NDOT helping make roads safer for winter travel

Motorists can drive a little safer on winter roads this season with safe driving tips and new snow removal technology from the Nevada Department of Transportation in association with the Nevada Highway Patrol.

Last winter, there were three fatalities statewide attributable to unsafe driving behaviors in snow, ice and other wet conditions, such as driving too fast for conditions, following too closely, and failing to maintain a lane and overcorrecting.

“There are too many crashes every winter from drivers not slowing down in winter conditions,” NHP Trooper Barb Stapleton explained in a press release. “Slowing down and wearing seatbelts is always important. And, in winter weather, drivers should avoid quick stops and turns and turn off the cruise control to help avoid skidding.”



Slowing down can help drivers avoid sliding off the road. Photos/LTN file

NDOT Director Rudy Malfabon said, “This year, NDOT will be using a tow plow and automatic bridge anti-icers as an even

more efficient way to clear the road."

Automatic bridge anti-icers have been put in place on bridges on Interstate 580 between Reno and Carson City. During inclement weather, an anti-icing solution automatically sprays on the bridges to help delay and prevent ice.

Beginning in 2013, motorists will also see a tow plow being used to remove snow on Interstates 80 and 580 in the Reno area. The tow plow is a second, steerable snowplow blade towed like a trailer behind a traditional snowplow. The tow plow swings out to the lane next to the lead snowplow to clear a second lane of snow. By using one plow to clear snow from two lanes, the tow plow increases mobility and safety for all drivers and leads to a $78 per hour estimated cost savings compared to operating costs of a single plow.

Updated state road conditions, from winter road closures to traffic and road incident information, are available by dialing 51" or clicking on the Nevada icon on the home page of Lake Tahoe News.

Winter driving tips:

• Only travel in winter weather when necessary, leave enough time to safely reach your destination and plan your route to avoid snowy/icy areas and steep hills.

• Before leaving home, check weather and road conditions.

• Share your travel itinerary so others know when to expect you.

• Remove snow and ice from all vehicle windows, mirrors, lights, turn signals and license plates.

• Buckle up.

• Turn on headlights to see and be seen.

• Turn off cruise control.

• Avoid quick starts, stops and fast turns. Accelerate, brake and steer smoothly and gradually.

• Reduce speed. Speed limits are based on normal road and weather conditions, not winter road conditions.

• Do not slam on brakes. Apply steady pressure on ABS-equipped vehicles and pump the brakes if necessary on non-ABS vehicles.

• Always comply with all posted chain requirements.

• If your vehicle has snow tires, install and use them between Oct. 1 and April 30.

• Keep additional distance from other vehicles.

• Watch carefully for snow removal equipment.

• Do not pass without good distance and sight clearance.

• Use extra caution on bridges, ramps, overpasses and shaded areas- they may freeze first.

• Maintain a high fuel level.

• If vehicle begins to skid, steer in direction of slide and slowly remove foot from accelerator.

• Be aware of black ice.

• If parked or stuck in snow, leave window slightly cracked for ventilation and make sure vehicle exhaust system is clear of snow.

Carry with you:

• Tire chains/tow strap

• Flashlight

- Spare batteries
- Ice scraper
- Cell phone for emergency communication only
- Snow shovel
- Flares
- Jumper cables
- Small bag of sand for wheel traction
- Extra winter clothes – coat, gloves, socks
- Blanket or sleeping bag
- Non-perishable food, water
- First aid supplies, prescription medication
- Battery-operated radio
- Candles, matches or lighter
- State map for navigation in event of winter detour.

Green building tour through

Angora burn area

The Sierra Nevada Alliance, an 85-member conservation network serving the 400-mile range of the Sierra Nevada and based in South Lake Tahoe, is offering a special tour of green homes built in the Angora area.

The tour is Nov. 17 from 9:30am-2:30pm. It is a fundraiser for the Sierra Nevada Alliance.

The tour is guided, providing expertise on alternative energy, green building, and sustainability at each location and answering specific questions people might have about quicker paybacks on the way to a more secure future and well-being.

The tour cost is $25, or $35 including a Sprouts box lunch.

Call Scott Terrell at (530) 386.5678 or Garry Bowen at (775) 690.6900 for more information, or to sign up in advance. Space is limited.

Meeting to focus on Lake Tahoe State Park’s future

Nevada Division of State Parks is in the process of updating the Lake Tahoe Nevada State Park’s general management plan.

There will be a second public workshop Nov. 16 for the public to provide input on two proposed General Management Plan alternatives.

The workshop is from 7-9pm in the lobby of the Richard H. Bryan building at 901 South Stewart St. in Carson City. It will begin with a presentation on the two alternatives, followed by an opportunity to discuss preferences, issues, and other comments with state park staff.

Contact Jay Howard for more information at (775) 831.0494, ext. 229.

Court: Online travel agencies not liable for local tax collections

By Danny King, Travel Weekly

Online travel agencies won two more legal victories in California, in Anaheim and Santa Monica, over the issue of who is responsible for millions of dollars in annual hotel taxes when rooms are booked through intermediaries.

The California Second District Court of Appeals affirmed judgments by the Superior Court of Los Angeles County, which concluded that OTAs were not liable for local lodging taxes on their hotel reservation services.

OTAs recently gained a similar legal victory in Hawaii, according to Travel Tech (formerly the Interactive Travel Services Association), the Washington-based trade group that represents the OTAs.

The most recent victories are notable because Anaheim is home

to Disneyland, while the seaside city of Santa Monica attracts more than 6.7 million visitors a year from outside of Los Angeles County.

Other municipalities that have taken on the OTAs in court and lost include Houston; Philadelphia; and Branson, Mo. Notably, a 2010 ruling that awarded the city of San Diego $21.2 million was overturned last September.

The issue of occupancy-tax responsibility is a big one in the U.S. because OTAs will book about $16.5 billion of the estimated $114 billion in total U.S. hotel and lodging revenue this year, or more than 14 percent of hotel booking revenue, according to research firm PhoCusWright.

OTAs typically mark up rooms by about 25 percent. Expedia, Priceline, Travelocity and Orbitz collectively account for more than 90 percent of U.S. travel sold through OTAs.

“In the span of less than one month, OTCs have recorded impressive victories in three of the largest travel and tourism markets in the nation,” said Travel Tech Chairman Simon Gros, in a statement. “It is a shame that communities continue to waste taxpayer dollars on such futile litigation.”

Washington is the most notable exception to this trend, as the nation’s capital in September won its ruling after Judge Craig Iscoe of the District of Columbia Superior Court wrote that the OTAs are responsible for transient taxes on the gross amount collected for hotel rooms from customers, not just on the net amount paid by OTAs to hotels.

Other decisions that have gone the municipalities’ way involved San Antonio and Florida’s Orange County, which the Walt Disney World Resort.

Orange County last year reached a settlement with Expedia, in which Expedia paid the county an undisclosed amount to resolve a 2006 case.

Meanwhile, in a July 2011 ruling involving San Antonio and 172 other Texas cities, including Dallas and Austin, the OTAs lost a $20.6 million decision.

Improper disposal of hot ashes could ignite unwanted fire

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit is reminding residents to use caution when disposing of woodstove or fireplace ashes. Ashes can remain live and capable of starting a fire for several days, even when they appear to be out.

Last fall, twice people along Pioneer Trail dumped their woodstove ashes onto national forest system lands just beyond their property boundary. Forest Service and Lake Valley fire crews were able to contain the resulting wildfires at less than a quarter acre each. The residents were cited “for negligently placing any material that could start a fire,” which carries a $350 fine.

They could also have been held responsible for the costs of fire suppression.

“Even when there’s snow on the ground, ashes can retain enough heat to melt through the snow and cause a fire,” Forest Service fire prevention officer Beth Brady said in a statement. “Protect yourself, your neighbors and our forest lands by learning how to properly dispose of ashes.”

Place discarded ashes in a heavy metal container, douse them

with water and cover with a fitted metal lid. Store the container outside, away from structures, decks, fences, wood piles and other combustible materials.

Contact your local trash collection agency for their disposal recommendations after ashes have cooled and embers are out.

Never use a vacuum cleaner to pick up ashes.

Letter: Variety of donors aid Bread & Broth

To the community,

Bread & Broth is a nonprofit, non-denominational, all volunteer organization that provides hot, well-balanced dinners every Monday at St. Theresa Church Parish Hall and a soup and bread meal at Lake Tahoe Community Presbyterian Church on Fridays to the less fortunate members of the South Lake Tahoe community.

The efforts of Bread & Broth for the past 23 years have been contingent upon the generosity of local businesses, clubs/organizations and private individuals. The Monday evening meals of Oct. 1 and Oct. 8th were no exception. Both of the evening meals were sponsored by individuals who participated in B&B's Adopt A Day of Nourishment program.

Lori London was the generous sponsor who hosted the Oct. 1 AAD meal and has been a sponsor in previous years. The Oct. 8th AAD meal was sponsored by an anonymous donor who has also been an ongoing sponsor over the past years.

Bread & Broth is sincerely thankful for the continued support

of London and all of our many sponsors who have generously donated funds to ensure that the Bread & Broth program is able to continue this much needed community service.

For information on any monetary donations or volunteering opportunities, please contact me at (530) 542.2876 or carolsgerard@aol.com.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

El Dorado County DA messing with lives without showing evidence

By Kathryn Reed

People with knowledge of the lingering investigation into potential criminal activity by South Lake Tahoe officials in connection with Gino DiMatteo have told *Lake Tahoe News* there are ulterior motives involved.

No longer is the El Dorado County District Attorney's Office using the word "bribery" or naming names in its investigation.

The district attorney, Vern Pierson, refuses to address the media in any way other than press releases. Only his secretary, Nancy Anderson, is allowed to speak for him.



El Dorado County District Attorney Vern Pierson

Anderson this week emphatically told *Lake Tahoe News* her agency did not use the word bribery to describe what DA investigators are currently probing. Nor would she say what the focus is or who the focus is on.

A Nov. 2 press release from Pierson's office says, "… the investigation into certain South Lake Tahoe City officials as to their dealings with DiMatteo is ongoing."

Former South Lake Tahoe City Manager Tony O'Rourke told *Lake Tahoe News*, "No one has ever contacted me in any way shape or form. So any investigation is not thorough or comprehensive. I don't think there was anything there. I think [Pierson] has hung [City Councilwoman Angela Swanson] out to dry. He needs to buy time to look like he did something."

Swanson had previously been named by the DA's office as the city official DiMatteo is accused of bribing. But no evidence has been presented to the public, to Swanson or to DiMatteo's attorneys to substantiate the allegation.

O'Rourke was at many of the meetings where the city's pot ordinances were being written. Those meetings also included DiMatteo, who at the time owned the medical marijuana dispensary City of Angels II.

O'Rourke thought it would be fine for DiMatteo to move his

business last summer to accommodate his landlord wanting him out. But the council changed its mind after O'Rourke left the city and information was presented about some questionable activities pertaining to DiMatteo's business.

(Swanson is no longer talking to the media. She continues to fulfill her duties on the council.)

At one time she had aspirations of running for El Dorado County supervisor. Keeping her name tied to a criminal investigation would thwart the likelihood of her being elected.

Swanson has been outspoken in her support for medical marijuana, so bribing her would not likely alter a vote. Those close to the case say if DiMatteo were to have bribed anyone, it would likely have been one of the men on the council because of their views about the pot clubs.

It is not known how much taxpayer money has been spent to-date on the various investigations involving DiMatteo.

Criminal complaint

DiMatteo at his first appearance in U.S. District Court in Sacramento on Nov. 6 was released on a $500,000 bond and GPS monitoring. It was on Nov. 2 that the county dropped the state charges and federal charges were levied against DiMatteo. However, this does not mean state charges will not be reinstated. That is what happened in the Karsten Gronwold child molestation case that rocked the South Shore a few years ago.

The five-page complaint does not say a word about bribery.

DiMatteo faces two counts – possession with intent to distribute marijuana and manufacturing at least 100 plants.

Here is the full complaint.

Dinner at Ernie’s to help S. Tahoe woman with cancer

Ernie’s Coffee Shop is donating 50 percent of its proceeds from dinner on Nov. 9 to help Chris Alper in her fight against breast cancer.

A South Lake Tahoe local for 33 years, Alper was recently diagnosed with a recurrence of breast cancer. She has worked at the local car dealership Cardinale Way Toyota (formerly Shehadi Motors) for more than 14 years. Two surgeries have left her in need of assistance with medical bills and living expenses during her recuperation and treatment.

The dinner is Friday form 5-8pm. Ernie’s is at 1207 Emerald Bay Road, South Lake Tahoe.

There will also be a raffle and silent auction.

For more information or to make a donation, contact Gia Richards at (916) 704.6900 or grichards@cherrycreekradio.com.

An account for Alper has been set up at Bank of the West: Christine Alper, Account No. 029201988.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• *Outside* magazine ranked the best ski resorts in North America. Here is how Tahoe area (including Mammoth) resorts came out: No. 1 Squaw Valley, No. 5 Mammoth, No. 13 Heavenly, No. 22 Northstar, No. 25 Sugar Bowl, No. 27 Kirkwood, No. 34 Sierra, and No. 27 Alpine.

• There will be a meeting Nov. 8 at 6pm at North Tahoe Event Center in Kings Beach to see if enough people want to keep the North Tahoe Little League going. For more info, email northtahoell@hotmail.com.

• Soroptimist International of Truckee Donner's annual toy drive begins Nov. 16. If you need to know where to find a red barrel to put the toy in, call Alissa at (530) 587.6681, ext. 11 or email alissaj@mountainhomecenter.com.

• South Tahoe Cancer League's annual See's Candy sale begins Nov. 15 at the Raley's shopping center at the Y, next to Starbucks.

• For the Dec. 29-31 SnowGlobe music fest in South Lake Tahoe a hotline (530.542.7429) has been set up to record information and/or concerns.

Cold, snow about to overtake Tahoe

Enjoy those yellow leaves because they may all blow off the trees with the storm that is about to roll into the Lake Tahoe Basin.

A winter storm advisory is in effect for the 24-hour period beginning at 4pm Thursday.

The National Weather Service in Reno says snow will reach the valley floors, with largest accumulations coming Thursday night. The storm could bring 6 to 12 inches above 7,000 feet and 3 to 8 inches below 7,000 feet. Ridge wind gusts could reach 100 mph.

“Lake effect snow bands are possible on the east side of Lake Tahoe and in the Carson Range Friday night,” the Weather Service warns. “Overall, expect moderate snow accumulations from the Lake Tahoe Basin north into Lassen and Plumas counties to create slick and icy road conditions.”

This means chains or four-wheel drive will be the safest bets for traversing the mountain passes.

This storm is also going to be a cold one. While Wednesday’s high was supposed to be 62 degrees, it will be half that on Friday – or 31 degrees. The low Saturday is slated for 6 degrees. The bright spot is the sun will return Sunday, if the forecast is correct.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report