Opinion: Don’t let your vehicle start a fire

By Teri Mizuhara

Keeping your vehicle up-to-date on its maintenance schedules can prevent wildfires.

By making sure all your vehicles are in good working order you can help reduce the potential of wildland fires occurring in California.

Recent examples of wild fires caused by vehicles are clearly visible in El Dorado County along Highway 50 below the Apple Café in Placerville, along Highway 50 near Cedar Heights Drive and along Highway 50 near Carson Road and in Amador County on Highway 88 and Toyon Road in Pine Grove.

When a vehicles engine is not well maintained, the exhaust system can become overtaxed thereby allowing fuel to enter the exhaust system which in turn overheats the catalytic convertor that melts and disintegrates while you are driving. Pieces of the catalytic convertor exit the muffler at about 1,200 degrees and can bounce into the dried grass along the edge of roads and start fires

Another common cause of wildland fires occurs when tires that are improperly inflated (too little or too much pressure) blow out and literally shred into pieces and bounce off the road coming to rest in the dried vegetation which during summer months can catch fire. And finally, towing vehicles, boats, campers, jet skis, etc., place added stress on a vehicles transmission and when that transmission hasn’t been properly maintained it can spell disaster.

Frank Rodriguez of the California Highway Patrol said, “If someone is having car trouble, we encourage them to find a

safe place to stop, such as a paved shoulder or parking area. They should avoid pulling off into the weeds if at all possible because this can cause a fire. Drivers should also be wary of driving long distances on a flat tire because the tire will detached from the rim and could cause a fire under the right circumstances. Best practice is for the driver to drive short distances at slow speeds to find a place to park."

Driving is something we do all the time, however we don't always give it much thought. A well maintained vehicle helps ensure that you won't end up on the side of the road with a trail of fires behind. This also saves you money, the better the engine runs the less fuel is wasted.

Teri Mizuhara is the public information officer with the CalFire unit that serves El Dorado County.

Bomb squad called to Lakeview Commons

A pressure cooker similar to what was used in the Boston Marathon bombing was blown up in South Lake Tahoe on Sunday night by the Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection Fire District bomb squad.

South Lake Tahoe police officers wasted no time in calling in the neighboring agency to take care of the suspicious device after what happened in Boston, where three people were killed and more than 260 were injured by homemade pressure cooker bombs.

The apparatus – which was actually a ricer cooker – was found at Lakeview Commons on June 30 after the Race the Lake of the

Sky stand up paddleboard races concluded.



Tahoe Douglas Fire Department's bomb robot at Lakeview Commons on June 30. Photo/Jonathan Moore

Eric Guevin with Tahoe Douglas Fire told *Lake Tahoe News* the cooker was found by a bear-proof garbage can, but it looked like it didn't fit – so people left it by the side.

He said the robot was sent in for recon, but it was not possible to get an X-ray of the cooker. That is why it was decided to blow up the device on scene.

Food was all that was inside.

Knowing what happened 3,000 mile away, authorities decided to blow up the cooker onsite instead of taking it elsewhere.

Traffic on Highway 50 was diverted for about an hour. Pedestrians were also blocked from the area for their safety.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

19 firefighters die in Arizona wildland blaze

Publisher's note: ***The Angora Peak crew from Lake Valley Fire Protection District is in Arizona on standby and the Lake Tahoe U.S. Forest Service crew is en route.***

By Jackee Coe and Laurie Merrill, Arizona Republic

Arizona State forestry officials confirmed Sunday night that 19 firefighters have died in the Yarnell Hill Fire that has ripped through half of the town, sent residents to Prescott for safety and given the state its biggest ever wildfire firefighter tragedy.

"It's a dark day," said Mike Reichling, Arizona State Forestry Division spokesman.

Reichling said the 19 firefighters were found in area that also had 19 fire shelters deployed. Some of those found were inside a shelter, which is typically used as a last resort to withstand the fire as it blows over. Some of the crew members were found outside the shelters.



Homes burn near Yarnell, Ariz., on June 30. Photo/David Kadlubowski/Arizona Republic

Officials said 18 of the deceased were members of the Prescott Hotshots team. It's unknown what fire crew the 19th firefighter was a member of. The firefighters are part of a team that is typically sent in first to help cutoff the fire, Reichling said.

"They were up there doing what they normally do," he said.

According to the *Los Angeles Times*, this is the worst loss of life of firefighters since 1933 when 25 died in a blaze in L.A's Griffith Park.

Reichling expects about half of the town's 500 homes to be decimated by the fire that is currently burning with zero containment and has grown well past 2,000 acres.

Mike Reichling, Arizona State Forestry Division spokesman, said the fire is quickly reaching "Type 1" status and that federal authorities will be brought in to help Monday morning. Reichling expects the manpower dedicated to the fire to reach about 400 people as federal help arrives.

Fire officials Sunday afternoon ordered the evacuation of Yarnell and parts of Peeples Valley as a fast moving, lightning-caused fire that charred up to 2,000 acres reached Yarnell, Reichling said, Arizona State Forestry Division spokesman.

The wind-whipped blaze also prompted officials to shut 25 miles of State Route 89 between Congress and Kirkland, but residents of the hundreds of evacuated homes could still travel the estimated 30 miles to a shelter in Prescott, Reichling said.

The Yarnell Hill Fire, ignited at about 5:30pm Friday, was moving north and east at the rate of about half a mile per hour, fire officials said.

As about 250 firefighters fought to keep the blaze at bay

Sunday, officials evacuated three subdivisions outside Yarnell, officials said.

Speaker of the House Andy Tobin, R-Paulden, was shaken Sunday evening during a brief interview with the *Arizona Republic*. He could not confirm details of the number of people injured, and said the Department of Safety was on its way to take him to the scene.

“I’m going to the scene, I’m going there,” he said, adding he just spoke with his friend, Yavapai County Sheriff’s Officer Scott Mascher. “The fire took an incredibly swift turn is all he (Mascher) said and he said it is very, very bad. Tonight, we need all of Arizona’s prayers.”

About 14 Yarnell-area residents Sunday afternoon had arrived at the shelter at Yavapai College near Prescott, located about 30 miles from Yarnell, according to Brian Gomez, spokesman for the Red Cross Grand Canyon Chapter.

He said the power went out at the shelter due to monsoons but was restored.

More people were expected to need shelter as officials ordered still further evacuations, Gomez said. The Red Cross was poised to open a shelter at Wickenburg High School, he said.

Yavapai College was also used to house evacuees during the Doce Fire, which has been 96 percent contained, officials said.

The Yarnell Hill Fire was zero-percent contained Sunday, officials said.

Officials opened a shelter for livestock and large animals at Hidden Spring Ranch on Highways 89 in a part of Peeples Valley that as of Sunday was safe from the fire, officials said.

The Yarnell Hill Fire had burned 300 acres Sunday morning, had scorched about 1,000 acres Sunday afternoon, and had probably

grown to 2,000 acres Sunday evening, Reichling said.

Fueled by chaparral and grass, the blaze was burning uphill on state land about 25 miles north of Wickenburg with 15-to 20-foot flames, he said.

The Yavapai County Sheriff’s Office evacuated the Double Bar A Ranch and Model Creek areas, officials said. A reverse 911 call was sent and sheriff’s deputies went door-to-door to alert residents.

The temperature warmed to 101 degrees Sunday afternoon and southwest winds were blowing up to 22 miles per hour, Reichling said.

The low humidity, type of fuel, topography and northwest direction of the wind was feeding the and pushing it up the hill toward the communities, Reichling said.

About 250 firefighters, including two Type 2 crews, three Type 1 crews, and four engines, were on the scene, Reichling said. Three Type 1 crews, seven helicopters, two air tankers, four single engine air tankers, and multiple engines and air tankers were ordered.

There were expected to be about 400 firefighters arriving Sunday night and on Monday, Reichling said.

Firefighters were establishing structure protection in the Yarnell area and directly attacking the fire along its eastern flank.

A large animal shelter was set up at the Hidden Springs Ranch on Arizona 89 southwest of Hayes Ranch Road, he said. A shelter for people and small animals is being opened at Yavapai College at 1100 E. Sheldon in Prescott.

Fire crews across the state also were battling three other blazes, including firefighters in Prescott who continue to work to get the Doce Fire fully contained, authorities said.

Firefighters near the Mexican border were battling the 530-acre W-2 Fire that is burning in oak grassland and brush about seven miles west of Lochiel, east of Nogales and south of Sierra Vista, Coronado National Forest spokesman Gerry Perry said. A local rancher reported the fire about 3pm Saturday.

The fire likely is human caused as there has been no lightning in the area recently, but the exact cause still has not been determined, Perry said. No structures currently are threatened.

A total of 160 firefighters, including six hand crews, two helicopters dropping water, two engines, two single air tankers and a heavy air tanker, were battling the blaze, he said.

Fire crews had conducted burnouts along the western flank overnight Saturday to insure the fire would not grow from that side, Perry said. They will continue to build additional fire lines and supplemental burnouts in advance of the fire to try to prevent further growth.

Firefighters were battling the 25-acre Dean Peak Fire near about 10 miles southeast of Kingman, officials said. Two heavy air tankers and one Type 1 crew had been ordered.

The 6,767-acre Doce Fire burning seven miles northwest of Prescott in the Granite Mountain Wilderness was 96 percent contained Sunday morning, officials said. Road and trail closures in the area are still in effect.

The estimated cost to date for the Doce firefighting efforts is $6,787,293, authorities said.

Not all sunscreens work the same

By Alexandra Sifferlin, Time

Not all sunscreens are created equal. That's the message being pushed by the Food and Drug Administration, which this summer will start requiring makers to say whether their products protect against both ultraviolet-A and ultraviolet-B rays.

UVA rays are always present, even on cloudy days, and cause skin aging. UVB rays are largely responsible for burns. Both can cause cancer.

What the labels won't tell you is that while U.S. sunscreens are safe to use, they're not as protective as they could be. Eight applications for cutting-edge ingredients – like bisoctrizole, which reflects and scatters UV rays – have been pending with the FDA for years.

All are deemed safe in Europe, where they're common in creams from L'Oréal, among other makers. Those sunscreens can be purchased online – but U.S. buyers must pay hefty shipping costs.

Why the delay? Not only does the FDA test for safety and efficacy, but products also must prove themselves in a similar market, like Europe, for at least five years. The process is stringent to prevent products that disrupt hormones or cause allergic reactions from making it to market.

But the Public Access to SunScreens (PASS) Coalition, a lobbying group of sunscreen manufacturers, dermatologists and skin-cancer organizations, is pushing the FDA and Congress to streamline the approval process. And legislators are listening. Congress directed the FDA to take final action on pending ingredients by June 2014 and to develop a new process

so innovative ingredients get on the market quicker.

Sierra – an outdoor climate change lab

By Tracie Cone, AP

SEQUOIA NATIONAL FOREST – In parts of California's Sierra Nevada, marshy meadows are going dry, wildflowers are blooming earlier and glaciers are melting into ice fields.

Scientists also are predicting the optimal temperature zone for giant sequoias will rise hundreds and hundreds of feet, leaving trees at risk of dying over the next 100 years.

As indicators point toward a warming climate, scientists across 4 million acres of federally protected land are noting changes affecting everything from the massive trees that can grow to more than two-dozen feet across to the tiny, hamsterlike pika. But what the changes mean and whether humans should do anything to intervene are sources of disagreement among land managers.

"That's the tricky part of the debate: If humans are causing warming, does that obligate us under the laws of the National Park Service to try to counteract those effects?" said Nate Stephenson, a research ecologist with the U.S. Geological Survey.



Looking down on Lake Aloha from the top of Ralston Peak. Photo/LTN file

“How do you adapt to a changing climate if you’re a national park?” added Stephenson, who is 30 years into a study of trees in the largest wilderness in the continental U.S., Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park.

Since 1895, the average temperature across California has increased by 1.7 degrees, and experts say the most visible effects of that warming occur within the Sierra Nevada, where low temperatures are rising and precipitation increasingly falls as rain rather than snow. Some models show noncoastal California warming by 2.7 degrees between 2000 and 2050, one of many reasons President Obama pledged last week to use executive powers to cut carbon pollution.

The state’s two largest rivers – the Sacramento and San Joaquin – originate in the Sierra. The range also is home to Lake Tahoe, the largest alpine lake in North America; Mount Whitney, the highest peak in the Lower 48; and the nation’s only groves of giant sequoias, the largest living things on earth.

There are mounting concerns about the beloved sequoias, whose sprawling, 10-foot-deep root systems make them especially vulnerable to drought and heat.

Because the trees exist only in such a small region, scientists are debating whether to irrigate the 65 groves in the southern Sierra to help them endure warmer temperatures.

Otherwise they fear the trees could die. During the last warm, dry period 4,000 to 10,000 years ago, their numbers were greatly diminished, according to pollen evidence collected by researchers at Northern Arizona University.

“Whether we would water them certainly comes up on our climate change scenario planning,” said Koren Nydick, science coordinator at Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park. “They are a very unusual species because they’re also looked on as a social artifact.”

Stephenson says his decades of studying conifers in Sequoia National Forest have shown they are dying at twice their historic rate, partly because the climate is warmer and dryer. The giant sequoias grow much more slowly than conifers over many hundreds of years so changes have been tougher to recognize, though researchers suspect seedlings already may be having a harder time taking root.

“That’s always the million-dollar question,” said Stephenson, director of USGS’s Sierra Nevada Global Change Research Program. “We just don’t have a big enough sample size to know what’s going on with the giant sequoias, whereas we monitor thousands of pines and firs and have much more confidence.”

So far, the dozens of changes researchers have noted, in everything from earlier songbird fledging dates to greater wildfire intensity, may point to a warming climate. But it’s far from understood whether that would mean doom or adaptation for California’s ecological heart.

“I don’t want to say that because we’re seeing one thing, that’s how it will play out,” said Rob Klinger who is studying alpine mammals for the USGS’s Western Ecological Research Center. “The endgame of our study is determining whether there will be uniform change or will it be patchwork. If you look at evolutionary time scales, species have gone through these changes before, and they handle it.”

As part of a doctorate project at UC Merced, Kaitlin Lubetkin for five summers has hiked the backcountry taking inventory of 350 subalpine meadows formed when glaciers retreated eons ago. The marshy ground acts as a reservoir that eases flooding after snow melts, and the stored water feeds streams during dry months and sustains wildlife such as the endangered willow flycatcher songbird and the Yosemite toad, which is being considered for threatened species status.

Over the past decade of warmer, drier conditions, however, pine trees have begun to take root, acting like straws to pull the moisture out of the meadows, Klinger and Lubetkin have observed.

“Pretty much right up to the tree line you’re getting encroachment in every meadow,” said Lubetkin.

In September, Hassan Basagic of the Glaciers of the American West Project will be hiking to 12,000 feet elevation to measure the Lyell Glacier in Yosemite National Park and monitor the changes he first began observing in the early 2000s. Scientists from Yosemite National Park and the University of Colorado recently noted that the glacier is no longer moving – and is melting – by using measurements they’ve made over the past four years, as well as some of Basagic’s earlier work.

Basagic’s used photos from the 1930s to show that in the early 2000s the rate at which the Sierra’s glaciers were receding picked up.

“A lot of people call glaciers the ‘canary in the coal mine.’ They’re an indicator that the alpine climate is changing,” said Basagic, who monitors glacial changes for Portland State University research projects. “With that change, other things will change, like the plants and animals that depend on certain climatic conditions.”

Already the American pika, a cold-loving rodent, is moving to

higher elevations, and a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service report says, “Climate change is a potential threat to the long-term survival.”

The USGS’s Klinger, however, said pikas might be more resilient than the wildlife service predicts. “It doesn’t hibernate and it has dealt with expanding and contracting snow packs and changing temperatures – and yet it persists,” Klinger said.

If the trends continue, some species are expected to adapt by finding more hospitable environments, scientists say. One potential place is Devil’s Postpile National Monument in the Eastern Sierra, where 40 data collection devices are showing that temperature inversions caused by atmospheric pressure are filling the region of steep canyons with colder air.

Scientists are studying whether other areas with similar features might serve as refuges for some species. They’re looking at establishing seed banks in the 800-acre park where several climatic regions overlap and more than 400 plants, 100 birds and 35 animals coexist.

“We have an incredible living laboratory to understand what’s happening with this cold air pool,” said monument Superintendent Deanna Dulen. “We’re really trying to get a good baseline of knowledge so we can look at the changes over time. We have the potential to be a refuge, but also to be a place of increased vulnerability. There’s so much to learn.”

Maritime museum hosting

holiday boat parade

Tahoe Maritime Museum is putting on a July 4th boat parade.

Meet in front of Commons Beach in Tahoe City (don’t go in too close, it is shallow), just west of the Tahoe City Marina at 11:45am. The parade will start at noon and cruise down the West Shore, ending in front of Obexer’s Marina.

The Stardust, the museum’s ride boat, will lead the parade.

Register with Christine by calling (530) 525.9253, ext. 104.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Bona Fide Books’ author Lexa Hillyer, who won the 2011 Melissa Lanitis Gregory Poetry Prize, was just awarded gold in the national Foreword Book of the Year Award 2012 for Poetry for her collection “Acquainted with the Cold.” Bona Fide is a small press based in Meyers.

• Looking for a grow house in South Lake Tahoe? Just go to CraigsList.

• Placer County officials are reminding residents and visitors that fireworks of all sizes and types are illegal in unincorporated areas of the county. Anyone caught violating the fireworks ban could be charged with a misdemeanor and face a fine of up to $2,000 per violation.

• A new cell site in El Dorado County should be making easier and faster for people using the Verizon wireless network. The

site is designed to improve wireless network coverage and capacity in the Placerville area, including the Somerset community.

Dolby contributes to Tahoe’s cinematic tradition

By Carla Meyer, Sacramento Bee

Filmmaker Tom Dolby started with a prime Lake Tahoe location and planned his debut feature from there.

It’s his family’s house, already featured in a famous film: the 1951 Elizabeth Taylor-Montgomery Clift melodrama “A Place in the Sun” directed by George Stevens.

“I had written the screenplay to fit the house – we have the ideal set there,” Dolby said of his family’s vacation home on the West Shore.

Click here to read the whole story

Lake Tahoe sweltering in record heat

By Kathryn Reed

California, Nevada, Arizona and Utah are sizzling, with record temps breaking all over the place – including the Lake Tahoe area.

And the mercury is going to continue to climb for a couple more days. A heat advisory remains in effect until Wednesday at 10pm for much of Western Nevada.



Truckee River outside Tahoe City on June 29 is full of rafters . Photo/Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe broke records Friday and Saturday. Both days it was 89 degrees. The old record was 87 for both days, set in 2010 and 1972, respectively.

Truckee broke a record June 28 by five degrees; the new record is 94, the old from 2010 was 89. On June 29, Truckee tied the 2010 record of 88.

“Right by the shore there in Tahoe City it’s getting numbers in the mid-80s, but the records are in the upper 80s. Mainly it looks like inland away from lake is getting records,” Shane Snyder, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Reno told *Lake Tahoe News* on Sunday.

He said more records are likely to fall today.

“That will get destroyed,” Snyder said of the June 30 87-degree record for Truckee.

South Lake Tahoe’s record for June 30 is 88, and the forecast is for closer to 90.

To the south and east of the Lake Tahoe Basin there is a chance of isolated thunderstorms today. Those will be moving into Tahoe on Monday and Tuesday.

While Las Vegas, Phoenix and Death Valley are always hot this time of year, they are redefining what hot means. It was 115 in Vegas on Saturday, when normal is about 103. The one death from the heat wave was reported in Vegas. A man in his 80s was found dead inside his home that did not have air conditioning.

Barton Memorial Hospital treated one person for dehydration on Saturday.

Death can occur when body temps hit 106 to 107 degrees.



Leaving pets and children in vehicles can also have deadly consequences. A Bay Area woman was arrested last week on animal cruelty charges for allegedly leaving her dog, which died, inside a parked vehicle.

While beaches in the basin have been full and rafters are flocking to the Truckee River, the water temp is still chilly – especially farther out in the lake and a foot below the surface. This is why jumping into the water without a life

jacket can pose a risk of hypothermia.

Sunscreen should be reapplied, and reapplied again – on adults and kids on all exposed skin. Drink plenty of water. Alcohol and heat can be a bad combo.

South Lake Tahoe police officers have been interacting with a greater number of people lately.

“The people we were contacting seemed to be drinking a little more than usual. They required being arrested instead of a move along thing,” Police Chief Brian Uhler told *Lake Tahoe News*. On the day shift Saturday, there were eight arrests and last night there were five. This is higher than usual. Most were for alcohol and domestic violence related issues.

Uhler expects officers to continue to be busy as people living where temps are in the triple digits continue to flock to the basin, which just adds to the number of people in town.

What you eat with changes food’s flavor profile

By Maria Godoy, NPR

Being “born with a silver spoon in your mouth” has long been known to have advantages. Apparently, eating off a silver spoon also has its perks – it seems to make your food taste better.

That’s the word from a group of researchers who’ve been studying how cutlery, dishes and other inedible accoutrements to a meal can alter our perceptions of taste. Their latest work, published in the journal Flavour, looks at how spoons,

knives and other utensils we put in our mouths can provide their own kind of “mental seasoning” for a meal.

“Some of my wine-drinking colleagues would have me believe that flavor is really out there on the bottle, in the glass or on the plate,” says Charles Spence, a professor of experimental psychology at Oxford University. “But I think it is much more something that we … understand better through looking at what’s happening inside the brain, and not just the mouth of the person eating or drinking.”

Alterations in taste perceptions aren’t necessarily the result of the cutlery itself, he says, but of the mental associations we bring to a meal. “Silver spoons and other silver cutlery, I’m guessing, are more commonly associated with high-quality food in our prior eating experiences,” Spence says.

In recent years, psychologists have found that the color and shape of plates and other dishes can have an impact on the eating experience. Studies have found, for example, that people tend to eat less when their dishes are in sharp color contrast in their food, that the color of a mug can alter a drinker’s perception of how sweet and aromatic hot cocoa is, and that drinks can seem more thrist-quenching when consumed from a glass with a “cold” color like blue.

So why study cutlery? For starters, there wasn’t any real scientific literature on the topic, Spence tells Linda Wertheimer on “Weekend Edition Sunday”.

Cheese might take on a whole new flavor when you use a plastic utensil.

Or, as he put it to the Salt, cutlery is “one of the few things we stick in our mouth that others have stuck in their mouths. So it’s a peculiar thing.”

Among Spence’s findings so far:

People will rate the very same yogurt 15 percent tastier and more expensive when sampled with a silver spoon rather than a plastic spoon or a lighter (by weight) option.

Combining a heavier bowl with a heavier spoon will tend to make yogurt taste better.

Plastic packaging or plate ware that’s more rounded will tend to emphasize sweetness.

Angular plates tend to bring out the bitterness in food, which works well for dishes like dark chocolate or coffee-based desserts, Spence says.

People will rate cheeses as tasting saltier when eaten off a knife, compared to a toothpick, spoon or fork.

In general, foods tend to be perceived as more enjoyable when eaten off heavier plates and with heavier cutlery – perhaps because heft is equated with expense.

Such research isn’t merely academic, Spence says. Food companies use these kinds of studies to inform how they package their products. And in a world where modernist chefs already pay lots of attention to how foods are arranged visually on the plate, cutlery, he suggests, presents a new frontier for fine dining.

Spence has already teamed up with some of the world’s top modernist chefs, using their restaurants as real-world settings to test findings from the lab. Working with Ferran Adria, the culinary superstar behind Barcelona’s now-shuttered elBulli, Spence tells us, he learned that strawberry mousse tastes “10 percent sweeter and 15 percent more flavorful on a white plate than on a black plate.”

Take a bite of the “Sound of the Sea” dish and listen while you chomp.

And this summer, Spence says, he’ll explore how ridged spoons

impact the dining experience at the Fat Duck, the restaurant run by British celebrity chef Heston Blumenthal. A previous collaboration between the two resulted in The Sound of the Sea, in which diners eat oysters while listening to an iPod playing the sounds of crashing waves. It’s become a signature dish on Fat Duck’s tasting menu.

“Maybe in a year or two,” Spence tells The Salt, “we will have signature cutlery associated with this chef or that.”