

Age requirement for children in booster seats changes Jan. 1

By Cathy Locke and Tony Bizjak, Sacramento Bee

A new state law requiring children younger than 8 to use car booster seats will become effective Sunday.

Children younger than 8 also must be properly buckled into a car seat or booster seat, and in the back seat, according to a news release from the California Office of Traffic Safety. In addition, children 8 and older who are not tall enough for the seat belt to fit properly must ride in a booster seat or car seat.

Previously, the law required that children remain in a booster seat until age 6 or until they weighed 60 pounds. The law change comes after several years of political debate. Safety officials hail it as critical catch-up moment for California.

"It's been national practice for several years now," said Jennifer Rubin, an instructor with the Cosumnes Fire Department. "Normally, California is a trendsetter, but we were pretty far behind."

Safety officials say the law is needed because most 6- and 7-year-olds are still too small to fit safely in adult seat belts.

Read the whole story

Lahontan-issued stormwater permit being appealed to state

By Kathryn Reed

A joint appeal to the state Water Resources Control Board is being crafted by South Lake Tahoe, and El Dorado and Placer counties regarding the stormwater permit the Lahontan Regional Board approved earlier this month.

El Dorado County initiated the process. Legal counsels for the three jurisdictions with the assistance of outside attorneys in Sacramento are finalizing the paperwork. All three are sharing in the nearly \$20,000 it will cost to file the petition.

The deadline to file is Jan. 5.



Lahontan
Executive
Director
Harold Singer,
third from
left, told the
board Dec. 6
the stormwater
permit should
be approved.

Photo/LTN

Because the petition is not expected to be finalized until the deadline, the exact language and specific arguments are not yet public.

"We hope to get some modifications to the permit which will at least modify the tools used and get the costs down somewhat," El Dorado County Chief Counsel Lou Green told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The three jurisdictions don't believe the regional board on Dec. 6 understood their concerns or listened well. They also don't understand why the disagreements couldn't be talked through before the board approved the permit.

Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board gets to tell the three government entities on the California side of Lake Tahoe what to do when it comes to water issues. Nevada does not have an equivalent layer of government.

"We have always approached water quality on a regional level and we aren't anymore," South Lake Tahoe Mayor Claire Fortier said. "We need a concerted and collaborative effort to reach the goals. If the problem is roads, then let's put money into roads."

No one is arguing stormwater should not be treated or that lake clarity is not important. What they disagree with is the language and requirements in the permit. This also then puts another layer of responsibility on two-thirds of the lake, instead of taking a basinwide approach to the sediment issue. Monitoring and costs associated with it are huge stumbling blocks for the local entities.

"For some reason the money doesn't matter (to Lahontan). Boy, if I ever thought of a time when money mattered, it's now with how bad the economic times are," Ken Grehm, Placer County public works director, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

"I would like to focus on cleaning up water, not so much on monitoring. Let local agencies provide services and let scientists do what they do. The real concern is I don't know if this will work," Grehm said of Lahontan's rules.

He would prefer a slower, more calculated approach instead of jumping in with both feet to uncharted processes like Lahontan has mandated.

All jurisdictions call the permit an unfunded mandate. They are told to do something and no money is provided. Lahontan uses a state definition for "unfunded mandate" that differs from conventional wisdom.

Equality is an issue as well. The state water board is working on the overdue stormwater permit for Caltrans that will likely have a special section for highways in the basin. That permit, according to Lahontan, is likely to resemble what the city and counties are being asked to do.

The U.S. Forest Service, which owns about 75 percent of the land in the Lake Tahoe Basin, falls under the federal Clean Water Act instead of a municipal stormwater permit.

Lauri Kemper, second in charge at Lahontan, said she didn't realize an appeal was in the works, but was not surprised. She said the process is the people in the petition unit do not work with the regional board on permitting issues, but are more independent. The petition unit has the authority to dismiss the petition or have a public hearing before the state board.

"If it goes to a public hearing, we would prepare a rebuttal then," Kemper explained.

The South Lake Tahoe City Council will discuss the issue in closed session at the Jan. 3 meeting. (The full City Council agenda is online.)

The Placer County Board of Supervisors will have the petition on closed session Jan. 10. Placer County Counsel Anthony La Bouff said staff has authority from the board to go forward with the petition.

“There are a lot of moving parts in Lake Tahoe all the time. This is just one of them,” La Bouff said of the stormwater permit issue.

Truckee man arrested on stolen property charges

A Truckee resident was arrested Friday morning on possession of stolen property and resisting arrest charges.

Christopher Haring, 27, was spotted by officers about 10am Dec. 30. He is a suspect in several open burglary and theft investigations, according to officers.

An officer attempted to stop Haring, which led to a short foot pursuit through part of Truckee.. Haring was found hiding in the back yard of a residence in the Sierra Meadows neighborhood.

Haring was transported to the Nevada County Jail in Truckee.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Homes threatened by fire in Carson City

By Reno Gazette-Journal

Twenty homes are threatened by a fire on the east side of Carson City, but the wind is blowing the fire away from the homes, Sheriff Ken Furlong said.

"Nothing is in danger right now," Furlong said. "They feel the homes are in good shape right now."

The fire initially estimated to be 5 acres to 7 acres is burning in foothills on the east side of Carson City. It started near the Deer Run Road area of Carson City on the east side of the collection of homes.

The Carson Fire Department responded first and was joined by several other agencies from the area.

Read the whole story

Orchard Supply Hardware store in Tahoe?

By David Goll, Silicon Valley-San Jose Business Journal

Stock in Orchard Supply Hardware Corp. will be distributed today to Sears Holdings Corp. shareholders as the venerable chain becomes independent once more.

Regular trading will begin Tuesday in the Class A common stock and Series A preferred stock shares of Orchard, an 89-store

retail hardware chain based in San Jose, which will be on the NASDAQ stock market under the "OSH" ticker symbol.

It comes on the heels of an announcement by Sears that it will close about 100 stores, partially as the result of a disappointing holiday shopping season. Officials of Sears, based in Hoffman Estates, Ill., announced the locations Thursday of 79 Sears and Kmart stores nationwide they plan to close. The only California stores on the closure list are three in Southern California.

Read the whole story

Liberty Energy rates expected to rise in early 2012

Liberty Energy customers, this includes all Lake Tahoe Basin customers in California, are likely to see their electric bills go up in February.



The company asked the state Public Utilities Commission for a 1.2 percent increase for all customers to essentially handle the increase in the cost of doing business.

"It covers more or less the cost of inflation of operations," explained Jeanne Matthews, Liberty's customer service billing manager.

Even though bills that came out in December said the rate increase would take effect Jan. 1, that is not going to happen

because the CPUC has not approved the hike. Matthews said she expects the state board to OK the increase in January.

For a bill that is \$90 for the month it will mean an increase of \$1.08 per month.

This is better news than what Nevada Energy ratepayers in Southern Nevada got this week. On Jan. 1 their rates go up about 10 percent a month. The utility had sought a 24 percent increase.

– Kathryn Reed

LA0: Ballot proposals to reform pensions may cost California taxpayers more

By Jon Ortiz, Sacramento Bee

Two ballot proposals aimed at cutting government pension costs could wind up increasing them, are fraught with legal and fiscal uncertainty and would put pressure on governments to increase public employee pay, according to new analyses of the measures.

The nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office on Tuesday released its takes on two public pension reform plans filed by Dan Pellissier, president of California Pension Reform. The group hopes to put one of the proposals to a statewide vote

next November.

Steve Maviglio, spokesman for labor coalition Californians for Retirement Security, issued a statement calling the pension plans “sloppily drafted and extreme” initiatives that “will be an economic disaster for our state.”

Pellissier, meanwhile, released a statement that focused on pension abuse and governance provisions common to both plans and the LAO’s conclusion the proposals will eventually cut pension costs: “Californians are ready to vote for this type of pension reform to help get our fiscal affairs back on track.”

The law requires that the nonpartisan legislative analyst review the fiscal impact of ballot proposals before they go before voters.

Read the whole story

Law enforcement will be out in force for New Year’s Eve

Douglas County sheriff’s deputies are preparing for the New Year’s Eve celebration at Stateline; where some years about 50,000 people have closed down the casino corridor.

While some of the usual participants may be at Lake Tahoe Community College for the SnowGlobe concert that night, law enforcement on both sides of the state line still expect a large contingency at the casinos.

Even though no ball drops, a mostly twenty-something crowd meanders around in the cold.

Close enough to walk to will be the festivities at Heavenly Village, where a lighted gondola will “drop” and fireworks will go off at 9pm – the New York New Year.

Douglas County will beef up its patrol starting Thursday – in large part because the three-night SnowGlobe event starts late that afternoon.

Due to the ordinarily high volume of pedestrian traffic expected within the casino core area during New Year’s Eve, Highway 50 is likely to be closed to vehicle traffic. If that occurs, traffic will be diverted around the Stateline casino core area using upper and lower Lake Parkway Drive.

Besides Douglas County and South Lake Tahoe officers near Stateline on Dec. 31, expect to see personnel from

Nevada Highway Patrol, Carson City Sheriff’s Office, El Dorado County Sheriff’s Office, California Highway Patrol, Nevada Department of Prisons, Placer County Sheriff’s Office and the FBI.

As in years past, a non-confrontational approach will be used, with the idea more citations are handed out than arrests made.

Incidents that will most likely result in an arrest include acts that place celebrants or law enforcement officers in jeopardy; including acts of rowdy behavior, fighting, throwing projectiles, vandalism, theft, narcotic violations, severe public drunkenness, possession of or discharge of fireworks, minors consuming or possessing alcohol, or any other act that disrupts the goal of achieving a peaceful and safe environment for all in attendance.

Glass and metal containers, regardless of contents, are prohibited in the casino core area on New Year’s Eve. Alcohol or other liquids shall be in a plastic cup, paper cup or other similar vessel.

The curfew in Douglas County on Saturday for people younger than 18 is midnight.

Gray wolf returns to California after nearly 84 years

By Cathy Locke, Sacramento Bee

A gray wolf that has been monitored in its wanderings through southern Oregon has entered California.

The California Department of Fish and Game announced today that the animal has crossed the border. The last confirmed gray wolf in California was killed in Lassen County in 1924, according to a department news release.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Game has monitored the travels of the 2 1/2-year-old male, which was collared with a Global Positioning System device in February. The wolf, formerly from a pack in northeast Oregon, is now more than 300 miles from where his journey began.

[Read the whole story](#)

DOJ opinion 'important day' in efforts to legalize online gaming

By Karoun Demirjian, Las Vegas Sun

WASHINGTON — A Department of Justice opinion released last week declares that Internet gaming transactions are legal between states where gambling is legal.

The opinion appears to open the door for multiple states with legalized gaming to band together and create online gambling zones across state lines — provided they don't involve sports betting.

Advocates for legalizing online gambling have focused on getting Congress to overturn the 2006 Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act (UIGEA), which made it illegal for banks to process Internet bets for prohibited forms of gaming. The 13-page opinion by DOJ Criminal Division Assistant Attorney General Virginia Seitz does not discuss how the Wire Act intersects with UIGEA.

But Richard Bronson, chairman and co-founder of California-based U.S. Digital Gaming, called the opinion a sea-change in the federal government's approach to online gaming.

"This is a very important day," said Bronson, whose company develops online gaming technology. "It has always been considered to be illegal under the Wire Act."

Seitz reviewed the 1961 Wire Act to address whether state lottery operators in New York and Illinois could sell tickets online if the routers and networks processing those transactions were out of state, in places like Texas, Maryland and Nevada.

Read the whole story