiant heat or flying embers. These embers can destroy homes and even entire neighborhoods that are far from the actual flame front of a wildfire.

Keys to creating defensible space are:

Zone One extends up to 30 feet (or your property line whichever is closer) from every structure on your property

• Remove all dead and dying vegetation

• Remove leaf litter from your roof and rain gutters

• Relocate woodpiles well away from your home

• Trim trees so they are a minimum of 10 feet from your chimney and roof line

• Remove ladder fuels (low-level vegetation that could allow fire to spread from the ground to shrubs and bushes to the tree canopies).

Zone Two extends from 30 feet to 100 feet (or to your property line whichever is closer)

• The key is to keep plant material separated from each other horizontally and vertically, this prevents the vegetation from acting like a ladder and allowing the fire to move from the ground to the tree canopies

• Cut annual grasses down to a maximum of 4 inches in height.

Preparing and practicing your family's disaster plan is also key to being ready for fire season. This plan can make evacuating ahead of a

CalFire beginning Monday is increasing staffing for the fire season on the South Shore and the Northern California counties of El Dorado, Placer, Amador, Nevada, Yuba,

wildfire or other disaster far less stressful. Creating a “Family Disaster Plan” is the first step in preparing for a disaster. It is important every member of your family understands what to do in the event of a wildfire in your area. Practice this plan on a regular basis so each member of your family knows their role and what they need to do; keep a copy of this written plan in an accessible place so that you can refer to it quickly and easily.

Tuolumne, Calaveras, Stanislaus, San Joaquin, Butte and Glenn.

“Things to include in the plan are: meeting locations away from your home, communication plans and evacuation plans for your family and your pets. Identify where your gas, water and electrical shut-offs are and how to use them. Plan several evacuation routes in your neighborhood and drive them so you are familiar with them day or night. Assemble emergency supply kits and have them ready for yourself, family and animals. Don’t forget to include a portable radio and/or scanner so you can stay updated,” Keenan says.

Finally, take steps to make your home more fire resistant; if you are building a new home or renovating your home, consider these fire resistive measures (hardening your home):

• Roofs are the most vulnerable surface on your house. Make sure your roof is made out of “class A” materials, such as composition, metal or tiles.

• Rain gutters should be screened or enclosed to prevent accumulation of plant debris that can catch on fire from a flying ember during a wildfire.

• Exterior walls of your home should be made of ignition resistant materials such as cement siding, stucco or fire retardant treated wood.

• Windows should be double paned with one of the panes made of

tempered glass which will reduce the potential of the heat from a wildfire breaking the window and catching the interior of the house on fire.

• If your home is dependent on a well for water, install a backup generator so you have water in case the electricity goes out.

The following areas of your home should be checked annually and maintained as needed:

• Check that your chimney has an approved spark arrestor (screen) in good condition covering the opening. The screen should have openings no smaller than three-eighth inch and no larger than a half inch.

• Keep the area under your deck or balcony free of combustible material. Never store your firewood under your deck.

• Consider having multiple garden hoses that are long enough to reach any area of your home and any structure on your property.

Keenan adds, “Wind driven embers can fly up to one mile during a wildland fire so ‘hardening’ your home with fire resistive material, creating a solid buffer zone of defensible space and preparing and practicing your Family Disaster Plan are critical. Being ready for wildfire season is your best defense. Preplanning for a disaster can save your life and the lives of the ones you love.”

For more detailed information, go online or call (530) 644.2345 to receive a free brochure.

Military have a chance to play in Reno-Tahoe Open pro-am

The Reno-Tahoe Open, together with Doctors Louis Bonaldi, Jason Champagne, Daniel Rowan and Renny Uppal, introduce Doctors Supporting Troops to benefit current and former members of the military currently or previously living or serving in Northern Nevada.

The new program for the 13th annual PGA Tour event encourages active duty, guard, reserve and veterans of all military branches to write an essay explaining why he or she would like a chance to play in the tournament's Wednesday Pro-Am. Nominations will be accepted through June 17, 2011 and winners are announced the week of June 27.

In addition to an opportunity to play, winners of the Doctors Supporting Troops contest may also attend the exclusive Pro-Am Pairings Party on Aug. 2 at the Eldorado Hotel Resort.

All essays must be 500 words or less and be submitted to Docs4Troops@MyNews4.com by 5pm June 17. Submissions may be entered by friends or family as well as the actual nominee. A copy of military identification should be included in the application and all nominees must have a handicap of 20 or better with verification from the golfer's home course. To learn more or view the complete set of rules, go online.

The 13th annual Reno-Tahoe Open is Aug. 1-7 at Montrêux Golf & Country Club in Reno.

Snow not altering Western States 100 run

By Sam McManis, Sacramento Bee

When it comes to traversing difficult snow-impacted terrain, man apparently has an advantage over horse.

At least, that's a conclusion that could be drawn from Western States 100 Mile Endurance Run race director Greg Soderlund, who has confirmed that the annual ultrarunning race on June 25 will be run despite snow conditions in Tahoe and Sierra that last week forced officials from the Tevis Cup – the 100 mile endurance horse race later in the summer contested over the same Squaw Valley-to-Auburn trails – to move its race to October.

"People can get over the snow," Soderlund said. "What's got people's attention is Tevis' postponement, but horses can't post through all that snow. Well, I guess they can, but it would really damage the horse. We (humans) can climb over logs and go through debris that horses can't. We're pretty impervious to it."

In the past week, since the Tevis Cup postponement, Soderlund said "rumors and speculation" swirled that Western States might be canceled as well. Considered the nation's most prestigious ultramarathon, Western States has only been canceled once – in 2008, due to fires in the Sierra. Soderlund said there actually has been more snow in the hills for the 1983 and 1995 races, which were contested on slightly altered courses to accommodate the drifts.

Read the whole story

Rivers in region rising each day as temperatures increase

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

WALKER – The big melt is on.

An epic snowpack locked in place by cool spring temperatures will soon be released by warming conditions, spilling water into churning rivers and streams.

It's happening before Mike White's eyes. He watched the levels of a foaming West Walker River next to his home rise by 6 inches overnight. By Friday morning, water was lapping at a rock that was dry the day before.

He knows more is coming. Maybe a lot more.

"It's starting to move. We're going to get some high water," White said.

On Friday, the National Weather Service issued a hydrologic outlook calling for possible flooding along the eastern Sierra over the next two weeks.

Coinciding with a spike in temperatures, the highest flows are expected between next Tuesday through June 25. Highs in Reno next week are expected to be well into the 80s while nighttime lows in the Sierra will remain well above freezing.

That's going to cause a lot of snow to melt and rivers and streams to gush. Flows are expected to peak by late next week, depending on location.

"That's really going to quicken the snowmelt. The waterfalls

and creeks should be amazing," said Gary Barbato, a hydrologist with the National Weather Service in Reno.

It's an issue because there's still so much snow in the high country. The snowpack, Barbato said, is close to what it normally is in early April. At Lake Tahoe, the snowpack Friday was about seven times what it should be for early June.

Read the whole story

State Senate rejects tax extension, budget deadline looms

By Kevin Yamamura and Torey Van Oot, Sacramento Bee

Senate Republicans blocked a tax solution to the deficit Friday, prompting Democrats to respond with a countermeasure expanding local taxation powers.

Thus began Round 2 of the state budget battle, complete with readings of letters from sheriffs and taxpayers, parliamentary gamesmanship and failed amendments on abortion funding.

With a threat of lost pay hanging over their heads, lawmakers face a Wednesday constitutional deadline to balance the budget. The Senate made procedural progress Friday by passing a slew of budget alterations on a majority vote, but state leaders still lack a bipartisan agreement.

The key divide remains taxation. Democrats want to solve the remaining $9.6 billion deficit with extensions of higher sales and vehicle taxes, as well as a return to higher income tax

rates that expired last year. Democrats asserted Friday that they had already taken hard votes by slashing universities and various programs for the poor in March.

“The public doesn’t like cuts and they don’t like taxes,” said Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg, D–Sacramento. “And as my budget director is fond of noting, I have yet to see a poll that results in a balanced budget. If there was a pain-free option to balancing the budget, we would have passed it months ago.”

Read the whole story

LTCC professor creates calculus app for iPhone

Lake Tahoe Community College math Professor Larry Green has created a collection of a few hundred calculus videos that he has put up for free on the Internet.

A few months ago, a publisher contacted him about turning the collection into an app for the iPhone.

“The app has become pretty popular amongst calculus students and the first royalty check arrived (this month),” Green told *Lake Tahoe News*. “The videos are still available for free online, but if a student wants them downloaded onto their iPhone, they cost a few dollars for each quarter of the complete collection.



Larry Green

Green doesn’t have a cell phone, so he let the publisher take care of the marketing and the technical details of bundling them into an app.

The links may be found at:

App 1

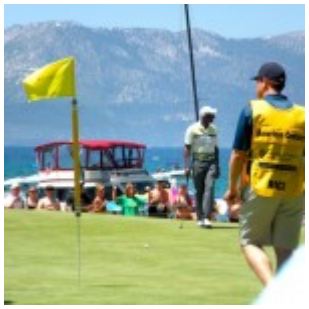
App 2

App 3

App 4.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Some of the odds for the July American Century Championship Lake Tahoe golf tournament: Charles Barkley 500-1 to win the event, Tony Romo 5-2, John Smoltz 5-1, John Elway 10-1 and Michael Jordan 40-1.

• Still time to signup for a kids’ summer camp through UNR’s Extended Studies.

• “Twelfth Night” will be performed at Sand Harbor July 15-Aug. 21 as part of the Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival.

• In July, Charter cable will launch a lease accessed channel on basic digital channel 219 in Glenbrook, Meyers, South Lake Tahoe, Zephyr Cover, El Dorado County and Doulas County. Programming will be provided by Tahoe Network TV from 6am-noon.

• Incline Village General Improvement District hired Charlie Kent as head pro at the Championship Golf Course, and Serena Quarelli as the pro at the tennis center.

• Caltrans’ Tahoe roadwork schedule for the next week has been released.

Shriner Hospital for Children gives thanks

To the community,

Again, many thanks to all of our Shriners Hospital for Children Northern California Sacramento screening clinic volunteers. What a warm glow it brought to my heart to see all of you using the bulk of your day volunteering for the children of the South Lake Tahoe area.

We saw 27 children (June 4) and referred 19 to Shriners Hospital for Children for further evaluation and potential treatment at no cost to the families.

Some of the children, as you may have noticed, were desperately in need of our services.

Many thanks to Steve Larson, M.D. and Kyle Swanson, M.D. Special thanks and appreciation in addition to the two physicians to the following: Lake Tahoe Unified School nurse Mary Burns; Angie Keil from the Lake Tahoe Unified School District; Becky Fortier from South Tahoe Middle School; South Tahoe High School teacher Tim Wright and Kriszti Kotka from El Dorado County Public Health Department for their interpreting, without whose assistance we would not have succeeded.

Also David Barnekoff for his assistance in putting this event together and these three people who may have been the busiest of all: Marlene Sorsabal at the reception/greeting desk, my wife, Barbara, who was the coordinator and Fred Sorsabal at the exit desk.

It was also nice to have Potentate Mike Grottkau visit with us. Please forgive me if I left out special recognition to anyone, but you are all special and God Bless.

Michael Day, chairman El Dorado County Shrine Club Screening Clinic for Shriners Hospital for Children Northern California Sacramento

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CDC: No progress fighting salmonella in last 15 years

By Linda Shrieves, Orlando Sentinel

Despite attempts to clean up the nation’s food supply, the rate of salmonella infections has held steady for the past 15 years, while rates for several other foodborne diseases have dropped dramatically.

In its annual food safety report card, the Centers for Disease Control said this week that the federal government has made little headway in its battle against salmonella, which sickens about one million Americans every year.

While salmonella infections have risen by 10 percent in the past four years, illnesses from the serious Shiga toxin-producing E.coli O157 have been cut nearly in half. And the overall rates of six foodborne infections have been reduced by 23 percent, the report said.

Only the rates of one foodborne disease tracked in the CDC report increased significantly. Researchers said the rates of vibrio infection were 115 percent higher than 15 years ago, and 39 percent higher than four years ago. Most vibrio infections come from eating raw or undercooked shellfish.

Read the whole story

Off-road legend recognized by state senator

State Sen. Ted Gaines, R-Roseville, this week presented a resolution to off-roading legend Mark A. Smith of Georgetown to recognize his contributions in building a major hobby enjoyed by thousands of Californians and building our state's economy.

"Mark Smith is the father of the world-famous Rubicon Trail off-road trek that literally created a new sport," Gaines said in a statement. "Now people from across the country come to California to put themselves to the ultimate off-road test."

Smith went on to lead the first team of drivers from the tip of South America to the Arctic Circle and led a team of U.S. off-road drivers in the 1987 Camel Trophy, the world's No. 1 off-road competition, as well as being named "four wheeler of the decade" by *United Four Wheel Drive* magazine.

Mark A. Smith Off-Roading Inc. is an industry leader for off-road adventures, providing the equipment and expertise for groups and individuals who want to get off the beaten path and navigate the types of rough terrain first tamed by Smith himself.

"Mark Smith is a pioneer who shows true California spirit," Gaines said. "He built a sport, built a business and built an unmatched reputation in his field."