County residents hit by South Tahoe tax

By Kathryn Reed

People who live in El Dorado County using the 96150 ZIP code could find themselves paying more for vehicles than they have to.

The 2004 voter approved Measure Q only applies to South Lake Tahoe, but with the same home ZIP code for the South Shore, the tax is getting applied to county residents.

The additional 0.5 percent transaction and use tax is applied to purchases in the city limits. But that's not the only time, and that's why county residents may be getting hit with a tax that isn't applicable to them.

"Measure Q is also collected on purchase transactions made outside the city limits that must be registered such as cars and boats, or where the merchandise sale includes delivery, such as with furniture," explained Christine Vuletich, South Lake Tahoe finance director. "The tax on these types of purchases is allocated back to the city if the purchaser resides in South Lake Tahoe."

A *Lake Tahoe News* reader who lives in El Dorado County had a run-in with the Department of Motor Vehicles regarding a vehicle she was registering. She was able to get a refund when the ZIP code issue came to light, but was told by DMV she "must let them know in advance next time."

South Tahoe collects between $1.8 million and $2 million a year from Measure Q. This money goes into the general fund to pay for police, fire, snow removal, and parks and recreation,

Vuletich said.

Measure Q does not have an expiration date.

The California Department of Motor Vehicles contends with many extra fees that have nothing to do with actual vehicle registration. Here are some of those DMV fees.

Business expo at Stateline

Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce's annual Business Expo is March 25 from 4-8pm at MontBleu casino in Stateline. Cost is $10.

It's dubbed Pedal to Prosperity this year.

The deadline for vendor registration and payment is March 11. Booths are assigned on a first paid basis. Booth cost is $300, shared booths by two businesses are $165 per business.

Registration materials are available at www.tahoechamber.org or by calling (775) 588.1728.

UNR site of Nevada autism conference

The Center for Autism and Related Disorders Inc., the world's largest autism treatment center that provides state-of-the art therapy, is hosting a CARD Nevada Autism Conference for

parents, educators, medical and behavioral practitioners, researchers, and students.

The one-day, comprehensive conference will be in Reno March 4 from 8am-4:30pm at the Whittemore Peterson Institute's Center for Molecular Medicine, located at UNR on 1664 N. Virginia St.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in 110 children in America is diagnosed with autism, making the neurological disorder more common than childhood cancer, juvenile diabetes and pediatric AIDS combined. The objective of the conference is to provide information on the most effective autism interventions, to inform on the latest advances in autism research, and to showcase hands-on, groundbreaking technology used to assess and treat developmental disorders. Attendees will also learn how to strategically access insurance funding for autism treatment.

Featured speakers include: keynote speaker and CARD Executive Director Doreen Granpeesheh on "Applications of Behavior Analysis to the Treatment of Autism", CARD Research and Development Director Jonathan Tarbox on "Practical Solutions for Addressing Challenging Behaviors", Co-Creator and Director of Skills Adel Najdowski on "Skills: A Comprehensive, Web-based Assessment, Curriculum, Training Package and Progress Monitoring System" and CARD Contracts Director Bryce Miler on "Nevada's New Autism Mandate-Assembly Bill 162". A panel discussion with the featured speakers will follow the series of workshops.

For more information about the CARD Nevada Autism Conference call (818) 345.2345, ext. 270.

Food, passenger screening changes coming to Reno-Tahoe airport

By Ray Hagar, Reno Gazette- Journal

The Reno-Tahoe International Airport should have the latest Advanced Imaging Technology (AIT) passenger screening in operation by the summer and most of the food court will be switched to the post-security part of the airport, CEO Krys Bart told legislators Tuesday.

The current food court area will eventually become the new checkpoint screening area, Bart said.

“We will probably have the new AITs in the existing checkpoints by this summer,” said Bart, the CEO and president of the Reno-Tahoe Airport Authority. “But we are now going full bore in the design of the new checkpoint. So the new checkpoint should be done within 24 to 36 months but in the meantime, we are going to get AITs.

Read the whole story

Plow drivers deal with un-fun part of Tahoe snowstorms

By Kathryn Reed

Bouncing. Snowplows can do this even though the machines literally weigh a ton and then some. Even with chains on all

six tires, if they are carrying enough snow, especially uphill, it’s far from a smooth ride. And these monsters also slide.

Operating heavy equipment isn’t easy under the best of conditions. Best of conditions for a plow driver would be adequate visibility, no obstacles and a road surface that doesn’t resemble a Zamboni having just cleared a sheet of ice.

It’s Feb. 17 and the snow is dumping in South Lake Tahoe. Visibility is less than ideal. Vehicles are coming and going, and this contraption is supposed to zig and zag to accommodate them. Mailboxes are on the edge of driveways looking like targets.



Visibility is lacking for snowplow drivers during a storm. Photos/Kathryn Reed

With 130 miles of streets to clear in the city limits, the 16 plow drivers work 12-hour shifts (6 to 6) at times when it’s dumping like it has been for the past few days. The city is divvied up into routes, with a team working a particular route.

It’s a little before 6pm in the employee room at the snowplow yard. Dennis Hillyard is telling Bobby Maxwell what the day shift was like, what he accomplished, how the machine is

operating. Something isn’t quite right with big blue so Maxwell takes an older machine that rattles onto the streets of South Lake Tahoe.

Before he leaves the yard Maxwell tests the hydraulics. It’s a bit like a pilot going through a checklist.

The instrument panel is not as complex as that of an airplane, but there is certainly more to do at all times while the machine is in motion. No autopilot on this rig.

Five controls on the left, six on the right and the foot pedals require dexterity, concentration and quick thinking. Plus, there are levers to the right dealing with front wheel drive and being able to lock the rear axels. Windshield wipers clear – though not well – the moisture from the glass on top and below. The radio to home base is to the left.

There’s the plow in front, the belly blade and the gate to contend with on the machine.

That’s what these guys, and it is a male dominated profession, contend with just in their small sphere that is not designed to carry a passenger.

Outside their sphere of influence are driveways, intersections, drainage areas, street signs, mailboxes and vehicles.

And then there’s the public. Some don’t know how to drive in the snow. Some don’t care their vehicle is on the edge of the driveway looking close to losing a front bumper. Some people come out to stare. Others throw their arms up in disbelief about the berm that just got left.

“There’s never anything positive from the public when you’re plowing,” Maxwell says.

He’s had people chase him in their vehicles. He doesn’t stop; thinking nothing good could come of the confrontation.

But that doesn’t mean he is callous about leaving a berm. He said he and co-workers do their best, but when it’s coming down as fast has it has been with this storm, the accumulation means the snow has to go some place.

“You can only carry so much snow,” Maxwell explains. “The gate really only reduces the berm. It does not eliminate it.”

Headed up Bode Drive off Pioneer Trail the machine is resisting, it’s bouncing a bit. That driveway is going to be bermed. The gate, the device that is used to avoid berms, has to be released. And simple physics prove plows can only carry so much snow before it spills over.

Houses on the right corner of an intersection are apt to receive the biggest berms. Such are the hazards of the plows having to clear an intersection, with some of that snow from the street getting dumped right away.

People who plow their snow into the street – which violates a city ordinance – are apt to get a larger berm because it’s just more snow that has to be moved out of the street.

It’s not one pass that Maxwell makes on what is called the Heavenly route. He said he and Hillyard are about quality, not the distance.

Other operations

South Tahoe plow drivers are responsible for all the city streets, while Caltrans contends with all state highways, just as NDOT does the highways in Nevada.

In El Dorado County, the main arterial roadways and school bus routes are the priorities when it comes to clearing the 158 miles on the South Shore. The county also has 35 miles of pavement in the Tahoma area to contend with.

“We have been hit by the budget to some degree, but it is not affecting snow removal operations,” said Tom Celio, El Dorado

County deputy director of maintenance and operations.

The county also runs two 12-hour shifts and breaks the work into zones.

Douglas County is only responsible for a handful of streets at the lake, which is done by two private contractors. The rest of the South Shore is either covered by homeowners associations (like in Glenbrook) or general improvement districts (like the streets off Kingsbury Grade). Douglas County School District plows Warrior Way for the schools along there.

Once the streets all get plowed, then the blowers come out in all the jurisdictions. The guys driving the blowers are the same ones who had been in the plows.

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Ryan Shreve Memorial Firefighters Race

Ryan Shreve Memorial Firefighters Race at Sierra-at-Tahoe on March 15 starting at 10:30am.

Denver cops intercept pot

being hauled from Tahoe

By Jordan Steffen, Denver Post

A New Hampshire man was arrested Wednesday after Wyoming troopers found $234,000 worth of marijuana in his rental vehicle that might have been headed to Denver.

Just before 10am, Samuel Quinlan, 26, was pulled over for speeding on eastbound Interstate 80, about 13 miles east of Rock Springs, according to a news release from the Wyoming Highway Patrol.

Inconsistencies in Quinlan's story about his travel plans and the documents concerning his rental vehicle raised the trooper's suspicions. The trooper asked for assistance from a drug-detection dog from the Rock Springs Police Department.

Read the whole story

August trial date set for Red Hawk Casino

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

The Indian tribe that owns Shingle Springs' Red Hawk Casino has failed for a third time to kill off a lawsuit filed by a former business partner.

An El Dorado Superior Court judge scheduled an August trial in the lawsuit, filed by Sharp Image Gaming against the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians.

Judge Patrick Riley on Monday denied the tribe's effort to derail the suit, said Sharp Image attorney Matthew Jacobs.

Based in Chatsworth, Sharp Image is seeking more than $100 million from the tribe. The suit says the Miwoks broke a contract establishing Sharp Image as the tribe's exclusive casino partner.

Sharp Image provided financing when the Miwoks opened a small, temporary casino off Highway 50 in the mid-1990s. The facility closed after 10 months, partly over assorted legal issues.

Read the whole story

LTFAC meeting

The Lake Tahoe Basin Federal Advisory Committee will meet from 12:30-3pm on Feb. 28 in the Aspen Room at Lake Tahoe Community College, 1 College Drive, South Lake Tahoe.

LTFAC will address issues related to federal activities at Lake Tahoe. Items on the agenda include a new member orientation, followed by a public comment period.

LTFAC consists of 20 members representing a broad array of constituencies.

For more information on the Lake Tahoe Federal Advisory Committee, visit the Forest Service website.

Ski report: Bring out the fatties



“Hard pack” is a phrase that won’t be used for a while at Lake Tahoe ski resorts.

Here is the ski report from Curtis Fong, the Guy from Tahoe.