Winter storm warning means rain turning to snow in Tahoe

A winter storm warning has been issued for Sunday until 4pm for the Lake Tahoe area.

The National Weather Service in Reno is calling for 4-8 inches of snow at lake level, 10-16 above 7,000 feet, and more than 2 feet above 8,000 feet.

The rain falling this morning will turn to snow in the afternoon.

Expect whiteout conditions on surface streets, but especially over the passes.

The California Department of Water Resources has a list of rain totals for various locations on its website.

A break in the weather is expected on Monday. For skiers and snowboarders, it could be an incredible powder day. Ski resorts throughout the greater Lake Tahoe area have been receiving snow at the upper elevations while rain soaked the lakefront.

But don’t put the rain gear away, but more of the wet stuff is expected to hit the Tahoe area on Tuesday and continue through Wednesday. The sun should pop out again on Thursday.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Ski report: Less than ideal conditions



It’s another challenging day for resorts because of extreme winds and weather.

Heavenly, Kirkwood, Sierra, Boreal, Mt. Rose, Sugar Bowl and Squaw Valley are closed.

Comstock at Northstar is on wind hold

Sierra Avalanche Center is reporting a danger level of 4 – high.

Here is the Dec. 2 ski report.

– Curtis Fong

Then and now: From Sahara to Horizon





Opening in 1965 as Del Webb’s Sahara-Tahoe and adorned in Las Vegas-style flashing neon, its ornate dinner theater over the years headlined major stars like Elvis Presley who labeled it his favorite showroom.

If I recall correctly, the debut show was Phyllis Diller with the Osmond Brothers.

This also was the theater where entertainer Ann-Margret suffered a fall onstage and broke her jaw in the 1970s.

Taking on a Western theme remodel in 1983, the resort was renamed Del Webb’s High Sierra.

Next owner, Columbia-Sussex, renamed it again in 1990 as (today’s) Horizon Casino Resort. The classic showroom was partitioned into a multi-screen movie theater shortly afterward.

These photos from 1965 and 2012 were taken from the same vantage point, across Highway 50 in Harrah’s back parking lot.

The casinos had no multi-level parking garages in 1965. And notice that virtually all the cars in the 1965 parking lot were of domestic manufacture.

– Bill Kingman

---

4 more companies want to cash-in on Tahoe's crayfish

Four outfitters want permission from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency to harvest crayfish from Lake Tahoe.

In July, the Tahoe Lobster Company run by Fred Jackson received permission from Nevada officials to begin pulling the nonnative species from the lake and selling them for consumption. This is the first commercial fishing operation on Lake Tahoe since the 1930s.

Besides something different to dine on, removing the crayfish helps improve the clarity of the lake. They are linked to algae blooms.

Scientists estimate there are between 200 million and 300 million of them swimming around Lake Tahoe.

The current applicants are: Tahoe Crayfish Co., Tahoe Crayfish Henrichsen, Tahoe Blue Crayfish Co., and High Sierra Ventures. Each applicant wants to operate one vessel that could ply the waters of both states.

A public hearing will be conducted before a hearing officer of the TRPA on Dec. 20 at 2pm, 128 Market St., Stateline. Applications are available to review by the public at the TRPA office. For more info, call Patrick Stone at (775) 589.5213.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Benefits of Tahoe holiday bazaar stretch to Africa

By Kathryn Reed

MEYERS – While the cha-ching of cash registers could not be heard, the swiping of credit cards across the Square was evident as people turned out en masse to buy local and think global.

Halfway into the Dec. 1 event more than 100 people had filtered through the doors of Bona Fide HQ in Meyers to peruse the 11 booths filled with items from local artisans. Books, jewelry, pottery, glassware, hand knit hats, photography and more were filling bags as people shopped for themselves and others.

Organizers of the second annual Zawadisha Holiday Bazaar were all smiles with the turn out.

"Zawadisha has sought to develop an effective microfinance program to improve the lives of Kenyan women and their families," Jen Gurecki, founder of Zawadisha, wrote in a column for *Lake Tahoe News* describing her global enterprise.



The second annual Zawadisha Holiday Bazaar brings out hundreds to Meyers. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Once a year she sells items she has brought back from Kenya. All the money goes to her nonprofit. (Vendors paid a fee to be at the event, which goes to Zawadisha.) Gurecki works with a wholesaler in Nairobi and also picks up things while doing work in Africa that she brings back to share with those in the United States. All are handmade and one-of-a-kind items.

Most of the items for sale on this blustery Saturday were unique.

Allie Broadhurst has been working with copper for the last seven years, but it's been just the last year that she has ventured into glasswork. All the glasses are hand etched and have a Tahoe theme.

Mostly it's middle of the night inspirations that drive her creativity. But flowers in her garden provided motivation for etchings on one pair of glasses.

While she doesn't have a storefront for Revive Tahoe, her work is sold at Gaia-Licious in South Lake Tahoe.



Allie Broadhurst creates original etchings on

glasses.

Kim Wyatt, owner of Bona Fide Books in Meyers, and author Suzanne Roberts of South Lake Tahoe are doing a brisk business selling their books. People are telling them they thought about buying their works on Amazon, but decided to keep all the cash local. (Amazon takes more than 50 percent from authors/publishers.)

Wyatt would like to see pop-up stores like this in Meyers every few months.

While this was a one-day event, it is an annual one.

“I want to build a community here to build a community there,” Gurecki said in regards to bringing awareness to Tahoe about the struggles of women and girls in Kenya and in turn helping them to have a better life.

Court case debates question of off-duty marijuana use

By John Ingold, Denver Post

A case pending before the Colorado Court of Appeals could have a big impact on whether employers will be able to fire workers

who smoke marijuana off duty.

The case concerns a former Dish Network telephone operator and medical-marijuana patient who was fired after testing positive for pot, even though there was no evidence he was impaired on the job. The operator, Brandon Coats, says it is against state law to fire someone for doing something off duty that is legal.

While Coats' case concerns medical-marijuana law, it is drawing extra attention after the passage of Amendment 64, which legalized marijuana use for everyone age 21 and older in Colorado. Some employers said during Amendment 64's campaign that they worried that the measure would prevent them from enforcing workplace drug policies that prohibit any marijuana use at all.

What Coats' case may answer: Does it?

"These are things that employers are definitely concerned about," said Vance Knapp, an attorney for the Denver firm Sherman & Howard who specializes in employment law. "For policy reasons, we want to make sure we have a safe workplace. And obviously, that has to be balanced against employees' rights in Amendment 64."

Previous cases have found that medical-marijuana patients do not have a right to cannabis under Colorado law. Coats' case, though, asks a different question.

Colorado's Lawful Off-Duty Activities Statute prevents employers from firing workers because of the legal things those employees do outside the office – such as smoking cigarettes, for instance – as long as those activities do not conflict with the employees' work. Coats' case is the first to challenge whether that protection extends to marijuana use that is legal under Colorado law but illegal under federal law.

Coats' attorney, Michael Evans, argues in his brief to the Colorado Court of Appeals that taking a narrow reading of the law would mean Colorado's roughly 100,000 medical-marijuana patients "would likely face immediate termination or become unemployable."

"It should be broadly and liberally construed to effectuate its purpose, which is to protect employees from unfair or discriminatory employment practices when they are in full compliance with state law," Evans writes in the brief.

But attorneys for Dish Network argue that marijuana's federal status makes it ineligible for protection under the Lawful Off-Duty Activities Statute.

"All use of marijuana is illegal under federal law," the attorneys write in their brief to the appeals court. "Accordingly, using medical marijuana is not a 'lawful activity.'"

In countering employers' concerns, Amendment 64's backers point to language in the measure that says: "Nothing in this section is intended … to affect the ability of employers to have policies restricting the use of marijuana by employees."

Knapp, though, doesn't see that passage as crystal clear when it comes to off-duty use.

"I think there is some wiggle room," he said.

Still, Knapp expects the Court of Appeals – which has not indicated when it will rule on the case – to side with Dish Network.

"As long as it's illegal under federal law," he said of marijuana, "it cannot, by definition, be lawful."

Strong winds, more rain coming Saturday into Sunday

The following are unofficial observations from storm reporters to the National Weather Service in Reno for the current series of storms through 11am Dec. 1:

LOCATION STORM TOTAL TIME/DATE RAINFALL INCHES

Alpine Meadows 6.41 9:30am Dec. 1

Donner Lake 6.0 9:30am Dec. 1

Homewood 4.98 9:30am Dec. 1

Sagehen Creek F.S. 4.39 9:30am Dec. 1

Lake Tahoe Airport 2.24 9:30am Dec. 1

Incline Creek 2.18 10:30am Dec. 1

Tahoe City 4.25 7am Dec. 1

Tahoma 4.18 7am Dec. 1

Truckee Airport 3.83 7am Dec. 1

Reno Airport 0.42 10am Dec. 1

Carson City 0.70 11am Dec. 1

Gardnerville 1.19 11am Dec. 1

While there is a lull in the storms, the Saturday afternoon break will not be long-lived.

A powerful low-pressure system is on its way tonight and into Sunday. A high wind warning for the Lake Tahoe Basin has been issued until 10am Sunday.

The National Weather Service in Reno is calling for wave heights on Lake Tahoe to be between 4 and 7 feet. The winds out of the south will be 25-40 mph, with gusts of 65 mph. While some trees have toppled, they have missed structures. Gusts along the Sierra ridge could hit 140 mph.

Rain will return Saturday night and continue into Sunday.

Moderate flooding is expected along the Truckee River from Truckee to Sparks. Some bridges in Reno will be closed starting Sunday morning in preparation for the river hitting flood levels.

An evacuation center will open at 6am Sunday at the Administration Building of the Tahoe Truckee Unified School District at 11603 Donner Pass Road.



Upper Truckee River in South Lake Tahoe on Dec. 1. Photos/Kathryn Reed

The Upper Truckee River and Trout Creek on the South Shore were flowing at a fast clip on Saturday, but not at flood levels. The Upper Truckee, though, could be seen from Highway

50 in South Lake Tahoe, when looking east, flowing into the meadow.

Sand bags are available in South Lake Tahoe at the fire station near the Y and at Bijou Community Park. In Douglas County they are available at Topaz Community Center, Ruhenstroth Firehouse, across from the Gardnerville Ranchos Firehouse, Johnson Lane Firehouse, Genoa Firehouse, Jack's Valley Firehouse and Zephyr Cove Firehouse. Sandbags are available at the Truckee Fire Protection District Station 92, 11479 Donner Pass Road. In Placer County, sand bags are available at: North Tahoe Fire Station 52, 288 North Shore Blvd., Kings Beach; Placer County Department of Public Works Corporation Yard, 2501 North Lake Blvd., Tahoe City; Old Squaw Valley Fire Station, 1810 Squaw Valley Road, Olympic Valley; Northstar Community Services District Corporation Yard, 50 Trimont Lane; and North Tahoe Fire Station 53, 5425 West Lake Blvd., Homewood.

– Kathryn Reed

ngg_shortcode_0_placeholder (Click on photos to enlarge.)

TPH offering digital recording workshop

A Digital Workflow Certification Workshop is being hosted by Tahoe Production House on Dec. 6.

The six-hour workshop will provide participants with knowledge and experience in using the S.two digital recording equipment. The workshop will include expert instruction, setup information, troubleshooting and hands on experience for uncompressed recording. The workshop is for individuals breaking into the digital workflow industry and those who want to sharpen their skills.

Stephen Roach, a long-time industry professional, co-founder and vice president at S.two, will lead the class.

The workshop is from 9am-4:30pm at Tahoe Production House, 2291 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

The $10 fee includes lunch.

Workshop space is limited. To register, email Nicole@DCRlimited.com or Brandi@TahoeProductionHouse.com.

Vonn, Cook repeat 1-2 finish at Lake Louise

By USSA

The No. 1 speed team in the world – the U.S. Ski Team – put six athletes into the top 20 on Saturday at Lake Louise.

Superstar Lindsey Vonn came back from the brink of disaster to win her 55th career Audi FIS Alpine World Cup, matching the great Swiss Vreni Schneider for second in the all time wins list. Vonn, who was already 0.24 behind, went wide on a sweeping turn before the midway point of the course losing

valuable time. But she nailed the bottom of the Lake Louise downhill to take a 0.52 second margin over teammate Stacey Cook and extend her win streak on the Canadian Rockies course to six.

It was Cook’s second career podium, matching the result of a day earlier.

Vonn will go for a sweep in Sunday’s super G.

Julia Mancuso (Squaw Valley) was ninth, Alice McKennis (Glenwood Springs, Colo.) 11th, Laurenne Ross (Bend, Ore.) 18th and Leanne Smith (North Conway, N.H.) 20th.

Vonn moved into fourth in the Audi FIS Alpine World Cup standings behind Slovenian Tina Maze, 347-210. Vonn and Cook are one-two in the downhill standings.

Cook, who is from Mammoth, had the added bonus of picking up her first two podiums with her family in attendance.

“I hope this is the tip of the iceberg for me. My coaches have told me that I’m like a fine wine – that I get better with age and it’s true,” Cook said. “I just hope the body holds out with the age.”

Nurse to stand trial in death of woman at El Dorado County

care facility

By Marjie Lundstrom, Sacramento Bee

The former head nurse at a Placerville nursing home will stand trial for felony elder abuse in connection with the 2008 death of a 77-year-old Cameron Park woman, an El Dorado County judge ruled Tuesday.

More than 4 1/2 years after the death of Johnnie Esco, Judge Daniel B. Proud found there was sufficient evidence to move forward in the criminal case again Donna Darlene Palmer, 58, a registered nurse.

Palmer, who was then director of nursing at the El Dorado Care Center, was one of two nurses at the facility charged criminally by the California attorney general. The second nurse, 39-year-old Rebecca Smith, negotiated a deal earlier this month with the state.

Smith, a licensed vocational nurse, agreed to plead no contest to felony elder abuse in exchange for a possible suspended jail term and her willingness to help prosecutors in their pursuit of Palmer.

The attorney general contends both nurses failed to perform their duties or to adequately supervise staff in caring for Esco, who died a painful and unnecessary death – despite a devoted family that surrounded her daily, according to testimony and state documents.

The unusual case has drawn widespread attention from the nursing home industry, legal analysts and advocates for the elderly, as criminal prosecutions of nursing home workers remain rare. Allegations of abuse or neglect are more frequently handled in the civil courts.

However, Attorney General Kamala D. Harris' office recently

announced plans to step up its efforts with three new specialized teams aimed at building criminal cases statewide against nursing home administrators and employees.

Palmer's attorney, Patrick K. Hanly, said Tuesday he was disappointed by the judge's decision. Hanly, a former assistant U.S. attorney, grilled the prosecution's witnesses and pressed one of the state's key witnesses – also a nurse – into admitting she had withheld information from investigators and changed her stories multiple times.

Deputy Attorney General Steven Muni, who is prosecuting the case, said he was "very satisfied" by the judge's decision and believed he had a "good case moving forward."

Esco died on March 7, 2008, after being rushed to nearby Marshall Medical Center after a 13-day stay. The nursing home, owned at the time by Horizon West Healthcare Inc. of Rocklin, has since been sold and renamed.

Tuesday's testimony revealed some of the legal complexities of such cases – while also allowing a glimpse into the alleged troubling practices within nursing home care. Even her cause of death was batted around Tuesday, as the judge was preparing to decide if the case was worthy of trial.

The state contends that Esco – with a history of constipation – essentially had been ignored at the facility, and she developed a devastating fecal impaction that led to her death.

The defense elicited testimony indicating that this was a pre-existing condition. And if there was neglect, attorney Hanly suggested, then why wasn't Marshall Medical Center deemed culpable – since Esco also had suffered a fecal impaction at the hospital, before her admission to El Dorado Care Center.

One prominent physician who specializes in geriatric medicine and nursing home care testified that Esco's medical records at El Dorado Care Center were suspicious – full of missing

information, overwritten entries and curious, unexplained notations.

Dr. Kathryn Locatell said the records, among other things, led her to conclude that Esco had received substandard care.

“I don’t consider that a failure of documentation,” she said. “I consider that a failure of care.”

Another nurse at the facility, Donna Eileen Pielin, testified for the state that Palmer had ordered her on two consecutive nights not to send Esco to the hospital, despite the woman’s deteriorating condition.

On questioning from Hanly, Pielin, a licensed vocational nurse, admitted that she had not initially told investigators this story because Palmer was “very intimidating” and she was afraid of being fired.

She admitted on the stand that she repeatedly changed her stories about the events leading up to Esco’s death because “I was fearful of consequences.”

The next court appearance is scheduled for Jan. 18. No trial date has been set.

Esco’s husband, Don Esco – who pressed for criminal charges – died in October, and his family was flying back this week to see him buried alongside Johnnie at Arlington National Cemetery.

Family members of Donna Palmer also attended Tuesday’s hearing in Placerville, offering words of encouragement during courtroom breaks.