Big-rig catches fire on Hwy. 50

Traffic on Highway 50 near Whitehall is reduced to one lane because of big-rig fire.

The road is expected to open about 5:30pm. (Whitehall is about seven miles west of Kyburz.)

A wrecker was on the scene to remove the truck.

Hazmat crews were called to cleanup up the mess, though the substance is not toxic, according to authorities.

Further details – like how the rig caught on fire and the contents of the truck – have not been released.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Calif., Nev. governors make peace regarding TRPA

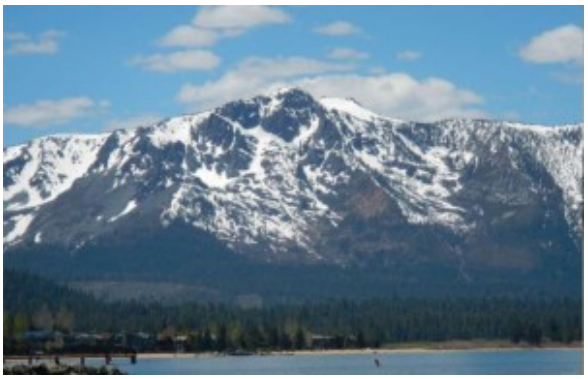
By Kathryn Reed

California and Nevada had decided to play nice and stop with the talk of withdrawing from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

Near identical press releases were sent out from both governors' offices Tuesday afternoon saying they have reached a compromise.

"This agreement renews our commitment to work together to do

what’s best for the environment and economy of the Lake Tahoe region. We urge state legislators and Congress to help us protect Tahoe’s future by taking action,” Govs. Jerry Brown and Brian Sandoval said in the May 14 statement.



Mount Tallac’s winter thaw is symbolic of tensions between California and Nevada easing. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The tussle began when Nevada threatened to pull out of the bi-state Compact if certain concessions were not made on the part of California as well as if a Regional Plan could not be ratified. The latter was done in December. Concessions had been harder to achieve. The voting structure of the Governing Board is one of the more contentious items.

Then the respective legislatures started getting nasty and threatening. That is when the leaders of the two states said settle down, we’ll figure this out.

Both press releases say, “Under the agreement, developed with legislative leadership from both states, amendments will be introduced to bills in the Nevada and California state legislatures that repeal Nevada’s planned withdrawal from the Tahoe Regional Planning Compact in 2015 and California’s proposal to re-establish a California Tahoe Regional Planning Agency in 2014.”

Some of the wording in the agreement will require congressional approval because Congress formed TRPA.

The governors want economics to play a role in decisions made by the Governing Board.

Criticism has been leveled against the TRPA that the Regional Plan that had been in place stifled redevelopment, which in turn led to property owners letting their buildings deteriorate. That in turn made Lake Tahoe not a pretty place to visit at least in terms of the built environment.

TRPA embraces what the governors are doing.

“This is a historic moment for Lake Tahoe. Over the years, the states have had disagreements but have always found a way to work things out. Today there has been a commitment to renew the partnership. This renewal will be important to help Lake Tahoe face the challenges ahead,” TRPA Executive Director Joanne Marchetta told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We still have a lot of work to do to implement the new Regional Plan. We are pleased by this announcement because through the partnership of two states and many other organizations and agencies, we have accomplished much and can continue working together to fulfill our shared restoration goals.”

The agreement also will add language to the Compact that establishes a burden of proof for challenging decisions.

Many of the Governing Board’s decisions are met with a lawsuit.

And while the additional language seems like a compromise, the burden of proof is already the plaintiff’s responsibility in a court of law, so this addition is more like window dressing than substance.

The League to Save Lake Tahoe sent out a press release saying the governors have done the right thing. While this South Lake

Tahoe-based conservation group has often been the one to sue TRPA, when it comes to the lawsuit challenging the 5-month-old Regional Plan, that is the doing of the Sierra Club. Today's decision has no bearing on that lawsuit.

AAA singling out emergency workers

AAA Carson City will honor rescue and emergency personnel May 17.

Carson City Sheriff's Department expects to bring its K9 unit. The fire department will also bring an engine. United Blood Services will also be there.

As a bonus, anyone who gets a home or vehicle quote will receive an Ace's baseball cap. Archie, the Reno team's mascot, will be on hand to make sure it's fitted correctly.

The event is slated for 11am to 3pm at 2901 S. Carson St. (between the Super 8 motel and Dodge dealership off Highway 395 on the south end of town). Food and drink will be provided.

For more information, call (775) 888.6400.

Slot machines resemble video games

By Ed Komenda, Las Vegas Sun

Ask Bill Wadleigh about serendipity in the slot business, and he'll say it's sometimes as simple as spinning the wheel of a toy car.

That's how the game designer came up with a spinning bonus graphic for his forthcoming NASCAR game.

"We'll just make a tire a wheel," Wadleigh recalled thinking. "Wheels are very attune to gambling."

But he'll also tell you his NASCAR game is much more than just wheels and reels.



Slot machines are no longer as simple as lining up 7s. Photo/Bally's

"It is a video game," Wadleigh said.

Wadleigh, a transplant from the video game industry and head of development at Bally Technologies, has found himself moving closer and closer to his roots these days. Bally and many other slot machine makers are beginning to bridge the gap between traditional spin slots and immersive video games.

“From a technological standpoint, on a slot machine, it’s pretty insane,” Wadleigh said. “Insane in a good way.”

The most immersive slot machines, such as NASCAR, have gone beyond simple player-character interaction. Equipped with complex math, high-quality video cards and 3D engines, the machines put gamblers in scenarios they can control, much like the video games made popular by Sony’s Playstation and Microsoft’s Xbox.

Tap the spin button on NASCAR and strike the “U-Race” bonus, and suddenly you’re transported to the first lap of a three-lap race at Daytona. The character you chose at the beginning of the game – either Dale Earnhardt Jr., Jeff Gordon, Jimmie Johnson or Kevin Harvick – sits in the driver’s seat, but you’re in control.

A cluster of arrows pops up on the screen: left, right or straight ahead. Your choice dictates the driver’s decision.

Tap the right arrow, and the voice of your driver responds: “I can pass on the high side!” And that’s what he does.

Tap the forward arrow, and the driver confidently pipes up, “I’m going for the lead!” The car pulls ahead, taking the lead.

When your car crosses the finish line, the driver thanks you. “Couldn’t have done it without you!” he says.

It’s not always that easy, of course. You don’t win every race. But with every choice, there’s money to be made. That’s the beauty of a bonus.

Wadleigh says the possibility of landing in a race or other high-quality bonus scenario keeps players interested and coming back for more – a slot machine’s ultimate goal and measure of success.

“We’re out to find something that’s compelling to a player,”

Wadleigh said. “And not just compelling once, but a repeatable event that has a lot of different variety in it.”

There are more than 853,000 electronic gaming machines in the United States, according to the American Gaming Association. Nevada has the most, more than 178,000. Nationally, the casino industry makes 62 percent of its revenue from slot machines.

Slot makers spend a lot of money – sometimes millions – paying for licensing fees and developing character-driven games based on pop stars, movies and television shows.

“(We want to) bring something new and exciting,” Wadleigh said. “It can be a subtle or incremental change, or it could be a vastly radical one.”

Take Pawn Stars, for example.

The Bally game offers players a chance to virtually do business with the characters made famous by the History Channel show.

Roll the Rick bonus, and up pops the show’s deal-savvy leader, Rick Harrison. The game gives you a chance to sell him a rare gas pump from the 1930s.

The item intrigues Rick, and he offers an interesting fact: it was invented in 1885.

But Rick is skeptical. He doesn’t know if the item is authentic, so he asks if you’d like him to call an expert. You tap the “Call an Expert” option, and Rick calls.

After a beat, you have your answer: “Sorry, my expert said it’s a reproduction. … Thanks for stopping by my shop.”

And you’re bum out of luck.

Roll the Old Man bonus, and Richard Harrison appears: “So, what do we have here?”

In this case, it’s an acoustic guitar from the 1970s. The old man takes a moment to examine it. You make him an offer, he counters and you accept. You win the amount he offered – $170.

One of IGT’s most innovative games is CSI.

Cari Bloomquit, the game’s lead producer, started pondering the mechanics of the game shortly after the license landed on her desk.

After two years of development with a team of 15 people, including engineers, 3D artists and mathematicians, the CSI slot machine moved to the casino floor. It’s now one of the most successful slots in the company’s repertoire.

Players first choose one of three cities: Miami, New York or Las Vegas.

If you sit long enough to hit a crime scene bonus, you’re transported to a murder scene where a lifeless body is spread across the floor. Glowing dots are strung across the scene, marking different clues, such as a bloody hand print. You get to pick five, each attached to bonus payout. The game analyzes the clue and reveals how much you’ve won.

“They’re looking for a suspect,” said Bloomquist, who has been working in the slot business for 18 years. “Slots have changed a lot since I came to the business.”

While slot players ultimately want to make money, experts say video game technology has made losing more fun.

“It’s all just a dressing for a traditional slot machine,” said Daniel Sahl, a sociology instructor at UNLV who has been studying the connection between slot machines and video games for the past three years. “People are still playing to win money. … The immersive elements make it more meaningful.”

The math behind the games hasn’t changed much. If they play long enough, gamblers typically can earn an 88 to 98 percent

return on their money. So, for every $100 a player pumps into a machine, they'd lose between $2 and $12.

The real reward comes with winning a bonus. But players have to sit at a machine long enough to earn the chance to race a stock car, investigate a crime scene or sell an item to the Pawn Stars. That chance doesn't come every round.

Sahl said immersive bonuses have helped improve the image of slot machines, which more than half of all gamblers call their favorite form of gaming.

"Some people think slots are these devious machines designed to inflict suffering," Sahl said. "Players now want to use that virtual world as a conduit for play."

Some bonuses are much more simple.

In the Queen of Hearts bonus in WMS' Alice In Wonderland, a queen pops on screen to turn a losing bet into a winning one or a weaker bet into a stronger one.

The Smooth Criminal bonus of Bally's Michael Jackson slot gives players a virtual concert experience. The chair is equipped with surround sound that pumps Jackson's famous tunes as a digital image of the singer moonwalks across the screen.

"It's so much more than hitting 7-7-7," Sahl said. "(Manufacturers) are doing an amazing job tapping into the cultures people love."

Cause of Reno woman's death

undetermined

Updated: May 14 9:25am

El Dorado County sheriff's officials have confirmed the body found in Strawberry is that of Sheri Renstrom.

No cause of death has been determined

Sheriff's Lt. Pete Van Arnum told *Lake Tahoe News* there was no sign of trauma to the body and that the coroner is waiting for blood toxicology results. That could be four to eight weeks.

—

Search and rescue teams found a body near Strawberry on May 10 that is believed to be that of a missing Reno woman.



Sheri Renstrom

Sheri Renstrom, 66, was last heard from on April 26 when someone spoke with her via telephone. She was at her residence at that time.

An autopsy is pending to confirm positive identification.

El Dorado County sheriff's Deputy Greg Almos told *Lake Tahoe News*, "We don't know how she died. It does not appear to be foul play."

The fully clothed body was found in the Strawberry tract in a wooded area. Strawberry is along Highway 50 between South Lake Tahoe and Placerville.

A vehicle belonging to Renstrom was seen in Strawberry on May 1, but law enforcement was not notified until Friday.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

March Against Monsanto event in Reno

Label GMO Nevada will take part in the March Against Monsanto in Reno on May 25.

While there will be protests worldwide that day, the one in Reno is the closest one to the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Label GMO Nevada founder Kiki Corbin said in a statement, “We’re pleased to sponsor this important event in our community. We encourage people of all ages to participate in this peaceful march. Bring signs, wear costumes or a green shirt.”

The Reno event will start at the Liberty Street side of the Bruce Thompson Federal Building at 400 S. Virginia St. at 10 am. At 11am – the same time events will take place all over the country – marchers will then proceed to the Reno City Plaza at First Street and Virginia Street to hear several brief speeches and partake in a rally for labeling GMOs.

TVES closed today

Tahoe Valley Elementary School will be closed today because of a water pump failure.

It is too soon to know if the closure will be for more than Tuesday.

Updates will be available on Lake Tahoe Unified School District's website.

All other schools in the district are open.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

USFS has firewood cutting permits for sale

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit will begin selling fuel wood permits at the South Shore office May 20 at the North Shore office May 22.

Permits cost $20 per cord, with a two-cord minimum purchase and a limit of 10 cords per household.

Permits have specific conditions and complete information is provided when the permit is issued. Maps to designated cutting areas are provided and must be in your possession along with the valid permit.

The permit is for collection of "down-dead" wood up to a 30-inch maximum diameter in designated fuel wood areas within the Lake Tahoe Basin. "Down-dead" means the tree is down on the

ground and dead, rather than dead and standing.

For more information, call (530) 543.2694 or (775) 831.0914.

SLTPD to honor citizen who played critical role in 2012 DUI bike-vehicle accident

By Kathryn Reed

One of the people to be honored this week at the annual South Lake Tahoe police awards ceremony is the man who was instrumental in helping save the life of Adam Rose and apprehend Christine Whalen.

Rose continues to struggle to heal from the devastating August 2012 accident in which he was struck by a vehicle while riding his bike. He keeps having surgeries. He has no insurance. And he is not able to work. And whatever money he may get from Whalen has not come through.

On May 10 his right leg and left arm were operated on – again.



Nine months after being hit by a drunken driver, Adam Rose of South Lake Tahoe keeps needing surgeries. Photo/Provided

“Adam had what is known as non-union of the bones in his arm and leg. The bones were about five-eighths of an inch apart on each of the fractures in his arm and leg,” Terry Soule, Rose’s mom, told *Lake Tahoe News.* “This was due to the severity and location of the fractures. The surgeries addressed these issues, and we are hopeful that this will really move Adam along on his road to recovery. The surgeons installed new hardware in his leg and arm and did bone grafts.”

But the surgeries won’t end there.

“Adam found out about two months ago that he will need spinal surgery, due to the trauma of being hit by the vehicle, carried on her car and then thrown off onto the highway,” Soule said. “This will be happening in the next few months, after his leg and arm are doing better.”

Rose is still living in South Lake Tahoe and plans to be at the May 15 ceremony.

Whalen is in prison.

More than one person nominated Rudy Pakes II for the citizen award of merit.

This is what police Lt. Brian Williams wrote in his nomination:

> *On August 21st, 2012 at about 5:00 pm, South Lake Tahoe Police Officers responded to SR 89 and 12th Street regarding a hit and run traffic collision. A white Subaru station wagon struck a bicyclist traveling in the northbound bicycle lane. The bicyclist, 38-year-old Adam Rose, was riding his bicycle when the Subaru, also traveling northbound, swerved to the right and struck him. Mr. Rose was left gravely injured and bleeding at the roadside.*
>
> *After striking Adam Rose the suspect driver of the Subaru fled eastbound on 12th Street. Rudy Pakes II was in his truck with his adult son Tyler Pakes and had witnessed the collision. Rudy Pakes made some immediate and critical decisions which helped the victim to survive and also helped the police to capture the suspect. Rudy Pakes dropped his adult son Tyler off with Mr. Rose to offer help, comfort and safety while awaiting medical personnel. Mr. Pakes then called 911 while following the suspect away from the scene. Mr. Pakes gave the police a description of the suspect vehicle and kept them updated on its location and direction of travel as officers responded into the area. While fleeing the scene, the suspect driver was involved in a second collision, striking tree stumps off the side of the road near Tahoe Island and Tahoe Vista Avenues. As police were coming into the area, and the suspect vehicle continued to drive in a reckless manner, Mr. Pakes lost sight of the suspect and wisely stopped following.*
>
> *When police officers arrived in the area they attempted to stop the vehicle by activating their red lights and sirens, but the suspect driver attempted to evade them until eventually becoming involved in yet a third collision at 2070 James, Bi-State Petroleum. The vehicle was finally forced to stop when it collided with, and impaled itself upon, steel and concrete posts in front of the petroleum*

warehouse. Not yet ready to give up, the driver of the Subaru, later identified as 54-year-old local resident Christine Whalen, tried to run on foot, but was apprehended by our pursuing police officers.

Other citizens who witnessed the collisions were also helpful in assisting police officers in locating the suspect, pointing out the directions of travel, and making positive identifications of the driver. Mr. Pakes however used particularly sound judgment and acted swiftly to render aid, compassion and comfort to the victim through his son Tyler, and then stayed engaged in order to prevent the escape of a dangerous felony suspect by following the fleeing vehicle and calling the police with a description and direction of travel. The suspect was captured and booked into the El Dorado County Jail on two felonies and three misdemeanor charges, including felony driving while under the influence, felony hit and run, misdemeanor hit and run, misdemeanor evading police officers, and misdemeanor obstructing, delaying or resisting arrest. Mr. Pakes demonstrated an admirable example for his fellow citizens by the manner in which he conducted himself, under circumstances of significant stress, offering help to the injured and attempting to safeguard others who may have become additional victims.

Among other criteria, the SLTPD Citizen's Award of Merit is given to recognize the demonstration of bravery, sound judgment, compassion, comfort and encouragement to this Department or community, displayed in a situation of great stress, danger or other jeopardy to members of this Department, the community and/or the citizen themselves at the time of taking the action in the service of others. There are other criteria for consideration as well. These items are NOT required, but may be considered by the Awards Committee:

• Innocent person(s) are safeguarded

- *A suspect is apprehended or identified*
- *Citizenship*
- *Sacrificial giving of self and abilities*
- *Communication skills*
- *Professional skills*
- *Rescue Skills*
- *Citizen saved someone's life*
- *Nominee demonstrated in this act extraordinary personal character*
- *Courage*
- *Endurance*
- *Calm in the face of danger*

I would like to nominate Mr. Rudy Pakes II to the SLTPD Awards Committee for consideration of presenting him The Citizen's Award of Merit.

The ceremony is Wednesday at 4pm at the police department, 1352 Johnson Blvd.

Others receiving awards are:

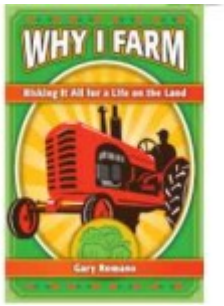
- Officer Angie Kallstrom – Meritorious Service
- Officer Barret Rider – Meritorious Service
- Officer Nick Carlquist – Meritorious Service
- Dispatcher Linda Clark – Distinguished Service,
- Peggy Goularte – Citizen Award of Merit.

‘Why I Farm’ to be released by Tahoe publisher

On June 6, Meyers’ publisher Bona Fide Books will release “Why I Farm: Risking It All for a Life on the Land” by Sierra Valley Farms owner Gary Romano.

A book signing will be that evening from 6-7 at Campo restaurant in Reno.

In “Why I Farm,” third-generation farmer Romano speaks from experience about today’s most vital issues: how to live with purpose and how to protect our food supply. The author documents a disappearing way of life and issues a wake-up call, describing his metamorphosis from a small boy growing up on a farm to adult white-collar worker and his ultimate return to the land. He details specific issues that small farms face today, and how they will challenge our food future. This book is his attempt to educate and enlist farmers and consumers in a call to action.



Romano owns and operates the 65-acre Sierra Valley Farm in Beckwourth and hosts the state’s only certified organic on-farm farmers’ market each Friday from 10am-2:30pm from May 31 through mid-September. Romano also has “Dinners in the Barn” and can be found weekly at the Tahoe City and Truckee farmers’ markets. His next book, “July & Winter: The Growing Seasons of the Sierra for Farmers and Gardeners” is a how-to guide to growing in the challenging Sierra climate. It will by published in 2014 by Bona Fide Books.

Campo is located at 50 N. Sierra St. in downtown Reno. “Why I

Farm” is available June 6 through Bona Fide Books, local bookstores and gift shops, at Romano’s farmers’ markets and on Amazon. Go online for more information about Romano’s market and other events.