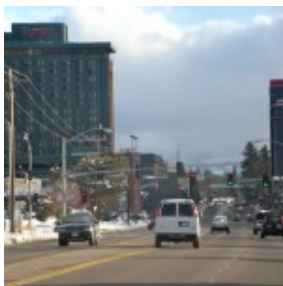


Caesars' revenue up, but loss widens on interest costs

By Steve Green, Las Vegas Sun

Hotel-casino operator Caesars Entertainment Corp. of Las Vegas said Wednesday that revenue increased in the fourth quarter, though the company posted a higher net loss from a year earlier.

Overall revenue of \$2.172 billion was up 2.4 percent from the year-ago quarter.



Revenue is up for the parent company of Harrah's and Harveys at Stateline.

Photo/LTN file

But Caesars posted a net loss of \$220.6 million, or \$1.76 per share, compared with a loss in the year-ago quarter of \$196.7 million, or \$1.71.

The higher loss in the 2011 quarter was caused partly by higher interest expenses, which increased from \$509.7 million to \$673.9 million on a year-over-year basis.

Caesars, which has properties around the country including

Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Harveys, said its Las Vegas resorts were hurt by "relatively flat trips (number of visits) and a decrease in spend per trip."

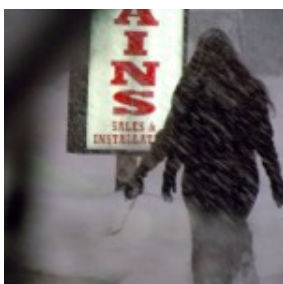
Read the whole story

Snow cancels classes; roads a mess in Lake Tahoe Basin

Blizzard conditions this morning have forced schools in the Lake Tahoe Basin to call a snow day.

Closed for the day are:

- Lake Tahoe Unified School District
- Lake Tahoe Community College, including Child Development Center
- Douglas County schools at the lake
- Tahoe Truckee Unified School District
- Incline Village schools
- Sierra Nevada College.



Walking along

Highway 50
will continue
to be
dangerous
today -- and
chains are
needed.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

Washoe County schools outside the basin are on a two-hour delay.

The heaviest snow on this Leap Day is expected through 10am. But another storm is on the heels of this one, so snow is likely to be falling through Thursday.

A winter storm warning remains in effect through noon March 1. Because strong winds are part of this system it will make driving hazardous. Expect whiteout conditions over mountain passes.

For road information, click on the state icons at the top of *Lake Tahoe News'* home page. Highway 89 around Emerald Bay is closed.

According to the Sierra Avalanche Center, "A trend of increasing avalanche danger is expected to occur this afternoon through (Thursday)."

– Kathryn Reed

Sierra water content 10 times less than what it was in 2011

Location	Elevation	Snow Depth	Water Content	% of Long Term Average
Alpha	7,600 feet	19.4 inches	4.9 inches	18
Phillips Station	6,800 feet	17.7 inches	3.9 inches	16
Lyons Creek	6,700 feet	30.5 inches	8.3 inches	33
Tamarack Flat	6,500 feet	24 inches	6 inches	26

Source: DWR

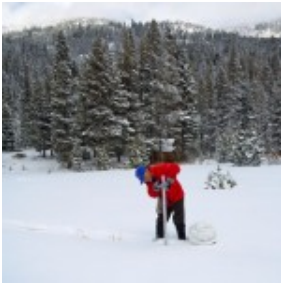
By Kathryn Reed

PHILLIPS STATION – “In California we talk about averages and normal, but it doesn’t describe our weather well. We have more extremes.”

Tuesday’s snow survey compared to a year ago is an example of the extremes Frank Gehrke is talking about. On Feb. 28 the water content near the entrance of Sierra-at-Tahoe was 16 percent of normal compared to 178 percent of normal a year ago.

Gehrke, who measures the snow near Echo Summit five times a year for the state Department of Water Resources, won’t make any predictions about what March will bring. But to play catch up “we need a significant, major turn around in the storm track,” Gehrke said.

The snow depth was 17.7 inches, with 3.9 inches worth of water.



Frank Gehrke
finds little
snow to
measure Feb.
28 near
Sierra-at-
Tahoe.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

Years like this were also recorded in 1945, 1963 and 1991. In '45 and '91 the slow start was followed by a tremendous March. But history does not necessarily repeat itself.

"We're not doing too well up here," Gehrke said.

To those who don't live in the area it might have been hard to believe Gehrke. He was breaking tracks as he snowshoed through fresh snow. Trees were covered with white stuff. A bitter wind whipped through the air and storm clouds passed overhead.

But snow in the Sierra has been scarce as the measurements show. Storms have been sporadic at best.

Normally the water content increases with the February measurement by 4 to 5 inches. In the past month it went up one-tenth of an inch.

There is so little snow, with so little water content that instead of measuring each of the stops along the route, Gehrke pours the collections into a bucket to be measured at the end.

"In shallow snowpacks it's more accurate to weigh it in bulk,"

he said.

While those in Tahoe know the dismal snowfall has created a cash-flow problem for most businesses in the region, the impact to the rest of California likely won't be felt until this summer or later.

Reservoirs are doing OK based on runoff from last winter, but the State Water Project has reduced the amount of water it expects to deliver to entities down stream to 50 percent of their allocation. This is down from projections of 60 percent. Last year these 29 public agencies that service 25 million Californians and nearly a million acres of irrigated farmland received 80 percent of their allocation.

If the snowpack does not improve this year, water managers will need to think about how best to allocate resources for next year.

But March is trying to do its best to not be dry and disappointing. The winter storm warning issued by the National Weather Service is from 10pm Wednesday to noon Thursday – the first day of March. With it, expect 2 to 4 feet of snow above 7,000 feet and 12 to 30 inches below that elevation.

South Tahoe man dies after

trailer goes up in flames

By Kathryn Reed

A South Lake Tahoe man had time to call 911, but not enough time to escape the fire that engulfed the bedroom of his trailer.

Glenn Sauls, 82, was found by firefighters and paramedics in his trailer at 1080 Julie Lane about 2:30am Feb. 5. He later died at Barton Memorial Hospital from smoke inhalation.

“He breathed in so much smoke,” Gareth Harris, chief of Lake Valley Fire Protection District, told *Lake Tahoe News*.



A South Tahoe man died from smoke inhalation when his trailer caught fire.

Photo/Lake Valley Fire

While South Lake Tahoe was the primary agency to fight the fire, Lake Valley handled the investigation because South Tahoe doesn't have a fire marshal.

It appears Sauls had been smoking in bed, Harris said. This is based on the number of cigarette butts found in that room and

that the fire was contained to that area.

However, smoke and heat damaged the entire trailer, rendering it a total loss.

While the trailer met the standards when built, fire officials say without having smoke detectors in every bedroom and outside of them, it could mean people won't know danger looms.

In this case, the one smoke detector was in the kitchen at the other end of the trailer.

Harris also stressed the importance of not smoking in bed.

Lake Valley will install smoke detectors for free for people who cannot afford them or for older residents so they are not climbing on ladders.

Bay Area woman dies from skiing injuries sustained at Northstar

A San Jose woman died last week while skiing at Northstar in Truckee.

Cindy Tucker Mulcahy, 52, was on the Castle Peak trail about 2pm Feb. 23 when ski patrollers found her unconscious.

Mulcahy, who was wearing a helmet, later died at Tahoe Forest Hospital in Truckee.

Northstar officials did not provide any more information.

Nevada truckers embark on campaign to stop human trafficking

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY – A campaign has been launched aimed at helping truck drivers and truck stop employees become more aware of how to identify underage children being forced into acts of prostitution.

The Nevada Trucking Association and the Nevada Petroleum Marketers Association said the campaign will use materials developed by a national organization, Truckers Against Trafficking, to help truck drivers and truck stop employees identify the behavior of underage children being forced to engage in prostitution so they can report such incidents to the authorities.

“The Nevada Trucking Association and its members are sickened by the evils of human trafficking,” said Chief Executive Officer Paul Enos. “Truckers are the eyes and ears of our highways and truck stops, so we are asking truckers to notify the authorities when they see signs of these activities.”

Peter Krueger association executive with the Petroleum Marketers, said: “The Nevada Petroleum Marketers Association is committed to make this effort our top priority for 2012. Our members can make a difference by spotting and reporting underage trafficking at truck stops across Nevada.”

Kendis Paris, national director of Truckers Against Trafficking, said: "Having the support of Nevada truckers and truck stops will prove vital to the work of Truckers Against Trafficking. This means that thousands more will become educated and equipped about the realities of domestic sex trafficking and how they can help end it. When the trucking and truck stop associations take the lead in their state it causes their membership to understand the importance of this issue and get behind it themselves."

The Nevada Trucking Association will distribute informational DVDs to its member companies to use during training, orientation and safety seminars. Wallet-size cards will also be provided to members with information about how to recognize trafficking and what to do when it is suspected.

The Nevada Petroleum Marketers Association will use its weekly email bulletins, quarterly magazine and website to promote awareness. It will also make the materials available from Truckers Against Trafficking to its members.

Assemblyman John Hambrick, R-Las Vegas, who has pursued legislation aimed at strengthening Nevada's laws against human trafficking, said, "I am very pleased that the Nevada trucking industry and the truck stop owners have entered the war against human trafficking. This scourge must be stopped. All of us have seen the media reports on children as young as eleven being prostituted by men who are making thousands upon thousands of dollars selling the bodies of our children. We now have two allies that can have a direct effective on fighting this war."

In a telephone interview, Hambrick said there was anecdotal evidence presented at a press conference in Southern Nevada announcing the new campaign that it has been successful in combating the problem.

"I think there will be a new dynamic on fighting this

problem,” he said. “Primarily now we’ll have people on the interstates. Many times society always thinks this is downtown, in an urban area, whether it is on the Strip or in Reno. But we always forget that these truckers are going all over the country.

“It’s a team effort,” Hambrick said. “We all have to pull together. Society has to pull together to solve this problem.”

The Department of Justice estimates 100,000 to 300,000 of America’s children are at risk for entering the sex for sale industry each year. Human trafficking is estimated to be the second most lucrative crime in world with annual revenue of \$32 billion.

Continuous snow reminds people it’s winter in Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

What was supposed to be a minor storm as a prelude to what is going to arrive Tuesday night turned out to be a rather significant event by 2011-12 winter standards.

South Lake Tahoe officially received 5 inches of snow by 3:30pm Monday, according to the National Weather Service. By 6:41pm Mount Rose had recorded 17 inches of snow.



It's bumper-to-bumper traffic through South Lake Tahoe on Monday night. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Both those amounts keep increasing as the white stuff continues falling. While the snow is expected to taper off Monday night into Tuesday, there is a 90 percent chance of snow Tuesday night and 100 percent likelihood Wednesday.

The Weather Service has issued a winter storm warning from 1am-7pm Wednesday.

Weather gurus say between 10 and 20 inches could fall above 7,000 feet, with 5 to 10 inches below that level.

Winds will be picking up as the next storm moves in, with steady winds of 25 to 35 mph and gusts of 50 mph. The ridge tops could experience gusts of 100 mph.

Driving over mountain passes will be less than pleasant, just like the Monday commute over Spooner Summit. Snow was falling so fast Nevada Department of Transportation crews were not keeping up with the accumulating snow. Visibility was also a factor and will likely continue to be.

“Strong winds and heavy snow Wednesday will result in dangerous driving conditions on area roads and near zero visibility over the higher passes late Tuesday night and

Wednesday,” the Weather Service warns.

To know about road conditions, click on the state icons on the home page of *Lake Tahoe News*.

S. Tahoe Olympian's mother arrested on drug charges

By Stephen T. Watson, Buffalo News

The mother of an Olympic snowboarder was arrested one week ago in the Town of Hamburg after investigators say she came to this area from California to pick up payment for a large shipment of marijuana, police announced Monday.

Myra Hight, 51, of South Lake Tahoe is a suspected member of a nationwide marijuana-distribution ring and remains in federal custody here on drug-trafficking charges, officials from the Erie County Sheriff's Office and the Hamburg Police Department said at a news conference. Police found more than \$77,000 in cash in her vehicle after her Feb. 20 arrest.

“We believe that she is part of a larger-scale drug-trafficking organization that's been operating both nationally and here in Erie County involving the distribution of large quantities of marijuana,” sheriff's Capt. Gregory Savage said.

Investigators have no indication Hight's daughter, Elena, a half-pipe snowboarder who competed in the 2006 and 2010 Winter Olympics, was aware of her mother's alleged drug trafficking, said Sheriff's Senior Detective Alan Rozansky.

The younger Hight, a likely participant in the 2014 Winter Olympics, was expected in Buffalo Monday to help her mother post bail, Rozansky said.

Read the whole story

Most hospitals in Nevada losing money

By Frank X. Mullen, Reno Gazette-Journal

Despite rounds of cost-cutting measures over the last few years, about two-thirds of Nevada general hospitals lost money in the third quarter of 2011, according to the latest report on the financial condition of state's health care systems.

The report shows that 20 of the state's 33 hospitals – not including specialty hospitals such as rehabilitation or psychiatric centers – lost money in a single quarter.

“That would be a disaster in any industry and it's a bit of a disaster here,” said Dwight Hansen, financial director for the Nevada Hospital Association.

Washoe County/Carson City hospitals reported losses of \$29.3 million and Clark County hospitals posted a \$45.7 million combined loss in the third quarter of 2011, according to data from University of Nevada, Las Vegas-based the Center for Health Care Information Analysis.

Rural hospitals had a combined \$52.7 million profit, but that total is largely driven by Elko, which is in the middle of a gold-mining boom, analysts said.

Northeastern Nevada Regional Hospital in Elko, for example, made about \$58 million in the first nine months of last year from paying patients.

Even as health care costs continue to soar and patients shoulder a greater percentage of their medical charges, some hospitals are sinking beneath multiple burdens, including fewer patients, more uninsured patients and ever-dwindling Medicare reimbursements.

Nationally, about half of all general hospitals have been losing money for the last four years, according to federal health care statistics.

Read the whole story

Linear Park upgrades expected to begin in summer

By Kathryn Reed

While the word “park” is in its name, this is not the four-letter word most would use for the stretch of land from Lake Tahoe Vacation Resort to Holiday Inn Express. “Ugly” is what it is.

Linear Park is going to get a complete makeover, with completion likely in 2013. It’s possible a final design plan will be in place in March.

Right now dirt, dead plants and non-working lights line the sides of the bike-pedestrian path that parallels Highway 50 and the gated Tahoe Meadows area.



The dirt and trail along Highway 50 known as Linear Park is about to be upgraded.

Photo/LTN

It is the residents of Tahoe Meadows who gave the city the land to create this park. The homeowners owned the land into the first travel lane of Highway 50.

But it was the Washoe who first called this area home – long before white people put gates around it to regulate who could access this lakefront property.

Tahoe Meadows was once a frequent fishing area for the Washoe, who spent their summers at Lake Tahoe. There was a pond nearby that was used to store the fish until the tribe needed them for food.

It is because of this history that it was decided by the now defunct city arts council to erect a statue in that location to honor the Washoe Tribe. The statue on the west end of the park was created by Arnold Aragon. It portrays a typical Washoe woman. Though Aragon, who lives in Schurz, Nev., is Crow and Laguna, he is married to a Washoe woman.

After it was erected in 2000, the original pedestal on which the statue sits began to crumble. In stepped the now-defunct Core 24 Charities, of which this reporter was a member. In 2005, a more durable quartzite pedestal was built. Tahoe Sand and Gravel donated materials.

The arts council had intended to place plaques in a semicircle that would have told the story of the Washoe. Money prevented that from happening.

However, after the revamped pedestal was put in, the city paid for a single plaque to be installed.

Core 24 when it disbanded gave the city more than \$20,000 to be used exclusively on upgrades to linear park. After all, the group had worked with the city and South Tahoe Public Utility District to establish a 2-inch water hookup near the old Shell station to supply needed irrigation. The group also planted 1,000 daffodil bulbs around the pedestal that to this day bloom each year.

It won't be until a March City Council meeting that the \$20,000 gets placed in the appropriate fund.

At the Feb. 21 City Council meeting the five approved an agreement with Brett Long Landscape Architecture for planning, design and construction support services.

The staff report says, "The preliminary project scope includes improving the existing landscaping, upgrading irrigation and supply, providing bus shelter pads and enclosures, class 1 bicycle trail repair and installing pedestrian lighting."

Councilman Tom Davis wants better lighting than what is on Ski Run Boulevard so pedestrians don't go from dark to light to dark. But it is those types of overhead lights that are proposed.

For one, they meet Tahoe Regional Planning Agency guidelines.

They are also more compatible when houses are nearby because of spreading less light.

Nancy Kerry, who was acting city manager for the week while Tony O'Rourke was out of town, said the Tahoe Meadows Homeowners Association is willing to discuss the lighting issue.

The entire cost of the project is estimated between \$250,000 and \$370,000. The higher cost is if the bike path is revamped.

Long hopes the landscaping could be in place this summer. While native plants will be used, it's likely grass will go in some areas, along with adaptive accent plants.

When the park was first developed in the 1990s the irrigation system was not adequate and the plants died. People have continuously kicked in the low-level light standards. Now it is just rundown.

Long believes improvements can be ongoing after the initial upgrades are made – like signs and benches.