Temblor rolls through North Lake Tahoe

People on the North Shore of Lake Tahoe were shaking Friday night when a 4.2 earthquake was recorded at 8:42pm.

The epicenter was near Incline Village.

Six aftershocks ranging from 1.4 to 2.1 had been recorded by the U.S. Geological Service as of 10:46pm June 22.

People as far away as Sacramento felt the quake.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Derby Dame squads split decisions with Stockton

Cryma Passion of Tahoe Derby Dames's B team was the star jammer for the first home bout of the season on June 16 by helping the team push for a 115-87 victory.

Lake Tahoe's only women's flat track roller derby team, Tahoe Derby Dames, hosted the Port City Roller Girls from Stockton at Bijou Community Park.



Pomp Adorable of Port City, right, upends Derby Dame Whiskey Wheels. Photo/Russell Reno Limprecht.

The A teams from each team also squared off. The main event was action packed with a lot of hard hits, speed, and penalties. However, Port City won, 159-113.

The next home bout is July 21.

Husband of deceased S. Tahoe woman commits suicide

A death in South Lake Tahoe on Friday is related to the homicide on Wednesday.

South Tahoe officers found Aaron Fisher, 41, hanging from a tree behind the Raley's near Stateline. He is the husband of Lyar Fisher-Bomediano, 43, of South Lake Tahoe who was found dead in the Lone Pine Lodge near the state line on June 20.

An autopsy on June 22 revealed her death was a homicide. Police Chief Brian Uhler told *Lake Tahoe News* it looks like

asphyxiation was the cause.

How long she may have been dead is not being released, though it’s possible it could have been at least 36 hours.

Officers discovered Fisher-Bomediano’s body when the hotel manager asked for a welfare check because they heard a baby crying. The 2-year-old was reported dehydrated and lying next to his mother. The child is in the care of Child Protective Services. His parents are now both dead.

Fisher, according to reports, may have tried to take his life on the morning before his wife’s body was found. He drove off the road near Emerald Bay the morning of June 19, but survived. He was arrested on driving under the influence charges, but was released about 90 minutes after his wife’s body was discovered.

– Kathryn Reed

Inmates win slew of awards at El Dorado County Fair

Every year inmates – yes, people in jail – test their culinary abilities by entering the El Dorado County Fair’s Baking and Fiery Fair categories.

Since 2007 the inmates have amassed more than 50 first, second, and third place ribbons.

This year was no exception. The inmates in the culinary arts program earned 18 ribbons: five first place, six second place, and seven third place ribbons. In addition, the inmates earned several fourth place awards and numerous honorable mentions.

The inmates develop not only cooking and baking skills, but develop pride and life skills as well, which leads to an improved chance of not returning to jail.

Some of the inmate county fair winners for 2012 are:

Marcus Tillman, First Place yeast rolls, Second Place Cinnamon Rolls, Third Place Peanut Butter Cookies.

Jose Avina – First Place Bar Cookies, Third Place White Chocolate Lime Cookies

Rodney Glover – Second Place Chocolate Chip Cookies and Florentine Cookies, Third Place Cup Cakes

Heather Halversa – Second Place Snickers, Third Place Lemon Rasp Drops

Adrianana Garcia – Third Place Macadamia Nut Cookies

Brandi Day – Third Place Fiery Fair Cookies

Katy Manoff – Second Place Cranberry Orange Cookies and Oatmeal Cookies

Symbria Smite – Third Place Sugar Cookies

Alan Gooley – Second Place Coffee Cake.

Opinion: California has half a budget at best

By Dan Walters, Sacramento Bee

So does California have a new state budget, or not?

It has about a half-a-budget, or perhaps more accurately, a half-baked budget.

The Legislature passed a budget bill last Friday, thus meeting the constitutional deadline and also preserving lawmakers' salaries, along with a handful of minor "trailer bills" to implement its provisions.

However, the budget bill also requires Gov. Jerry Brown's signature, and he has until June 27 to sign or, as he did last year, veto it.

There's also a flock of other trailer bills still pending, including those that involve Brown's dispute with his fellow Democrats in the Legislature over health and welfare services.

The Democrats would spend roughly a billion dollars more on those services than Brown insists he wants, covering the extra spending by slashing the budget's emergency reserve in half and adopting some rosy revenue assumptions.

Whether the intraparty conflict is genuine, or is merely a bit of political theater to portray Brown as being tough with the voting public's bucks, is at least debatable.

Certainly, the governor has been trying mightily to create an image of frugality to persuade voters to pass his sales and income tax hike next November.

Speaking of which, Brown has about three weeks until the deadline for his tax measure to qualify for the ballot and there’s at least a small doubt that the signature-sampling now under way will be successful.

If it isn’t, all bets are off.

Read the whole story

Driving on Nevada highways is a trip through history

By Marlo Bartlett Pesek, Las Vegas Review Journal

Most of Nevada’s highways began as old trails that were paved over.

Native people first conquered Nevada’s distances on foot, finding routes between water sources. After they acquired horses, they could go farther but still had to utilize available water and find forage.

When Europeans explored the continent, they used the same routes on foot or horseback but had to adapt old trails for wheeled vehicles pulled by horses, mules or oxen. Later, railroads altered routes to meet specific requirements. The automobile eventually dictated that most routes would be paved.

Explore Nevada on any of its major highways for a journey through history. Nevadans vacationing in their own state see unusual places and meet fascinating people. Unfortunately, many Nevadans living in our urban areas seldom venture beyond city streets. They miss what savvy foreign visitors travel

thousands of miles to see. Travel websites lead many Europeans to our intriguing rural communities, ghost towns, remote deserts and lofty mountains. These intrepid travelers fly into our cities, rent RVs or motorcycles and set out bravely into our lonely, majestic distances for adventures most Nevadans don’t bother to experience.

Because Nevada is so large and still sparsely populated, road travelers must plan for long distances. For safety’s sake, top off your fuel tank whenever you can, for the next service station might be half a tank away. Check your spare tire and know how to change a flat. Carry sufficient water for your vehicle and a gallon of drinking water for each person. Pack some nutritious snacks. Make sure everyone has a long-sleeved cover-up, for most places in Nevada cool off sharply at night, even in summer. Expect that cellphones will not work in some areas of Nevada. If you break down, stay with your vehicle.

Read the whole story

Volunteers needed to pull invasive weeds in Rabe Meadow

The League to Save Lake Tahoe and U.S. Forest Service are combining forces for a community weed pull on June 28 from 5:30-7:30pm in Rabe Meadow in Stateline.

Volunteers will be helping to remove invasive weeds that are threatening Tahoe’s native plant species, wildlife habitat, and the surrounding watershed. Participants will learn about invasive weeds and how to properly remove them.

Invasive weeds are plants that grow aggressively, spread

quickly and choke out native and other desirable plants from the native landscape. They produce enormous amounts of seed, have spreading root systems, and lack natural predators. These traits enable them to dominate entire landscapes. The following are some of the invasive weeds have been found in the Lake Tahoe Basin: bull thistle, oxeye daisy, scotch broom, yellow toadflax, and perennial pepperweed.

For more information on volunteering, call (530) 541.5388 or email events@keeptahoeblue.org.

Number of hours of sleep tied to stroke risk

By Steven Reinberg, HealthDay

Middle-aged and older people who regularly sleep less than six hours a night may be significantly raising their risk of stroke, a new study suggests.

As much as a fourfold increased risk was seen among normal-weight people who didn't suffer from sleep apnea but got fewer than six hours of sleep each night, the researchers found. Both obesity and sleep apnea are known risk factors for stroke.

"Sleep is important," said lead researcher Megan Ruiter, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Alabama at Birmingham's School of Medicine. "There is evidence that insufficient sleep … increases all sorts of abnormal responses in the body."

Lack of sleep increases inflammation and causes increases in

blood pressure and the release of certain hormones, all creating a greater stress response that can increase the risk for stroke, Ruiter said.

The results of the study were scheduled to be presented Monday at the annual meeting of the Associated Professional Sleep Societies in Boston. The data and conclusions should be viewed as preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed journal.

For the study, Ruiter's group collected data on more than 5,600 people who took part in a larger study on geographical and racial differences in stroke.

Over three years of follow-up, the researchers found that sleeping fewer than six hours a night was associated with an increased risk of stroke in normal-weight people beyond that related to other risk factors.

They didn't find any association between stroke and short sleep among overweight and obese people.

Although the study found an association between shorter sleep and stroke, it did not prove a cause-and-effect relationship.

Michael Frankel, director of vascular neurology at Emory University and director of the Marcus Stroke & Neuroscience Center at Grady Hospital, both in Atlanta, commented that "although difficult to define why this may be occurring, one can speculate about a possible mechanism linked to changes in cortisol levels, an important stress hormone that may be in higher levels in people who have shortened sleep."

Elevated levels of this hormone may trigger dysfunction of the cells that line and protect people's blood vessels and set in motion the cascade of events that leads to stroke, he explained.

This finding may explain why people without traditional vascular risk factors such as obesity, hypertension and

diabetes occasionally have a stroke, he added.

“We know that in about a third of patients with ischemic stroke, doctors are unable to define a cause,” Frankel said. “Reduction in sleep may be contributing in some of these patients.”

“For those of us who chronically work long hours, we may need to listen closely to these findings and adjust our lifestyle to reduce our risk of stroke,” he added.

Controlling blood pressure; eating a low-calorie, balanced diet; exercising; not smoking; not drinking heavily; having regular checkups; and closely following doctors’ advice remain critical for vascular health, Frankel said.

“But attention to proper sleep may be equally important,” he added.

Another expert, Keith Siller, medical director of the NYU Comprehensive Stroke Care Center in New York City, agreed that sleep is an important factor.

“I see this as part of a general message that along with exercise and a proper diet, a good night’s sleep should be included in a healthy lifestyle,” he said.

Study: Nevada pension plan receives low marks

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – The financial health of Nevada’s public employee pension plan is cause for serious concern because it is only

70 percent funded as of fiscal year 2010 with a $10 billion gap, a national organization reported this week.

The Pew Center on the States said the funding ratio in Nevada is below the 80 percent benchmark that fiscal experts recommend for a sustainable program.

In 2010, Nevada paid 92 percent of the recommended contribution to its pension plans and just 21 percent of what the state should have paid to fund retiree health benefits, the study found.

Nevada's "serious concerns" grade for its pension plan is the lowest of three in the new Pew report released Monday, which examines the solvency of public pension plans across the nation. The state received a better "needs improvement" grade on the retiree health care issue. The top ranking is "solid performer."

Dana Bilyeu, executive officer of Nevada's Public Employees' Retirement System, said that while she respects the Pew center's efforts to calculate the national pension liability, the heavy reliance on the funding ratio for the state scores presents an incomplete picture.

"Nevada has always made its payments," she said. "Both the employers and the public employees themselves. And to me that is the single best measure for determining if a pension plan is in trouble."

Nevada's contribution rates are based on an analysis by an independent actuary, and are fully paid each year despite the Pew report findings, Bilyeu said. Some other states take "pension holidays" where they defer contributions to their pensions, yet they have better grades in the study because of higher funding ratios, she said.

"I just disagree that the single driver of the score is the funding ratio," Bilyeu said. "I have made this comment to Pew

in the past but it has not made it into their methodology."

The new report notes that the Nevada Legislature in 2009 made some reforms to the plan, which covers nearly all state and local government public sector workers, including raising the retirement age for newly hired workers to 62.

Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval has advocated for a change to the pension plan for future workers from a defined benefit to a 401(k)-style defined contribution plan. Defined contribution plans eliminate any unfunded fiscal liability for states. The 2011 Legislature took no action on the issue but it is expected to resurface in 2013.

Nationally public pension plans lost more ground in the new study, called "The Widening Gap Update."

"States continue to lose ground in their efforts to cover the long-term costs of their employees' pensions and retiree health care due to continued investment losses from the financial crisis of 2008 and states' inability to set aside enough each year to adequately fund their retirement promises," the report said.

"States have responded with an unprecedented number of reforms that, with strong investment gains, may improve the funding situation they face going forward, but continued fiscal discipline and additional reforms will be needed to put states back on a firm footing," the report said.

In fiscal year 2010, the gap between states' assets and their obligations for public sector retirement benefits was $1.38 trillion, up nearly 9 percent from fiscal year 2009. Of that figure, $757 billion was for pension promises, and $627 billion was for retiree health care.

The Pew report said that more than half the states' pension plans were fully funded in 2000. By 2010 only Wisconsin was fully funded, and 34 were below the 80 percent threshold – up

from 31 in 2009 and just 22 in 2008.

Another group is questioning, however, whether the Pew study is actually understating the financial risk facing taxpayers because of the underfunded public pension plans.

Bob Williams, president of State Budget Solutions (SBS), a nonprofit organization advocating for fundamental reform of state budgets, said the Pew Center report understates the real funding gap for public pension plans.

The actual number for unfunded state and municipal pensions is greater than $4 trillion, he said in a statement issued today.

“The most dangerous deception in the Pew report is the failure to not recognize that public pension funds are putting more taxpayer and worker money into riskier investments,” Williams said. “Ignoring this will set taxpayers up for a bigger catastrophe in the future.”

“State Budget Solutions urges elected officials to understand the full scope of our nation’s pension crisis,” he said. “It is vital that pension reform be based on actual numbers instead of Pew’s optimistic outlook.”

Other analyses of the country’s public pension plans, including those by the American Enterprise Institute, put the unfunded liability at much higher levels than the Pew report.

Williams said in a telephone interview that the last time Nevada’s pension liability was calculated by the organization, it was closer to $33.5 billion, not the $10 billion reported by Pew.

The public pension crisis will be worse than Enron, he said.

“Most of the reforms in the states have addressed new hires,” he said. “They should end the defined benefit program for everyone and switch to defined contribution. It’s the only way out of the system. When you’re in a hole you have to stop

digging, and most states aren’t willing to do that.”

TRCD educating public about watershed projects

Tahoe Resource Conservation District is putting on conservation events this summer to highlight environmental projects and stewardship opportunities in Tahoe.

Community Watershed Partnership barbecues will be June 27 in South Lake Tahoe and June 28 in Kings Beach. The public is invited to get involved with weed pulls, interpretive hikes and paddles, invasive species projects and backyard forestry. There will also be opportunities to provide input on Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Projects coming to a neighborhood near you.

Each CWP Kickoff event is free and open to the public and will include refreshments and kid-friendly activities. The South Lake Tahoe event will take place in the Lake Tahoe Demonstration Garden at Lake Tahoe Community College from 4:30-7:30pm, and the North Tahoe event will occur at the North Tahoe Events Center in Kings Beach from 5:30-7:30pm.

For more information on the Community Watershed Partnership, contact Kim Gorman at kgorman@tahoercd.org or (530) 543.1501, ext. 129.