Wind, humidity to create fire weather in Tahoe

The combination of gusty winds and low humidity may create critical fire weather conditions for the Lake Tahoe Basin on Sunday.

The National Weather Service in Reno says a fire watch is in effect for all of Sept. 29.

A strong storm system from the Northwest will be moving into the area this weekend, bringing winds of 20-30 mph and gusts up to 50pmh, along with humidity near 25 percent.

With the wind on Sunday, there is also a chance of moisture for the basin. Full sun is expected to return Tuesday.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Beer makers to convene in Reno

The second annual Nevada Craft Brewers Festival is Oct. 5 from 3-7pm at Wingfield Park near the Truckee River in downtown Reno.

Fifteen breweries across the state will pour two to four beers and ales.

Brewers from both ends of the state will compete against each other.

The $25 tickets may be purchased at Great Basin Brewing Company, Silver Peak, The Brewer's Cabinet, Sierra Tap House, Stoneyhead Brewery, the Reno Homebrewer and High Sierra. Tickets will be $30 at the gate. Tickets include a souvenir tasting glass and unlimited beer. Must be 21 to attend.

South Lake Tahoe, TTD settle MV dispute

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe and Tahoe Transportation District expect to have their legal matters with MV Transportation resolved next week.

The City Council on Oct. 1 is expected to ratify the settlement agreement that calls for the city to pay MV and South Tahoe Area Transit Authority $115,000. The money will come from the general fund's unassigned excess reserves. The money is to be split equally among the entities.

Fairfield-based MV had signed a three-year contract in summer 2009 to run the daily operation of the bus service on the South Shore that included BlueGo, Heavenly ski shuttles, Nifty 50 Trolley, routes to Carson City, and service into Carson Valley.

MV filed a lawsuit against South Tahoe Area Transit Authority – which was the overseer of the bus operations – after the agency severed the contract within a year. STATA filed for bankruptcy on Sept. 13, 2010. MV that year filed a complaint saying it was owed $2 million for services rendered and another $1 million in lost revenue.

The staff report for Tuesday's council meeting says, "The city has vigorously defended its position that it has no liability in this situation. However, the costs in time and attorney's fees have resulted in a determination that the certainty received in settlement is better for the city than the risk and ongoing expenses to proceed further with litigation."

The agreement is expected to be filed with the Bankruptcy Court in Reno on Oct. 23.

The TTD board earlier this month voted to settle as well. The court is expected to approve that agreement on Oct. 3.

"TTD has agreed to assist the parties in recovering potential reimbursable expenses from outstanding operating grants, and TTD will be able to keep 50 percent of whatever funds are recovered," TTD Executive Director Carl Hasty told *Lake Tahoe News*. "TTD will also pay the parties $150,000 in total with the potential to offset some or all of that through the 50 percent of recovered funds from eligible operating expense reimbursement, which minimizes or negates any potential impact to existing south shore transit service."

Other entities involved in the case have settled, but not everyone is talking about it.

S. Tahoe coalition receives multi-year drug grant

By Kathryn Reed

Drug use and abuse is nothing new in South Lake Tahoe. But

there is a group in town that believes the status quo must go.

The South Tahoe Drug Free Coalition secured a $150,000 federal grant for each of the next five years. The money will primarily go toward education and prevention. The funding starts Oct. 1.

South Lake Tahoe was one of nine communities in California and one of 147 nationwide to receive the Drug Free Communities grant.

“Look around, there is probably not one of us who doesn’t have a family member, an associate or someone in our different circles that has not been affected by substance abuse,” Erica Eng told *Lake Tahoe News*. “The grant is about prevention and prevention at a young age so kids don’t go down that route to begin with, so they don’t become addicted to alcohol, marijuana and prescription drugs.”

Eng works for Tahoe Youth & Family Services, the lead agency for the Drug Free Coalition. While she led the charge during the grant seeking process, Leanne Wagoner with Barton Health is now chair of the coalition. (This reporter is a member of the coalition.)

“Working toward reducing substance abuse in our community will benefit everyone. Substance abuse can be correlated with many other social health factors such as domestic violence or mental health, known as co-occurring disorders, which can negatively affect the quality of life for many living in our area,” Wagoner told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Additionally, from Barton’s perspective, reducing substance abuse may ultimately reduce healthcare costs. You see, when a patient is admitted to the hospital for a medical issue and it is combined with substance abuse, their stay tends to be longer. Many of these patients do not have the ability to pay for these services, which results in Barton donating this care, which affects the cost of healthcare for everyone.”

The coalition also wants to work with Lake Tahoe Unified School District. Students from South Tahoe Middle School are part of the coalition. Going forward South Tahoe High students are expected to be part of the mix.

Here are some local stats from the California Healthy Kids Survey, which is conducted every two years in middle and high school:

• In LTUSD during the 2011-12 school year, 27 percent of freshmen and 46 percent for juniors said they had at least one alcoholic beverage in the past 30 days.

• The number of juniors in the district using alcohol in the past month was nearly 10 percent higher than the state average from 2004-10.

Barton Health's 2012 Community Health Needs Assessment showed that 29 percent of people living on the South Shore consider themselves binge drinkers. This is 12 percent higher than the national rate. The survey found local illegal drug use nearly four times the national rate.

"Barton has been working this past year on initiatives targeting substance abuse in our community by creating an awareness poster campaign in primary care offices encouraging patients to ask their doctor about available resources, supporting initiatives like the Drug Store Project and Every 15 Minutes through the volunteerism of many nurses and physicians, looking at pain management protocols and how Barton can be more proactive about looking into non-medication solutions to address patients' pain, integrating an electronic medical record system which allows physicians to better manage a patient's care holistically and helps practitioners identify conflicts in care or overuse of medication, sponsoring local events and nonprofit organizations such as Tahoe Youth and Family Services, Live Violence Free, the Drug Store Project, and sober grad nights at both local high schools," Wagoner

said.

Binge drinking was the subject of a study at the University of Michigan from 2005-11 where more than 16,000 high school students across the U.S. were surveyed. The results were released this month. The research revealed in the last two weeks 20.2 percent of high school seniors reported drinking more than five drinks or more at a time, 10.5 percent reported having 10 or more drinks, and 5.6 percent reported 15 or more drinks.

Other stats from the study: Rates of 5+ binge drinking and 10+ extreme binge drinking have declined since 2005, but rates of 15+ extreme binge drinking have not significantly declined. Students from more rural areas were more likely than students from metropolitan areas to consume 15 or more drinks.

Lake Tahoe is considered rural.

Some of the grant money will help keep current prevention programs intact. This includes Drug Store Project. In April, 350 sixth-graders went through the program that shows them the consequences of taking prescription drugs. (The 2014 event will be April 1 at Lake Tahoe Community College.)

Illegal drug use is not just a local issue. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., head of the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control, on Sept. 25 chaired a hearing on dangerous synthetic drugs such as Molly, K2, Spice and bath salts.

She cited statistics, saying poison centers nationwide responded to approximately 3,200 calls related to synthetic marijuana and bath salts in 2010 and that by 2011 that figure jumped to 12,834. Sixty percent of those calls were from people 25 and younger.

“In my view, synthetic drugs are diabolical. Synthetic drugs are often unregulated substances designed by scientists to

mimic the effects of controlled substances. They are similar in chemical structure to Schedule 1 controlled substances. They are sold at gas stations, convenience stores, head shops and over the Internet," Feinstein said during the hearing. "When Congress outlawed several of these synthetic drugs last year, traffickers did not stop producing them. Instead, they slightly altered the chemical structure of illegal drugs to skirt the law. By making these alterations, the drug traffickers produced what we call 'controlled substance analogues' which mimic the effects of drugs like ecstasy, cocaine, PCP and LSD."

In July, Feinstein introduced the Protecting Our Youth from Dangerous Synthetic Drugs Act to give law enforcement the tools they need to prosecute individuals who produce and distribute controlled substance analogues. The bill would establish an inter-agency committee of scientists to be responsible for establishing and maintaining an administrative list of controlled substance analogues.

The local drug coalition will hire a coordinator to implement the goals of the group, oversee future programs, and manage the grant funds.

For more information about the South Tahoe Drug Free Coalition, including becoming a member or volunteering time, contact Erica Eng at Erica@tahoeyouth.org.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

• The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board on Sept. 25 approved the Douglas County South Shore Area Plan.

• The Polish Ambassador and DJ Vadim will be at the Tahoe Biltmore in Crystal Bay on Oct. 3 at 9pm. GRiZ: The Rebel Era Tour with Two Fresh and Anvil Smith play there Oct. 16 at 9pm.

• Comedian Daniel Tosh will be at MontBleu Dec. 21 for two shows – 7pm and 9:30pm. Tickets are $55, $65 and $75 – 888.829.7630.

• The El Dorado Trail between Halcon and Verde Robles will be closed Oct. 2-3 for maintenance.

• Check out this video to find out what Northstar pro rider Chas Guldemond has been up to.

WCSO has more radar guns on the streets

Washoe County Sheriff's Office efforts to increase public awareness about the dangers of speeding are being helped by a grant from the Nevada Office of Traffic Safety's Joining Forces program.

The $4,600 grant funded four radar guns for the sheriff's office, along with chargers and other support equipment. Deputies will use the equipment during commute hours to

encourage drivers to stay safe and drive within the speed limits.

Health care premiums may not be affordable

By Alex Wayne and Alex Nussbaum, Bloomberg

Health insurance under Obamacare will cost individuals at least $2,988 a year on average, a price that Republican opponents may target as out-of-reach for many Americans who don't qualify for U.S. subsidies.

While the $249 monthly payment is intended to be discounted through tax credits, less than half of people now buying insurance on their own may get that help. The release of the data by the Obama administration comes just six days before the Affordable Care Act's insurance exchanges open for enrollment, and a day after Ted Cruz, a Texas Republican, took the floor of the U.S. Senate to oppose the law.

The affordability of the overhaul has polarized debate since the act passed in 2010. While the law's cheapest plans offer more care than minimal policies available today, including guaranteed coverage for people with pre-existing conditions, their cost may persist as an issue even though it affects only a relatively small percentage of people.

The law's long-term success "will depend on the changes that are made over the next couple of years to address the affordability issue," said Brian Wright, an insurance analyst at Monness Crespi Hardt & Co. in New York. "If you have modifications that can help address those issues, then it will

ultimately be successful. If not, then it’s an open question.”

Read the whole story

Study: Calif. one of the best states for women

By UPI

WASHINGTON — Despite U.S. women’s advancements, substantial inequalities remain with men, but disparities for women also exist among states, a nonprofit group says.

A report by the Center for American Progress analyzed multiple factors — 36 factors overall — involving women.

For example, women in Vermont make on average close to 85 cents for every $1 a man makes, while women in Wyoming make only 64 cents $1 a man makes. Nationally, U.S. women are paid only 77 cents for every dollar a man makes. On average, African-American women make 64 cents for every dollar that white men make.

On leadership, 15 states have no female elected leaders in the House of Representatives or the Senate. Lastly, while less than 10 percent of women in Vermont, Wisconsin, Hawaii and Massachusetts are uninsured, nearly 25 percent of women in Texas do not have health insurance.

Read the whole story

Tamale sale benefits FRC

The South Lake Tahoe Family Resource Center is having a tamale fundraiser.

Orders are being accepted Monday-Friday from 8:30am to 5pm. The last day to submit an order is Sept. 30 at noon.

Pork, chicken and cheese tamales are $15 a dozen. People can mix-and-match their orders. Only 80 dozen tamales will be sold.

Tamales will be ready on Oct. 4 between noon-5pm.

All proceeds go toward programs and services offered at the Family Resource Center.

For more info, call (530) 542.0740.

Tahoe boat inspections moving to launch ramps

On Oct. 1, boat inspections will move to select launch ramps and winter hours will begin.

Tahoe RCD inspectors will be stationed at Cave Rock and Lake Forest boat launches from 6am-4pm seven days a week, weather permitting. Boats with attached Lake Tahoe wire inspection seals and valid Tahoe inspection stickers will be permitted to launch during these times, but any unsealed boats are required to get an

inspection during daylight hours.

Decontaminations will be available through October. Decontamination fees apply. Boats with intact inspection seals will still be permitted to launch at Sand Harbor,

Obexer’s and Tahoe Keys Marina, but no inspections or decontaminations are available at these locations.

To confirm hours and inspection locations, call 888.824.6267.