

S. Tahoe skydiver dies landing in Lake Tahoe, 2 survive

Updated: May 22, 2012, 3:25pm

By Kathryn Reed

CAMP RICHARDSON – One skydiver is dead and two others survived their jump near Camp Richardson on Tuesday morning.

Robert Ranieri, 29, of South Lake Tahoe was found in 12 to 15 feet of water by El Dorado County sheriff's divers.

Lt. Pete Van Arnum said Ranieri used to be a search and rescue volunteer for his department.

The coroner is likely to perform an autopsy Wednesday. The FAA will be part of the investigation.

The plan was for the three to jump from the helicopter that had taken off from Lake Tahoe Airport and land on Pope Beach like they had done last week. Instead, two of the jumpers landed in the icy waters of Lake Tahoe, while the third landed on the sand.



Helmets, parachutes and other gear from the skydivers. Photos/Kathryn Reed

According to the National Weather Service in Reno, the wind speed at the airport at 8:53am was 17 mph, with gusts of 24 mph. The accident occurred moments earlier.

Van Arnum said sky diving is rare in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

"There are not that many good landing areas in the basin because you don't want to land in the water or in the trees," Van Arnum told *Lake Tahoe News*. "These guys chartered a helicopter ride from airport. Supposedly they were experienced."

Chris McKean, who owns a barge that is docked at Camp Rich, said he and some of his crew at about 8:45am raced to the jumpers who were in the water. He said the man they pulled to safety was about 250 yards from shore and about three-quarters of a mile down Pope Beach.

McKean said the person was treading water without a life jacket and yelling for help.

"He was shivering and cold and worried," McKean said.

Hypothermia can set in quickly and people cannot survive for long in Lake Tahoe because of the temperature. The water temperature last week at Camp Rich tested at a depth of 10 feet was 48 degrees, while the surface temp at Timber Cove was 52 degrees.

"We went for the other guy. We found his chute and helmet floating, but not him," McKean told *Lake Tahoe News*.

At 10:42am a yell from one of the searchers on one of the nearly dozen vessels helping with locating the missing parachutist could be heard on Pope Beach. The victim's body had been found several hundred yards off shore.

Law enforcement and private boaters had been using a grid system to locate the victim. A CalStar helicopter had helped early on, with a CHP and Coast Guard chopper called off once the body was located.

The surviving skydivers and their friends waited out the search at Pope Beach, but declined to speak with *Lake Tahoe News*. Gear from two of the parachutists was in a heap at the edge of the beach parking lot.

"I don't mean to be rude, but I have no comments at this time," Claudio Belloto, who runs the helicopter tour operation out of Lake Tahoe Airport wrote in an email to *Lake Tahoe News*.



About 12 boats, some

private, help locate the skydiving victim on May 22.



It was a long wait for friends at Pope Beach.

\$1.6 mil. tunnel being built for wildlife in El Dorado

County

By Tony Bizjak, Sacramento Bee

On a wooded and wildlife-rich stretch of Highway 50 in the foothills, Caltrans is about to launch an unusual road safety experiment – for critters and drivers alike.

The agency is building the Sacramento region's first deer and large-animal road crossing, a \$1.6 million tunnel and fence project, in hopes of reducing the amount of roadkill in the Highway 50 corridor.

Even as they put finishing touches on the tunnel east of Shingle Springs near the El Dorado Road exit, state Department of Transportation biologists acknowledge they can't be sure how well it will work.

Will deer, coyotes, foxes, bobcats and mountain lions find their way to the 12-foot-by-12-foot concrete culvert? And will they choose to use it, or continue along the fence looking for an opening to make a dangerous dash across the four lanes above?

"No one location is going to solve the problem," said Suzanne Melim, Caltrans biologist on the project. "I think it'll work well.

"I look at this as a starting point in what will be a continual effort."

The Highway 50 undercrossing is funded by a federal grant. But state officials acknowledge that spending money on an animal crossing when California faces a massive deficit could raise questions.

Read the whole story

U.S. Olympians getting used to foreign soil

By David Wharton, Los Angeles Times

When the 2012 London Olympics begin less than three months from now, it will mark an anniversary that Americans might not want to celebrate.

Ten years have passed since the Games last took place on U.S. soil. And with the bidding process extended years in advance, this country's next opportunity will not come around until 2022.

"That's a problem," said Anita DeFrantz, an International Olympic Committee member from Los Angeles. "We like hosting this event. It's important to the psyche of our people."

Los Angeles, Atlanta and Salt Lake City proved to be successful host cities over the past three decades. DeFrantz is quick to point out that American broadcast deals and corporate sponsorships account for 60 cents of every dollar that pours into the Olympic movement.

Yet the IOC flatly rejected bids by New York and Chicago in recent years.

Read the whole story

Trash may be best way to dispose of prescription drugs

By Ted Burnham, NPR

American homes are filled with unused prescription drugs. Each year we squirrel away 200 million pounds of pharmaceuticals we don't need anymore, according to some estimates.

Left in medicine cabinets, those drugs can end up in the hands of children or others who really shouldn't be taking them. Proper and timely disposal can avert those problems. Flushing or trashing drugs has been the norm for decades, but take-back programs have been springing up at pharmacies and police departments lately.

The Drug Enforcement Administration has organized four nationwide take-back events since 2010. The most recent, in late April, collected more than 500,000 pounds of unwanted medications.

Of course, any disposal method has environmental consequences. Flushing, for instance, has fallen out of favor for all but a handful of drugs because of concerns about water contamination. And researchers at the University of Michigan, writing this week in *Environmental Science and Technology*, say they've determined that trashing drugs, paradoxically, may be the most environmentally-friendly option.

"It's surprising to find out that even though there's this push toward take-back, trash seems to be the best option for several different reasons," lead author Sherri Cook, of the University of Michigan department of engineering, tells Shots.

The researchers looked at the overall environmental impact of three disposal methods – flushing, trashing and incineration. They included how much of the drugs would enter the

environment, but also looked at emissions impacts from transportation, water treatment, and burning of waste materials.

Read the whole story

Minority babies now the majority in U.S.

By Carol Morello and Ted Mellnik, Washington Post

For the first time in U.S. history, most of the nation's babies are members of minority groups, according to new census figures that signal the dawn of an era in which whites no longer will be in the majority.

Population estimates show that 50.4 percent of children younger than 1 last year were Hispanic, black, Asian American or in other minority groups. That's almost a full percentage point higher than the 49.5 percent of minority babies counted when the decennial census was taken in April 2010. Census Bureau demographers said the tipping point came three months later, in July.

The latest estimates, which gauge changes since the last census, are a reflection of an immigration wave that began four decades ago. The transformation of the country's racial and ethnic makeup has gathered steam as the white population grows collectively older, especially compared with Hispanics.

The census has forecast that non-Hispanic whites will be outnumbered in the United States by 2042, and social scientists consider that current status among infants a

harbinger of the change.

“This is a watershed moment,” said Andrew Cherlin, a sociologist at Johns Hopkins University who specializes in family issues. “It shows us how multicultural we’ve become.”

Although minorities make up about 37 percent of the U.S. population, the District and four states are majority minority – California, Hawaii, New Mexico and Texas.

Read the whole story

0’Rourke presses to upgrade S. Tahoe’s infrastructure

By Kathryn Reed

On June 5, the South Lake Tahoe City Council is slated to have a workshop on the capital improvement program, or the infrastructure of the city.



At the June 19 meeting, the council is expected to approve the certificate of participation that is basically a \$5 million loan. That money is slated for roads, Harrison Avenue upgrades and revamping Linear Park. (This will be City Manager Tony 0’Rourke’s last meeting before beginning a job in

Washington.)

Infrastructure improvements will begin before the COP money is in hand.

“We don’t have to wait for the COP. We will reimburse the

general fund," O'Rourke told *Lake Tahoe News*.

In other words, O'Rourke is OK'ing the city to take money from one fund to be used in other, without a definite guarantee fund No. 1 will be repaid. O'Rourke is literally banking on the assumption the council still favors the COP process. Because it's not a tax, residents don't have to vote on it – though it will be taxpayer money that pays back the loan.

At a meeting in July 2011, Councilman Tom Davis said, "The interest is \$32 million over a 30-year period so really it's \$10 million a year. (The COP) just doubled the cost."

O'Rourke at the May 15 council meeting went over the five-year budget scenario in a big picture scenario without getting into the nitty-gritty.

As with most financial documents, it's not stagnant and it's built on presumptions that don't always come true.

For instance, transient occupancy tax collections in March were 8.2 percent less than the previous fiscal year at the same time. This meant the city needed to make a \$600,000, or 6 percent mid-year adjustment to the budget.

O'Rourke told the council it should cut the 25 percent operating reserve to 20 percent. The money in the fund now equates to 35 percent of the general fund. He said that excess, so to speak, should go to capital improvements over several years. This would include purchasing fire trucks.

Adjusting the reserve would need to be brought back to the council and four of the five need to approve it.

What wasn't discussed at the meeting this month was merging resources with Lake Valley Fire Protection District.

While the city in March appeared hot to get to the negotiating table, no meetings between the departments have ever occurred.

O'Rourke told *Lake Tahoe News* the city is doing an analysis of what is appropriate.

He said, "We're of the mindset of let's date before we get married."

O'Rourke added that consolidation is not off the table, but more research needs to be done before that would occur.

He also said going forward the budget has Brian Uhler remaining as police and fire chief.

When it comes to what happens at Harrison Avenue, that could be decided today as city staff meets with business owners.

"We want to see it improved, but if there is any delay by property owners or no interest, we can move the money elsewhere," O'Rourke said. "There is no lack of needs."

An item that could come with a price tag of close to \$500,000 is upgrading the finance department's software and hardware. However, the idea is it will create efficiency in the department, and therefore throughout the city. An RFP has been released.

A stream of revenue could be collecting more hotel tax. A request for proposal was released May 14 seeking firms that could primarily go after delinquent or non-existent taxpayers.

Placer County moves into new Tahoe City offices

Placer County's Community Development Resource Agency, Environmental Health Services and Executive Office North Lake Tahoe offices will be doing business out of a county-owned office building in Tahoe City starting Monday.

They moved this weekend.

The new offices are located at 775 N. Lake Blvd., Tahoe City, in the building known as the Customs House.

Placer County purchased the Tahoe City building in the summer 2010 and the Assessor's Office is currently using a portion of the facility.

The new offices have video teleconferencing capability so Tahoe area staff can meet with west county staff without incurring the time and costs of driving from Lake Tahoe to Auburn. The building will be more customer friendly and have a larger waiting area.

4-year sentence in Stateline

DUI death

The man accused in the hit and run DUI accident last summer in the Stateline casino corridor pleaded guilty to one count of reckless driving causing death or substantial bodily harm and one count of vehicular manslaughter.

David Stephenson, 36, of Discovery Bay has been sentenced to four years in prison. He would be eligible for parole in one year.

Stephenson was driving east on Highway 50 when the vehicle he was driving struck Joan Marie Hamrick, 60, of Valley Springs who was crossing the highway from Horizon to MontBleu. She later died of her injuries after being airlifted to a Reno hospital.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

California medical pot advocates push bill to regulate legal dispensaries

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

Medical marijuana advocates Saturday opened a three-day event to rally support to regulate a legal dispensary industry in California, spurred on by videotaped messages from two members of Congress who recently pushed an amendment to deny funds for federal raids on cannabis businesses.

About 200 people, including dispensary operators and people

who use marijuana for medical conditions, turned out at a Sacramento labor hall in a conference to rally support for a bill to create a state oversight agency for cannabis business and make it harder for cities and counties to ban dispensaries.

Assemblyman Tom Ammiano, D-San Francisco, who passed the bill out of his public safety committee, said it faces difficult path to passage as state lawmakers shrink from the medical marijuana issue while “the (federal) Department of Justice is going rogue on us and the U.S. attorneys are participating in this spin cycle of reefer madness.”

Representatives of marijuana patients’ advocates Americans for Safe Access and a union organizing California marijuana workers, the United Food & Commercial Workers, used the event to attract volunteers to flood the Capitol on Monday to lobby lawmakers to pass Assembly Bill 2312, which is opposed by law enforcement groups.

Read the whole story

Series of meetings set regarding El Dorado County General Plan

El Dorado County has scheduled a series of meetings to collect public comment on the Targeted General Plan Amendment and Zoning Ordinance Update.

The purpose of scoping meetings is to request public feedback on the range of environmental issues that should be analyzed

in the Environmental Impact Report.

The public is invited to attend the following meetings:

May 30, 6-7:30pm:

Union Mine High School Library, 6530 Koki Lane, El Dorado

June 7, 6-7:30pm:

El Dorado Hills CSD Pavilion, 1021 Harvard Way, El Dorado Hills

June 18, 6-7:30pm:

Greenwood Community Center, 4401 Highway 193, Greenwood

June 20, 6-7:30pm:

Pioneer Park Community Center, 6740 Fairplay Road, Somerset

June 21, 6-7:30pm:

Camino School Old Gym, 3060 Snows Road, Camino

June 25, 5:30-7pm:

Lake Valley Fire Protection District Station 7, 2211 Keetak St., Meyers

June 27, 6-7:30pm:

Cameron Park Community Center, 2502 Country Club Drive, Cameron Park

June 28, 9am:

El Dorado County Planning Commission, 2850 Fairlane Court, Placerville.