Flames engulf Tahoe Vista residence



A Tahoe Vista residence is destroyed April 1. Photo/Provided

A two-story residence in Tahoe Vista was heavily damaged by fire Tuesday night.

North Tahoe Fire Protection District officials said the blaze started as a chimney fire.

The residents returned home about 10:25pm April 1 to find their home filled with smoke.

No one was injured. A dollar amount on the loss has not been released.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Homewood and Tahoe Donner ski resorts had super short seasons. They are closed.

• Tahoe Donner golf management anticipates opening the golf course by mid-May, with perhaps the earliest opening to date. It’s also likely the driving range may open before May.

• Truckee’s capital improvement program budget will be the subject of a meeting April 3 at 3pm at the town hall.

• The League to Save Lake Tahoe is putting on a Pipe Keepers forum April 17 from 6-8pm at Blue Angel Café in South Lake Tahoe.

• Reno and other community partners are organizing a David Wise Parade of Champions on April 26 at 5pm in downtown Reno. The parade will end roughly 30 minutes later at Aces Ballpark.

Calif. may look at groundwater regulations

By Paul Rogers, San Jose Mercury News

For nearly 50 years, California has passed sweeping environmental laws that limit private property for the common

good – from the nation's toughest automobile pollution standards to curbs on clear-cutting forests to rules requiring that developers keep beaches open to the public.

However, when it comes to preserving one of the state's most critical and politically divisive resources – billions of gallons of groundwater that are vital to farms and cities – California lawmakers and voters have done almost nothing.

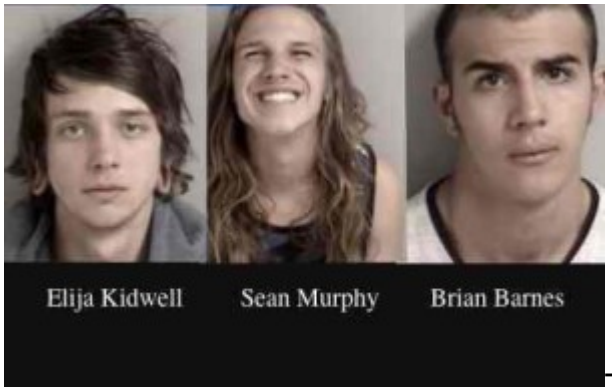
Now, driven by the historic drought and new pressure from Gov. Jerry Brown, the chances of reform appear better than ever.

Decades of intense pumping have dropped water tables dangerously low in places such as the San Joaquin Valley and Paso Robles. Scientific studies show that the ground is sinking in some places and that aquifers are at risk of running dry.

Read the whole story

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3 men arrested in rash of vehicle thefts



Three people are in custody after allegedly going on a spree to steal vehicles in South Lake Tahoe.

In the 16-hour period between 7pm March 31 and 11am April 1three vehicles were stolen and several unlocked cars within the city had property stolen from the interiors. In each auto theft case, the vehicle had been left unlocked with the keys inside. Only one of the three stolen vehicles has been recovered.

Three 18-year-olds from Placerville wee arrested – Elija Kidwell, Sean Murphy and Brian Barnes – on felony charges of auto theft, possession of stolen property and conspiracy as it relates to at least one of these three auto thefts and to some of the thefts of property from inside unlocked and unattended vehicles.

Officers said the thefts began Monday evening when a white 1991 Jeep Cherokee was stolen from a residence on Bowers Avenue. This vehicle has not been located. At about 10:40 the same night, less than a mile away, a 1991 Subaru Outback was stolen from the parking lot of Inn by the Lake.

On Tuesday about 9am a victim discovered at least three men stealing items out of his unlocked vehicle in front of his house on Lodi Avenue. When he went to investigate the suspects fled in the stolen Subaru Outback. The Subaru abandoned in the parking lot of the Nickelodeon Motel.

The suspects were located at the Grocery Outlet store; where at least one other victim had already discovered a theft from their unlocked vehicle in the parking lot.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Missing backcountry snowboarder found alive

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

A snowboarder who went missing Monday night during a snowstorm near Castle Peak was alive and well Tuesday after walking his way out of the backcountry, according to Nevada County Sheriff's Department officials.

Abraham Finkelstein, 25, a Bay Area resident, was backcountry snowboarding with his father on Monday in the Castle Peak area across Interstate 80 from Boreal Mountain Resort.

The pair started hiking up a hill toward Peter Grubb Hut when a storm moved in and the father and son were separated due to cold and snowy conditions, according to the Nevada County Sheriff's Department. The father was able to make it down to the family vehicle around 5pm Monday, but his son did not show up.

Read the whole story

Adventure camp available to Tahoe youth

Berkeley's Adventure Risk Challenge Program and its sister sister course in Yosemite National Park are available to youth residing in Lake Tahoe.

Outdoor adventures like rafting, rock climbing, and backpacking will be combined with an academic curriculum that

strengthens students' English literacy and leadership skills.

Tahoe Program Coordinator Sean McAlindin will be accepting applications through April.

All Tahoe students in grades 9-12 are eligible to apply for ARC's summer immersion courses.

Go online to learn more about the program and download applications for the summer immersion course.

SLT pledges to enforce outdoor display rules

By Kathryn Reed

Crappy outdoor displays are like pornography – you know it when you see it.

No true definition could be given of what a good or bad outdoor display is. That was essentially the conclusion of a workshop and online survey that South Lake Tahoe officials put together, as well as the consensus of council members on April 1.

At the workshop and online people were shown a variety of pictures – not from South Lake Tahoe – of outdoor displays. People leaned toward liking smaller, neater displays. However, larger displays of produce, tires and outdoor gear received positive feedback, too.



Anderson’s bike rentals has a special use permit for its display of two-wheelers. Photo/LTN file

But parameters must be drawn so there is a level playing field and the decision-making is less subjective. Plus, this allows officials to enforce the rules.

Solidifying outdoor display policy was one of the main items on Tuesday’s South Lake Tahoe City Council meeting. However, as much as this has been a controversial issue in the past, only one member of the public was in the audience when this item was discussed.

As Hilary Roverud, director of development services, said, it’s about balancing the needs of businesses trying to attract customers and the overall aesthetics of the city so people will want to come back and not think the town is junky.

“The majority of displays you see today are not consistent with city and TRPA code,” Roverud told the council.

TRPA doesn’t do any enforcement, while the city is sporadic with its enforcement.

The city is getting away from a tattletale type of enforcement and moving toward a more proactive approach. If code enforcement officers see a violation, they have the power to issue a warning immediately. If the infraction continues beyond two weeks, a citation may be issued.

The council unanimously adopted staff’s four recommendations:

- Continue to allow short-term, temporary outdoor displays through a temporary activity permit;
- Continue to allow 16-square-feet of adornments at entrances as long as they don’t interfere with pedestrian accessibility;
- Work with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency to add types of recreational items allowed in larger displays;
- Make code enforcement a priority.

Roverud and Mayor Hal Cole, who is on the TRPA board, plan to meet with officials from the bi-state regulatory agency about the displays. TRPA rules don’t allow for standup paddleboards under the outdoor amusement category for displays. Bikes, skates and mopeds are allowed.

In other action:

• The council wants to revisit when sandwich board signs are allowed.

• The May 6 meeting was canceled because there will be renovations to council chambers to accommodate upgrades to the audio-visual room.

• Police Chief Brian Uhler will be looking at possibly creating motorcycle parking in select areas.

Opinion: Why make students

sit still?

By Carolina Blatt-Gross, CNN

As a graduate student, I had the opportunity to observe a number of idyllic, progressive classrooms where students danced to the pencil sharpener or sprawled across beanbag chairs while completing their work. I read countless books and articles about research that supports physical activity as part of academic success. It made sense to me – theoretically – that children should be allowed to move their bodies. Asking them to do otherwise, I came to believe, could be detrimental to both the student and the teacher.

Then it got personal. I had two children of my own, two fearless boys who are so busy they don't have time to stop for uninteresting activities like eating, sleeping or potty training. Our eldest son lobbed himself out of his crib at 10 months and hasn't stopped climbing since. Putting clothes on our younger son currently involves a high-speed chase followed by a wrestling match and, if we're lucky, ends with at least one piece of clothing partially in place.

Obviously, it takes more than a little mental and physical effort for them to keep their bottoms in a chair.

This doesn't bode well for academic success in traditional classrooms, where sitting quietly is a prerequisite for nearly all instruction. I cringe in anticipation of the notes my sons' constant motion and chatter will prompt future teachers to send home. I worry that their intellectual prosperity will be curtailed by the simple, but daunting, expectation that they sit still for hours each day.

Read the whole story

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• A Free Medication Take-Back day is set for April 26 from 10am-1pm at the Old Tahoe City Fire Station (above Commons Beach), 300 North Lake Blvd., Tahoe City.

• Movie in the morning at the South Lake Tahoe library is April 12 at 10am. It will be Disney's latest hit. And it's free. The library is at 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd.

• Got questions about your iPad, e-reader, or laptop? Sign-up for 30 minutes of tech help at the South Lake Tahoe library on April 19. Email maria.delallo@edcgov.us.

• Daniel Robertson has been selected as doctor of the year by Barton Health.

• UNR plans to implement a tobacco-free university policy effective Aug. 1, 2015.

USFS sides with Alta in ban of snowboarders

By Brady McCombs, AP

SALT LAKE CITY — The U.S. Forest Service says it supports one of the last U.S. ski resorts to prohibit snowboarding in a court battle over a ban that snowboarders call discriminatory.

The decision by the Alta ski area to promote a snowboarder-free experience to lure skiers and keep them safe is a rational rule that violates no constitutional rights, attorneys for the Forest Service said in court arguments filed this week.

“Even if plaintiffs established that they are similar to skiers and have been treated differently, they have failed to show that the federal defendants’ treatment of them was irrational,” Forest Service lawyers wrote.

Four snowboarders filed the lawsuit in federal court in January. They’re claiming discrimination on national forest lands that make up most of the Alta ski area in the mountains east of Salt Lake City. The U.S. Forest Service was named as a defendant in a lawsuit, in which the snowboarders argue the ban violates the promise of equal treatment under the 14th Amendment.

The legal back-and-forth has reignited a long-festering culture clash on the slopes between skiers and snowboarders.

The new Forest Service brief comes a week after the ski area’s lawyers said that the lawsuit degrades the U.S. Constitution and should be thrown out.

Jon Schofield, an attorney for the snowboarders, said both filings mischaracterize the complaint, confuse applicable law and avoid the fact that Alta discriminates against snowboarders based on an inaccurate stereotype. Schofield said they’ll address the issues fully in an upcoming brief.

“Before bringing suit, we considered every issue raised in these motions, and we believe the case rests on solid legal ground,” Schofield said.

Under a 40-year permit issued to Alta by the Forest Service in 2002, the ski area is allowed to restrict any type of skiing device that creates an unnecessary risk to other skiers.

The Forest Service said it agrees with Alta that the way snowboarders slide down the slopes is a legitimate safety concern for skiers. In a filing last week, Alta attorneys explained that skiers find the slopes at Alta more peaceful, safe and enjoyable because they don't have to worry about being hit by snowboarders whose sideways stance leaves them with a blind spot that can make their wide, sweeping turns a danger to others on the slopes.

"These differences create safety concerns that can be avoided or minimized by not allowing snowboarders," Forest Service lawyers wrote in the new filing.

Alta is one of 120 ski resorts that has a permit to use Forest Service land, the court brief says. The agency's lawyers say they are aware of Alta's snowboarding prohibition but argue the agency was not part of the decision to enact the ban and does not make a profit from it.

Based on a congressionally mandated formula, Alta paid the Forest Service between $305,000 and $474,000 each of the past five years. That represents less than 1 percent of the Forest Service's annual budget, their attorneys said.

The two other resorts that ban snowboarding are Deer Valley, also in Utah, and Mad River Glen in Vermont.