Weather hampers efforts to locate missing snowboarder

Rescue crews are still searching for snowboarder Shanwte Marie Willis, 25, of Tahoma. She was last seen on the backside of Alpine Meadows Ski Resort on Dec. 28 at 1:30pm.

Her boyfriend reported her missing at 4pm.

Placer County sheriff's Capt. Jeffrey Ausnow said Wednesday at 8am search and rescue efforts are under way, including snowmobiles and 11 Tahoe Nordic Search and Rescue Skiers. The weather is not cooperating with blizzard conditions and high avalanche danger.

Willis was last seen wearing a pink helmet, tan and camo jacket, and grey snowboard pants.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Rash of deaths on slopes prove riding can be dangerous

Even though the National Ski Areas Association reports a decline in the number of ski injuries in the last decade, the same cannot be said for deaths. The 2010-11 ski season is starting off with some unusual deaths.

This story from the *Vancouver Sun* talks about a rider who died at Blackcomb when he fell into a creek.

Two people died Christmas Eve when a snowboarder collided with

two skiers.



Tahoe area resorts have not reported any deaths this ski season. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Mount Hood Meadows in Oregon has had four deaths in 2010, which includes last ski season.

Two people have died at Cannon Mountain in December.

Mountain High ski resort in Southern California reported a snowboarder died on Monday.

The National Ski Areas Association reports 25 skier and 13 snowboarder deaths during the 2009-10 season out of 59.8 million skier-snowboarder days. Stats show of those 38 deaths, 30 were males.

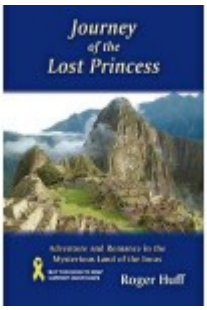
Snowboarders typically are injured more often, while skiers have more deaths. The use of helmets has decreased the number of head injuries by 50 percent, according to NSAA.

Despite these statistics, snow sports are relatively safe compared to other activities. The National Safety Council reports in 2008, 900 U.S. residents died bicycle riding, and 3,600 drowned either swimming, playing in the water or falling

in.

– Compiled by Kathryn Reed

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Tahoe City resident Roger Paul Huff has published another book – "Journey of the Lost Princess."

• Hear Lake Tahoe Unified School District Superintendent Jim Tarwater's webinar about technology.

• El Dorado County has sandbags available for residents, though none of the locations is in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

• El Dorado County officials will take the oath of office Jan. 3.

• *U.S. News & World Report* lists Sierra Nevada College in Incline one of the top 10 colleges for winter enthusiasts.

• Liftopia has discounts on lift tickets for Tahoe resorts.

Genoa Cowboy Poetry fest

planning for 2011

Organizers of the Genoa Cowboy Poetry & Music Festival are putting the final touches on the lineup for the event's second year – May 5-8.

Following up a highly successful inaugural event in 2010, the Town of Genoa and the Carson Valley Arts Council have been busy securing poets, storytellers, singers and a lot more for the second go around.

Headliners committed to appear include award-winning poet Paul Zarzyski and multiple entertainer of the year winner Dave Stamey, along with Belinda Gail, Wylie & the Wild West, David John & the Comstock Cowboys, Doris Daley, Sourdough Slim and more favorites.

Alongside the entertainers, attendees will find a packed schedule of workshops and several galleries of fine western art, a Native American Center, cowboy dinners and dances and opportunities to shop for Western clothing, collectibles, jewelry and tack. There's even a Trail Ride, with its own barbecue dinner and concert on Saturday and a special Mother's Day Brunch and Concert offering on Sunday.

The Genoa Cowboy Poetry & Music Festival is a blend of setting, heritage and Western culture and entertainment.

Nestled at the base of the Sierra Nevada in Northern Nevada's Carson Valley, historic Genoa, Nevada's oldest settlement, is the site of the first ranch in Nevada and still has working cattle ranches literally steps from the town. From its 19th century beginnings, cowboys and ranching have shared work, words and music here.

Find all the festival information online.

Opinion: A lesson about California's water systems

By Gary Arant

As people focus their attention on water supply issues and rates, I often hear this question: "Why are there so many water agencies?" As with the issue of "we conserve and you raise rates," this is a complex issue involving a little geography and history.

Most of the state's water occurs naturally in northern California. In the mid-1800s, this abundance led communities in Northern and Central California to build local storage and irrigation systems. Meanwhile, the sleepy villages of Los Angeles and San Diego existed off of local intermittent stream flows and groundwater.

Completion of the Union and Southern Pacific Railroads in 1860s made the West Coast accessible to the rest of the nation. Land speculators used Southern California's greatest resource, its climate, to promote the sale of vast tracts of undeveloped land.

As a result, Los Angeles' population grew rapidly. In 1908, city fathers authorized the construction of the Owens Valley system to bring water from the eastern slopes of the Sierra Nevada 233 miles south to L.A.

No sooner had the Owens system been completed in 1913, there was concern that even more imported water would be needed. In 1928, 13 cities formed the Metropolitan Water District to build a 242-mile long aqueduct system to import water from the Colorado River.

As the nation mounted World War II's Pacific campaign, San Diego County, with its military bases and aircraft industry, was thrust into a critical war role. As a result, from 1940-43 the county's population doubled to more than 400,000 people.

Gary Arant is general manager of the Valley Center Municipal Water District.

Read the whole story

Lake Tahoe water transit plan inching toward reality

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – A shred of optimism still exists that water transit will be operational on the North Shore in summer 2011. The reality is it is probably not going to be fully functional, if at all, until 2012.

The Tahoe Transportation District board this month agreed to have Executive Director Carl Hasty find a person to spearhead the project. This person would be tasked with obtaining agreements with pier owners, finding a boat and developing a plan.

TTD has no money for the project for the coming season, but the North Lake Tahoe Resort Association has said it can probably come up with $10,000 to help the cause. The NTLRA board still needs to vote on allocating the dollars.

The idea is to have water transit for locals and tourists at locations in Placer County – the North Shore – as a pilot program. The plan is to start small and grow – both in number

of boats used and stops.

In this month's staff report it says, "Several key questions remain unanswered at this time and they are the support of the Federal Transit Administration to use capital grant funds for boat acquisition, the identification of matching funds should FTA support exit, and the identification of start-up funds to get operations under way."

Mechele Duhamel, who ran a waterborne transit operation briefly in 2010, spoke at the meeting this month in favor of going forward with the concept.

"There is tons of funding out there. There are waterborne associations. They've all done this before," Duhamel said. "A nonprofit in our eyes is a perfect way to solicit more money."

Bill Bohn, who operates Bohn Consulting Design & Engineering in Incline Village, submitted a three-page letter to the board outlying how to go forward with water transit. He is advocating his firm be the one to create a feasibility study.

In part he wrote, " … none of the studies have comprehensively addressed the entire Waterborne Transit system from initial design, systems integration, funding and ongoing operational requirements. Before this board votes to approve the LSC study as presented it needs to consider the entire waterborne system from design, funding, construction and implementation to on-going operations."

Cal Neva to resume operations

in February

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

The slots will start ringing again soon at Frank Sinatra's old gambling joint at Lake Tahoe.



The owners of the Cal Neva Resort, the fabled hotel that straddles the state line on Tahoe's north shore, said this week that they expect to reopen the property's casino in February.

Cal Neva's casino was shuttered in March, a year after the property was taken over in a foreclosure by investment firm Canyon Capital Realty Advisors.

Read the whole story

Skier missing at Alpine Meadows

By Chelsea Phua, Sacramento Bee

Placer County sheriff's authorities are looking for a missing skier at a Lake Tahoe ski resort on Tuesday night as another winter storm is preparing to dump up to a foot of snow in parts of the Sierra Nevada.

Staff members at the Alpine Meadows Ski Resort – about 10 miles south of Truckee – reported the skier missing shortly after 4pm, a sheriff's dispatcher said.

Read the whole story

Residents homeless because of fire on Upper Kingsbury Grade

By Kathryn Reed

A nasty snowstorm with blowing wind hampered firefighters' efforts to bring a structure fire under control late Tuesday afternoon.

Flames could be seen along much of Tramway Drive in Stateline after the 4:30pm blaze was reported. Although the structure is not a total loss, all four units are uninhabitable, according to officials.

Mark Novak, fire marshal with Tahoe-Douglas Fire Protection District, said people living in the units are spending the night with friends or family in the area. He said some of the units were occupied, while others are vacation rentals.

"All efforts are being hampered by weather up there," Novak told *Lake Tahoe News*. He said it's been snowing hard and blowing quite a bit since the fire started.

The cause of the fire is under investigation. No injuries were reported.

"We're going to keep a fire watch overnight and complete the fire investigation in the morning when the light is better and the weather is better," Novak said.

Assisting Tahoe-Douglas on Dec. 28 were fire crews from South Lake Tahoe, North Lake Tahoe and East Fork. Those who weren't

on the fire were contending with multiple accidents on Kingsbury Grade.

The worst of the collisions involved two vehicles that temporarily closed the highway, sent one person to Barton Memorial Hospital and left three others with minor injuries that did not require hospitalization.

Mild temblors shake Truckee area

Residents in the Truckee area were shaking a bit Tuesday night.

A 1.6 magnitude earthquake struck at 6:01pm two miles west-southwest of Truckee. This was preceded by a stronger temblor of 3.6 at 5:53pm.

One person in Oakland reported feeling the first quake, though most of the more than 100 responses on the U.S. Geological Survey site were from people in the area, including Reno and Incline Village.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report