Take time to prevent pipes from freezing

Frigid temperatures can cause one of winter's worst woes – frozen water pipes.

Property owners and residents can take some simple precautions to prevent the inconvenience and expense of frozen water pipes.

Here are recommendations from Placer County:

Insulate pipes and faucets outdoors and in unheated areas. Wrap pipes with pipe-insulating materal, which is available at hardware and plumbing supply store, or use insulation. Be sure to protect all pipes in unheated areas, such as crawl spaces and garages.

Do not attempt to put anti-freeze into any water pipes. Antifreeze is toxic to humans, pets, wildlife and landscaping and is harmful to the environment. Antifreeze shouldn't be used unless specifically called for by a manufacturer.

Make sure you know the location of your master water shut-off valve. The frozen pipe may already be broken and will leak when the water is thawed. In this case, you will need to shut off the water in your home or business until the leaking pipe is fixed.

Thawing frozen pipes. If you locate the frozen section of pipe and try to thaw it yourself, be sure to take the following precautions to protect yourself and your property.

- Do not use a torch with an open flame.
- Open the faucet first. Start by warming the pipe as close to the faucet as possible working toward the coldest section of the pipe. Water running through the

pipe will help to melt the ice in the pipe.

- Place a warm towel or rag around the pipe. Pour hot water over the cloth. Repeat several times until the pipe is unfrozen.
- If water is not available, you may use a hair dryer but be careful to avoid getting it wet causing a shock.

Cell phones not perfect in emergencies

By Frank Knutson, Wall Street Journal

Amid all the privacy concerns about cellphone tracking, one important group is arguing that location data isn't precise enough: emergency responders.

Police and others say 911 dispatchers are having trouble sending help to callers who use cellphones. The reason: unlike a landline, cellphones provide just a rough estimate – with a possible radius of a few hundred yards – of the caller's location.

Data released this summer renewed attention to the problem and set off a debate over the adequacy of the tracking data that cellphone carriers share with emergency dispatchers.

"The location of the caller is the most important thing," said Eric Parry, who oversees 911 calling technology used in Utah. "If I have a 'what,' that helps me know what I need to send. If I don't have a 'where,' then the 'what' doesn't help me in the least."

The proliferation of cellphones has been both a blessing and a headache for law enforcement officers and other emergency

responders. More people with cellphones means it is easier than ever to make a quick call for help.

Read the whole story

Heavenly agrees to settle zipline death case

By Andy Furillo, Sacramento Bee

After a honeymoon hike at Heavenly Mountain Resort, Mark and Rebecca Dickson were riding the chairlift down the hill, laughing and talking about their lunch plans, when the newlyweds saw a blue rope flutter ahead of them in the stiff afternoon.

“And then I heard my husband say, ‘This is not good,’” Rebecca Dickson recalled in an interview Tuesday.

The rope had broken off from Lake Tahoe’s Heavenly Flyer ZipRider line that ran parallel to the lift about 100 yards away. The fluttering rope wrapped around the couple’s chair, which swung back and forth so violently in the entanglement that Mark Dickson, who was 51, fell out of his seat and to his death in the rocks about 40 feet below.

Rebecca Dickson and Mark Dickson’s two sons from a previous marriage sued, and in September they settled the wrongful death case in El Dorado County Superior Court.

A confidentiality agreement has kept the financial terms of the settlement under wraps. The plaintiffs had asked for $15 million in a settlement conference in June, according to documents they filed ahead of a court hearing.

But, while the payout has been kept secret, the settlement does allow the Dicksons' attorneys to reveal a list of Heavenly's acknowledgments about the facts surrounding the Aug. 31, 2009, accident.

Under terms of the deal, Heavenly's owners agreed to make a number of safety-related changes, including ones that call for strengthened drug and alcohol testing of the people who run the Heavenly Flyer, regular equipment inspections and shutting down the ride in high winds.

Read the whole story

Negative double-digit temps headed for Tahoe



Cold temps mean more fresh and man-made snow at Northstar. Photo/Provided

The low tonight in South Lake Tahoe could be minus 8 degrees, according to the National Weather Service in Reno. But it's going to get worse.

"Extremely cold low temperatures are possible Sunday morning,

especially in the Sierra where overnight lows may drop close to 20 degrees below zero," NWS said in a statement.

Expect mostly sunny skies until the next storm blows in on Friday afternoon. A foot of snow is expected above 7,000 feet and several inches at lake level. The Reno-Carson areas will also see white stuff.

By Sunday the sun should come back out.

In the basin the highs are not expected to be above freezing through the weekend.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Pet pictures with Santa benefit Tahoe animal group

Alpine Animal Hospital has arranged to take photos of people's dog or cat with Santa.

All funds raised go to the Animal Coalition of Tahoe. The suggested donation is $5.

Santa will be at the South Lake Tahoe vet clinic from 4-6pm on Dec. 4, 7, 11 and 12.

Alpine is located at 921 Emerald Bay Road, just north of the Y.

For more info, call (530) 541.4040.

City attorney hampers efforts to have South Lake Tahoe voters decide pot initiative

Updated Dec. 4, 4:15pm: City Attorney Tom Watson has given the title and summary to Steve Kubby.

By Kathryn Reed

While hundreds of hours, including multiple public meetings, were spent devising South Lake Tahoe's medical marijuana ordinance, there is an effort under way to tweak the law that is on the books.

Steve Kubby, a local medical marijuana advocate, wants the voters in the city to have the opportunity to revise the ordinance. This is the second time he has started the ballot process. The first time was aborted in early 2012 when he planned to move to Canada. Those plans changed and he has resumed his quest to alter the language of the law.

But it has hit a few roadblocks on the way to the June ballot. City Attorney Tom Watson last week said he would not write the title and summary for the initiative, which is required before signatures can be sought.

A flurry of emails was exchanged during the weekend and through Monday between Kubby, Watson, City Manager Nancy Kerry and Mayor Tom Davis. Kubby told *Lake Tahoe News* he received a call from a city official Dec. 3 saying in all likelihood Watson would issue the title and summary some time today. This would still allow time for the question to be posed to voters in June.

If this happens, it will be the second time this week Watson has done a 180 regarding title and summaries. Late last month he said “no” to writing the documents for the group wanting a paid parking question on the ballot. At the time he told *Lake Tahoe News* he could not be an advocate for that group. However, on Dec. 3 he summoned Tahoe4Tahoe members to his office.

“The topic of discussion was refining the petition request to be resubmitted for the title and summary that the city attorney is required by law to provide the petitioners. The meeting was productive and the committee remains focused on getting this issue in front of the voters for the June ballot,” Peggy Bourland of Tahoe4Tahoe told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Watson did not return a call to *LTN. Lake Tahoe News* sent Watson a series of questions on Dec. 1 to which he has not responded. These are the questions:

- Can you tell me if you have had to deal with Title and Summary issues before you came to South Lake Tahoe? If so, did you ever write one? If yes, what was different about those compared to the two that just came before you?

- If you have not dealt with Title and Summary issues before, was your decision for the two recent decisions made on your own or did you consult others? If you consulted others, who did you consult?

- What would the two SLT petitioners need to do to get you to write a Title and Summary? What is stopping you from helping them get the verbiage correct for you to write the Title and Summary?

- On the marijuana issue, how can one city attorney say yes one year and another say no to almost the identical wording nearly two years later?

The law states that the city attorney “shall” write the title

and summary. In other words, he must. If passed by the voters, it can always be challenged in court if someone believes it violates the law.

“We are presenting an alternative to the current policy which we believe is illegal and unconstitutional and overly oppressive for patients,” Kubby said of his initiative.

His initiative would allow the market to determine the number of dispensaries and delivery services that could operate in the city, reduce fines, not mandate people disclose they are growing marijuana, increase rules regarding odor and limit local law enforcement working with federal agents.

The last item could be where a legal challenge would arise.

The exact wording is, “Elected, appointed, hired employees, officers, and officials of the city of South Lake Tahoe shall not directly or indirectly cooperate with or assist federal, state, or county officers or officials, volunteers, or employees who eradicate marijuana, act for seizure or forfeiture, or demand entry without a warrant or to defeat any liberally construed purpose of this act, nor may any state or local agency contract to eradicate marijuana that is being grown, manufactured or stored under the provisions of this act. Knock and talk shall be the first act taken by the above officers/employees. Violation of this clause shall be a misdemeanor, punishable by fine and up to one year in prison.”

While Kubby worked on the ordinance that is on the books along with the three operators of the collectives that were open at the time and the former city attorney and manager, he was under the impression certain items would be removed. They weren’t.

Kubby said he believes the current ordinance has negative health and safety consequences for people who use and grow marijuana for medicinal purposes.

Here is a copy of the revised ordinance Kubby is proposing.

Letter: Harrah’s-Harveys helps Bijou school

To the community,

Thank you Harrah’s-Harveys Lake Tahoe. Harrah’s Harveys Lake Tahoe made a big contribution to the new Bijou Community School playground to finish off the $102,000 that was raised by the Bijou PTA.

The playground equipment has been purchased and the playground will be installed as soon as possible (weather will determine this).

We can’t thank the community businesses, community service organizations, and private individuals enough for the amazing support we have received to make this playground for our school and the community happen. We are continually impressed with the generosity and community-minded spirit of South Lake Tahoe and Stateline.

Thank you,

Kathy Haven, Bijou PTA

USFS to pile burn on South Shore

U.S. Forest Service fuels management crews will begin prescribed fire operations on Kingsbury Grade and at Emerald Bay on Dec. 4.

Weather and conditions permitting, crews will burn approximately 10 acres per day on Lower Kingsbury Grade near Meadow Lane. Operations are expected to continue through the weekend. In the Emerald Bay area near Inspiration Point, crews will burn approximately 3 acres in one or two days.

Smoke from these prescribed fire project areas can be expected, is normal, and may continue for several days after the initial ignition. All Prescribed fires are monitored regularly for burning and smoke dispersal and action is taken to mitigate concerns as they arise.

Forest Service staff will post road signs around the areas affected by the prescribed fire, send email notifications, and update the local fire information line at (530) 543.2600, ext. 6.

U.S. teens not as smart as their peers

By Motoko Rich, New York Times

Fifteen-year-olds in the United States score in the middle of the developed world in reading and science while lagging in math, according to international standardized test results

being released on Tuesday.

While the performance of American students who took the exams last year differed little from the performance of those tested in 2009, the last time the exams were administered, several comparable countries – including Ireland and Poland – pulled ahead this time.

As in previous years, the scores of students in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan and South Korea put those school systems at the top of the rankings for math, science and reading. Finland, a darling of educators, slid in all subjects but continued to outperform the averages, and the United States.

The Program for International Student Assessment, commonly known as PISA, was administered to 15-year-olds in 65 countries and school systems by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, a Paris-based group that includes the world's wealthiest nations. Just over 6,100 American students took the exams.

Read the whole story

No injuries in DCSD bus accident

A Douglas County school bus was involved in an accident late Tuesday afternoon in Stateline.

"I was told the driver was allowed to continue on and take the children home," Douglas County School District Superintendent Lisa Noonan told *Lake Tahoe News*. "I have had no word of

injuries or damage to the bus requiring children to be transferred to another bus.”

Noonan did not know how many Zephyr Cove Elementary students would have been on the bus at the time of the Nov. 3 accident. Buses can hold a little more than 50 students.

A school official was calling the parents of the students, who could be in grades K-6, to let them know what happened.

The accident occurred on Lower Kingsbury Grade. A Nevada Highway Patrol trooper said his agency assisted with the accident, but is not the lead agency and had no details. Douglas County sheriff’s dispatch said NHP is the lead agency.

Snow has been falling on the South Shore for much of the afternoon. Roads are slick because it was raining earlier in the day.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report