Grass fire consumes less than an acre along Highway 89

Smoke that is visible in parts of South Lake Tahoe is from a grass fire near West Way and Highway 89.

About a quarter acre burned. It is under control.

The U.S. Forest Service is the lead agency. Cheva Heck with the USFS said the cause at this time is unknown. The fire was first was reported at 5:50pm Aug. 26.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Tahoe celebration ends with 5 people dying in plane crash

By Kathryn Reed

Five people from Fresno who were in South Lake Tahoe for a birthday celebration died Saturday when their plane sputtered and then nosedived into a field just after taking off at 9:45pm.

Francisco de la Mora, who owned the Piper Cherokee, was piloting the single-engine fixed wing craft. Shannon D. Fleck is the other person the plane is registered to.

With de la Mora were his wife, their 5-year-old daughter, and Harold and Kin Cardwell. The plane could seat seven. De la Mora owned JDM Transport, a trucking company, in Fresno. Harold Cardwell was an insurance agent. Information about the

victims is still not complete.



Harold and Kin Cardwell

“I’m sure he was flying right-hand on this plane,” Stephen Buxton told *Lake Tahoe News* of Harold Cardwell. “He was an incredible pilot. I’ve flown many times with him. He is the one who taught me to fly.”

Buxton had known the 60-year-old Cardwell for more than 30 years. They met in church. While Buxton is now a pastor in the San Diego area, he never ministered to Cardwell. But Cardwell, who owned an Allstate Insurance franchise in the Fresno area, was Buxton’s agent for several decades.

According to Buxton, two adult daughters from a previous marriage survive Cardwell.

“He was a great guy. He was easy to love,” Buxton said. “I’m going to miss him and I know his kids are going to miss him.”

Officials from Mountain West Aviation, which runs the plane operations at the local airport, told investigators the Piper landed Aug. 25 at the South Lake Tahoe airport for a few hours and that the occupants requested a taxi. No gas or other services were requested.



A 1-acre circular area burned after a plane crashed Aug. 25 after taking off from Lake Tahoe Airport. Photo/Claire Fortier

The cause of the crash is not likely to be known for some time as federal investigators do their job. The fuselage is all that remained of the plane after it disintegrated upon impact.

Federal Aviation Administration and National Transportation Safety Board officials have been scouring the site.

Witnesses told authorities they heard the plane sputter before it crashed. It also appeared to bank right, which could have been an attempt to get back to the airport or to avoid the heavily populated area at the end of the meadow.

The plane, according to authorities, needed most of the runway to take off – which is not usual and should have been an indication something was wrong before the plane left the ground.

According to the National Weather Service in Reno, the wind at Lake Tahoe Airport at 9:45pm Aug. 25 was out of the south at 4 to 8mph, so that was not a factor. Plus, it was a clear night.



The pilot was unable to gain altitude after take-off. Photo/Claire Fortier

“They will be out there all night. They will probably remove the bodies sometime tonight,” El Dorado County sheriff’s Lt. Pete Van Arnum told *Lake Tahoe News* of investigators. “From what I saw, we’ll probably have to go to X-rays and dental charts (for definite identification of the victims).” He added that could take a couple days.

A fire immediately started after the plane crashed Aug. 25. About 1 acre of brush burned a circular area.

This same plane was involved in an accident on March 5, 2005, in Destin, Fla., according to the National Transportation Safety Board. In that accident the two people aboard were not injured. At the time it was registered to other people.

NTSB records said the cause of that accident was, “The pilot’s inadequate compensation for wind during a crosswind takeoff resulting in a loss of directional control and subsequent collision with terrain.”

The last plane crash at Lake Tahoe Airport was Aug. 5, 2007, which killed the Bay Area pilot on impact when he took off on

a summer morning heading south. On Aug. 19, 2002, a single engine plane went down near Meiss Meadows after taking off from Lake Tahoe Airport. The Bay Area couple on board died. That crash ignited what became known at the 294-acre Showers Fire.

Switching out lightbulbs should reduce S. Tahoe electric bills

With the completion of $130,311 in energy improvements, South Lake Tahoe expects to see an annual savings of $19,623 by reducing kilowatt hours by 186,889.

The improvements were paid for by the U.S. Department of Energy’s Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Program under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Approximately 150 lights at the Motor Pool Building and 88 streetlights on Ski Run Boulevard were switched from incandescent bulbs to LED.

More than 200 interior lights were switched from T12 lights to higher efficiency T8 lights at the police department. And ore than 50 occupancy sensors, designed to shut off lights when

offices are not in use, were also installed.

Other city facilities switched more than 400 lights to the more efficient T8 bulbs.

Fresno couple, daughter and 2 others die in fiery South Lake Tahoe plane crash

Updated Aug. 26 3:17pm:

Javier de la Mora has told KOLO-TV in Reno that his brother Francisco de la Mora was piloting the plane that crashed in South Lake Tahoe on Saturday night. The pilot is one of the registered owners of the plane.

The four others on board are believed to be de la Mora's wife, daughter and two other people.

Updated Aug. 26 3:10pm:

Federal officials are waiting for family members of the deceased to be notified before releasing the names of the people who died in the Aug. 25 plane crash in South Lake Tahoe.

The fire that was ignited by the downed plane was about 1 acre in size.

Updated Aug. 26, 2012, 2:05pm:

Francisco J. De La Mora of Fresno and Shannon D. Fleck,

hometown unknown, are the registered owners of the plane that crashed into a field off the runway of Lake Tahoe Airport on Saturday night, according to the FAA Registry.

The Piper that disintegrated on impact, killing all on board, was a fixed wing single-engine.



Federal officials are on scene at the site of the Aug. 25 plane crash in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/Claire Fortier

This same plane was involved in an accident on March 5, 2005, in Destin, Fla., according to the National Transportation Safety Board. In that accident the two people aboard were not injured.

NTSB records said the cause of that accident was, “The pilot’s inadequate compensation for wind during a crosswind takeoff resulting in a loss of directional control and subsequent collision with terrain.”



The plane did not get far off the runway before crashing Aug. 25. Photo/Claire Fortier

FAA and NTSB officials are in South Lake Tahoe investigating the Aug. 25 accident that is believed to have killed five people who had been in Tahoe for only a few hours. The plane seats seven.

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Updated Aug. 26, 2012, 9:10am:

By Kathryn Reed

FAA officials believe five people could have been on board the plane that crashed Saturday night on take-off from Lake Tahoe Airport.

The Piper Cherokee could seat six people.

The Federal Aviation Administration in Southern California would not give details about the victims, nor where they are from or what makes them believe there were five people on board.

In looking at the wreckage from Saturday night's plane crash in South Lake Tahoe, officials the morning of Aug. 26 were not able to recover any identifiable markings.

"It's just a charcoal circle," City Manager Nancy Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Nor have there been any calls from the airport the plane originated from.

Mountain West Aviation officials, which runs the operations, told investigators that the plane landed Aug. 25 at the South Lake Tahoe airport for a few hours and that the occupants requested a taxi. The taxi took them to a local restaurant and returned them to the airfield.

The plane crashed about 9:45pm into a field on the north end of the runway.

FAA officials from Reno are to be at the site this morning.

National Transportation Safety Board officials will be coming from Idaho today or Monday.

Because the plane landed on El Dorado County property, the sheriff's office is taking control locally. However, neither the local lieutenant nor the lieutenant in charge of media relations was available Sunday morning.

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By Kathryn Reed

A plane crashed after taking off from Lake Tahoe Airport on Saturday night. No one on board survived.

Because the plane was completely engulfed in flames and only the fuselage remained intact, rescue personnel do not know what type of plane was involved. And because no flight plan was filed, it is not known how many people were on board.

The South Lake Tahoe airport does not have a tower, so information about planes taking off and landing is not as complete as it is at other airports. There is a recording the pilot made, but it has limited information.



A fire started immediately after the plane crashed Aug. 25. Photo/Dan Wilvers

What officials could determine from what the pilot said is that the plane was not involved in the air show that took place at the airport earlier in the day. The plane also is not registered at Lake Tahoe Airport.

Because no part of the tail could be seen where the plane landed, it is not possible to match what is on the recording to what is on the ground.

South Lake Tahoe Police-Fire Chief Brian Uhler is the one who got closest to the plane, and as someone who owns a small plane, would know what to look for. It is hoped daylight will reveal a piece of the tail section.

Officials are saying it’s possible the plane was a four- or six-seater Lancer. The plane was registered to more than one person living outside the Lake Tahoe Basin. No fuel or other

services were purchased locally.

“Witnesses report sputtering, that the engines didn’t sound good,” City Manager Nancy Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*.

She said people saw the plane try to bank to the right. It’s not known if this was to try to return to the airport or avoid structures.

The aircraft crashed nose first into the dry brush north of the runway by Winnemucca Drive. No buildings were hit. On impact a brush fire of a few acres broke out that took firefighters about an hour to fully extinguish.

According to the National Weather Service in Reno, the wind at Lake Tahoe Airport at 9:45pm Aug. 25 was out of the south at 4 to 8mph.

Flying in and out of the mountains always poses risks, and more so in the summer because of the density of the air. A heavy plane can prevent a pilot from being able to gain enough altitude.

National Transportation Safety Board and Federal Aviation Administration personnel have been notified. It’s possible they will be on scene Sunday.

Overnight, local public safety personnel will secure the perimeter so no one can tamper with evidence. The body or bodies are likely to be recovered Sunday, with autopsies to follow.

Officials hope a flight plan was filed where the plane originated from so when it is overdue, that airport’s staff will call Lake Tahoe as another mechanism to confirm who was on the plane.

The last plane crash at Lake Tahoe Airport was Aug. 5, 2007, that killed the Bay Area pilot on impact when he took off on a summer morning heading south.

The crash is not expected to interfere with any airport operations on Sunday, including the Young Eagles flights that will be taking place. Capt. Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger, who landed an Airbus in the Hudson River, will be at the airport for the Young Eagles event.

California counties taking harder look at tattoo parlors

By Ed Fletcher, Sacramento Bee

As county officials work to implement state legislation requiring tattoo and piercing shops to register and pass a battery of tests, some area practitioners question the need for the new regulations and ask whether the government will crack down on underground artists.

AB300 created California inspection and registration protocols for tattoo and piercing shops, as well as the artists, but left it to the counties to do the legwork. The bill, authored by Assemblywoman Fiona Ma, D-San Francisco, is aimed at protecting the public from exposure to hepatitis C and other blood-borne pathogens. It took effect in July.

Ma said she was shocked six years ago to learn there were no state rules on the operation of tattoo parlors.

“I wanted to do something about this to ensure diseases would

not be shared through needles," Ma said.

With the backing of industry trade groups, her legislation was passed in 2011.

The legislation also allows counties to assess shops and practitioners to fund annual inspections.

Placer County took action Tuesday, adopting a fee schedule under which Placer County tattoo and piercing practitioners must pay $80 a year. Other fees were assigned for permanent facilities, temporary events and in various other categories.

Read the whole story

Mountain lion released near Spooner Summit

By Martin Griffith, AP

A mountain lion that was caught after trying to enter a Reno casino is back in the wild.

The 2-year-old male cougar was released into the Carson Range above Lake Tahoe's East Shore on Saturday morning, said Chris Healy, spokesman for the Nevada Department of Wildlife.

"He was fully ready to go," Healy said. "He was feisty in the trap and snarled if you got too close. Once he decided to go, he quickly ran off into the underbrush and was gone."

Guests at Harrah's reported seeing the 100-pound cat trying to walk into the casino around dawn Friday morning. When the animal couldn't negotiate the revolving door, it hid under an

outdoor stage where it was tranquilized and captured.

Wildlife officials speculate the cougar was chased out of the nearby Sierra Nevada foothills by the drought or by an adult cat that didn't want competition for a mate. They believe the cat followed the Truckee River into Reno.

Mountain lion sightings have been reported around Reno in the past, Healy said, but not in the downtown casino area.

Wildlife biologists say the Carson Range is good mountain lion habitat that features an abundance of mule deer and smaller prey in the summer.

"The mountain lion is unlikely to stay in any area until it finds an area of its own," Healy said.

The cougar was fitted with a collar that will track its movements, and officials hope it stays in the wild.

"The best-case scenario is we never see it or hear from it again," Healy said, adding the cat probably would be euthanized if it turns up in a city again.

The mountain lion was released a couple miles south of Highway 50 in the Spooner Summit area.

California Republican Party struggling to be viable

By Torey Van Oot, Sacramento Bee

California's top Republican operatives are busy raising millions of dollars to pump into the state's most competitive

races.

But this election, many of the checks aren’t being made out to the California Republican Party.

A new crop of independent committees and fundraising efforts created to support Republican candidates are allowing major donors to bypass the state party.

As California delegates gather in Tampa for the Republican National Convention this week, they leave behind a party organization in a major state of flux.

Historically, state political parties have been expected to raise and spend money to support candidates statewide. They lead voter registration and outreach efforts, work to boost turnout and map out messages that strengthen the party’s brand.

But the California Republican organization has fallen on hard times, particularly since losing every race for statewide office in 2010. GOP registration has dropped to 30 percent of California voters, and the party’s bench of potential statewide candidates isn’t deep.

Those leading the new efforts say claims of mismanagement from the top, including the leadership of state Chairman Tom Del Beccaro, have discouraged donors.

The party recently downsized its Sacramento office, eliminating some of its staff, as it reported ending June with just $169,000 in the bank for state races and about $156,000 in unpaid bills still on the books.

That doesn’t necessarily mean Republicans are on the ropes this November. Top GOP politicians and strategists are moving to work around what they see as the state party’s failings, spearheading efforts of their own to recruit candidates and reach out to voters.

Read the whole story

Then and now: Bijou Center changes through the years

Anchor stores in the Bijou Center in South Lake Tahoe have changed through the years.

TRPA was not around in 1965 to regulate the color scheme.

Why the yellow painted ovals on the roadway in 1965?

— Bill Kingman



Bijou Center 2012



Bijou Center 1965

Opinion: Complexity obscures California school money

By Dan Walters, Sacramento Bee

When Gov. Jerry Brown labeled the state budget a “pretzel palace of incredible complexity,” he almost certainly had in mind the budget’s largest, most complicated piece – financing schools.

Proposition 98, a measure that barely won voter approval in 1988, supposedly dictates what schools and their 6 million students are to receive from state and local taxes, but it’s so dense that only a few analysts profess to understand it, and they rarely agree.

Rather than take politics out of school finance, therefore, Proposition 98 invites political manipulation.

Typically, after much gnashing of teeth, the governor and the Legislature agree on a number each year and then interpret Proposition 98 to justify it.

Over the last half-decade, a recession-wracked budget could not be stretched to cover what Proposition 98 required, so shortfalls were placed on what insiders call “the credit card.” The state booked the money as a debt, now more than $13 billion.

School Services of California, which advises school districts, recently generated a chart showing the gap between what schools should be receiving in unrestricted state and local funds under Proposition 98 – roughly three-fourths of their total revenues – and what they are actually receiving.

Read the whole story

Casino worker tip sharing may be issue of Nevada Legislature

By Cy Ryan, Las Vegas Sun

CARSON CITY – A Las Vegas assemblyman says the policy of some casinos to force table games dealers to share tips with others isn't fair, and he wants the 2013 Legislature to examine the issue.

Assemblyman Joseph Hogan, D-Las Vegas, calls tip-sharing an "inappropriate intrusion" on what dealers earn from players. Tips are a large part of income for dealers who are paid minimum wage, he said.

The controversy is currently before the Supreme Court and, according to briefs, some dealers earn $100,000, including tips.

Hogan asked that a bill regarding tip-sharing be drafted last week.

Tip-sharing has resulted six-year legal battle between dealers at Wynn casinos in Las Vegas. Dealers lost an appeal to state Labor Commissioner Michael Tanchek in July 2010 but won a suit before District Court Judge Kenneth Cory.

Cory ruled that dealers could launch a class-action lawsuit.

In September 2006, the Wynn casinos adopted the present tip-

sharing policy, which it maintains has been endorsed in a collective bargaining arrangement by the dealers.

But a suit by casino employees Daniel Baldonado, Joseph Cesarz and Ouyngoc Tang challenges the policy that allows tips to be shared by the box person at the craps tables and with “casino service team leads.”

Read the whole story