

5 arrests at Incline DUI checkpoint; 'uneventful' night in S. Tahoe

Five people were arrested on driving under the influence charges during the July 4 checkpoint in Incline Village, with South Tahoe officers making a DUI arrest as well that night.

On Monday from 1:15-8pm several law enforcement agencies, including the Washoe County Sheriff's Office, Sparks Police Department, Washoe County School Police Department and the Nevada Highway Patrol, conducted a sobriety checkpoint on Highway 28 near Ponderosa Ranch Road in Incline Village.

A total of 1,911 vehicles were screened, resulting in 25 motorists directed to a secondary screening area. Of those 25, five were arrested for driving under the influence; four for alcohol and one for drugs.

Several traffic violations were also observed during the roadblock, with 48 motorists cited for not wearing a seat belt, 11 citations issued for child restraint violations, two for having a suspended driver's license, five for vehicle registration discrepancies, two for not having proof of insurance and 13 other misdemeanor citations. Additionally, 22 verbal warnings were given.

The checkpoint was funded by a grant from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

In addition to the DUI checkpoint statistics, 20 additional arrests were made over the three-day weekend in the greater Reno-Sparks area. Fourteen were for DUI, four for misdemeanor traffic warrants, one for domestic battery and one additional misdemeanor arrest.

Twenty-two accidents were reported throughout the Northern Nevada area. Eleven of those incidents had some type of injury reported while the other eleven were property damage only.

Sgt. Shannon Laney with the South Lake Tahoe police described the Fourth as “largely an uneventful night.”

Brandi Orr, 35, of South Lake Tahoe was taken into custody on DUI charges near Harrison Avenue in the city limits. Officers said there had been reports she was threatening people with a screwdriver at Tahoe Bowl.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Williams to be promoted to lieutenant in SLTPD

Brian Williams, who has been an officer with the South Lake Tahoe Police Department since 1986, will be promoted to lieutenant July 9.

Williams, 46, spent nearly a decade in detectives. He earned certification through California’s Robert Presley Institute of Criminal Investigations in the specialties of homicide and sexual assault investigations.

He has been a sergeant for the last 10 years. His brother, Brad, is also a sergeant in the department. He did not take the test to become a lieutenant. To avoid nepotism issues, the lieutenant will not supervise his brother.



Brian Williams

Williams has a bachelor's degree in criminal justice management, and in 2012 will complete his master's in managerial science.

For more than a decade he has been an adjunct faculty member at Lake Tahoe Community College.

Williams fills the vacancy left when Marty Hale retired.

More changes are coming to SLTPD starting this fall when Police Chief Brian Uhler also takes over the responsibility of the fire department.

In February, after Martin Hewlett retires, the captain's position will no longer exist.

Lt. David Stevenson is the other lieutenant in the department. The department will reduce the number sergeants from seven to five. Patrol officers will remain staffed at the current level.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Solar program in jeopardy,

including in Nevada

By Erin Kelly, Reno Gazette-Journal

WASHINGTON – The solar power industry is facing a double threat from a Congress that might turn off the flow of federal subsidies and take a pass on mandating renewable energy standards that would increase demand.

The Republican-led House, focused on cutting spending, has targeted federal grant and loan guarantee programs to reduce or eliminate.

One is a U.S. Treasury grant program, set to expire at the end of this year, that solar companies said has kept them alive through the recession. The other is an Energy Department loan guarantee program, part of which would end Oct. 1, that has provided nearly \$35 billion in loan guarantees for solar, wind, geothermal and other clean energy projects that have generated more than 68,000 U.S. jobs, according to the department.

Just this year in Nevada, the Energy Department provided a conditional loan guarantee of \$737 million for the Crescent Dunes Solar Energy Project in Tonopah, creating about 5,000 jobs in the state, which has the nation's highest jobless rate. A second loan guarantee of nearly \$46 million was provided for a solar generation facility to be developed northeast of Las Vegas by Fotowatio Renewable Ventures Inc. The project is expected to create about 250 jobs.

Read the whole story

Growing racism toward Indians concerns tribes

By Valerie Taliman, Indian Country

During his six-year term on the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, Chairman Arlan Melendez of the Reno Sparks Indian Colony saw more than his share of racism, discrimination and hate crimes against Native Americans.

But even he was surprised by the vicious attacks by skinheads against one of his tribe's families, Johnny and Lisa Bonta, in Fernley in late May.

"We know from hearings in Montana, New Mexico and South Dakota that hate crimes are continuing to happen against Native Americans, mostly in border towns near our reservations," he said, citing a soon-to-be released report developed by the U.S. Civil Rights Commission that compiled testimony in 2009 about hate crimes from hundreds of Americans Indians.

The report follows up on the 2005 Department of Justice report that showed the overall violent crime rate among American Indians and Alaska Natives was 100 per 1,000 persons, meaning that one out of 10 American Indians has been a victim of violence.

The study also found that "American Indians are more likely than people of other races to experience violence at the hands of someone of a different race," with 70 percent of reported violent attacks committed by non-Indians.

"Nevada was always known as the 'Mississippi of the West' for its rampant racism. Up until the late 1950s, Indians had to be off the streets by sundown or face arrest," said Melendez. "Reno was a very racist place, but over the years it's become more diversified as more Hispanic people moved into the area.

Sadly, that's not the case in many rural communities where there's still a lot of good 'ole boy attitudes."

Melendez said he was shocked and very concerned about the hate crime committed against tribal members, especially since the victims are now being portrayed as the perpetrators, despite evidence to the contrary.

Read the whole story

N. Nevada Indians talk about attack by skinheads

By Valerie Taliman, Indian Country

Johnny and Lisa Bonta, a Native family from the Reno Sparks Indian Colony, became the latest victims of a hate crime on May 24 when they were attacked at a gas station along I-80 in Fernley, a border town between the Fallon and Pyramid Lake Indian reservations.

"I was pumping gas at Quick Stop on our way to Reno to look for another job when these skinheads in a blue car drove by real slow and checked us out. The driver jumped out with a baseball bat, and I asked them 'why you holding a bat?' said Bonta. "He said 'let's do this' and tried to pick a fight. I don't know how to explain what happened—we didn't do anything to them."

Bonta, a Paiute member of the Reno Sparks Indian Colony, tried to avoid the confrontation by telling them he didn't want to fight. He got back in the car, with his son-in-law Shane Murray at the wheel, and they quickly drove away with the

carload of skinheads in close pursuit.

As they approached the freeway ramp, they were cut off as the blue car swerved in front of them, then slammed on the brakes, causing Murray to crash into it. Murray said he recognized one of the attackers as Jacob Cassell, a former classmate and son of retired Lyon County Sheriff officer Jim Cassell.

“They all jumped out of the car with baseball bats, knives and a crowbar, and we knew they were going to hurt us,” said Lisa Bonta, in an interview from Washoe Medical Center, where she was in treatment for seizures she suffers.

Read the whole story

Nevada paves way to get robotic cars on the road

By Sharon Gaudin, Computerworld

It looks like self-driving cars may be on the road sooner than most people had thought – at least in Nevada.

The state passed Bill 511 last month, authorizing executives at the state’s Department of Motor Vehicles to begin coming up with a set of rules of the road for autonomous, or self-driving, vehicles .

This is the first step in what could be a lengthy process in getting autonomous cars, which are designed to use artificial intelligence, computer sensors and GPS instead of human drivers, on the nation’s roads.

But the move must be seen as good news to companies such as

Google and General Motors, along with researchers at institutions such as Stanford, Cornell and Carnegie Mellon University. All of these organizations have been working on autonomous cars.

Just last fall, Google announced that its engineers were working on software for self-driving cars . Google's self-driving car reportedly logged 140,000 miles in California, driving – with a trained driver and software engineer on board – around Lake Tahoe, across the Golden Gate Bridge and along the Pacific Coast Highway.

Read the whole story

Power restored to STPUD, LTCC

Updated July 3 at 7:45am: Power was restored at 11:45pm.

Liberty Energy reported a power outage Saturday night affecting the South Tahoe Public Utility District wastewater treatment plant and Lake Tahoe Community College.

The outage was caused by an overhead conductor failure, according to Liberty Energy officials.

This is the third Liberty Energy outage this week.

STPUD was running on a generator.

– Lake Tahoe New staff report

Woman dies falling from Stateline casino balcony

Investigators are trying to figure out if the death of a Placerville woman at the Horizon casino in Stateline was intentional or accidental.

The body of Loretta Sangara, 68, was found July 1 at 10am. Douglas County sheriff's officials say she fell from a 14th floor balcony.

Deputies are not releasing further details.

The investigation is continuing.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Plastic found in fish could end up in food chain

By Tony Barboza, Los Angeles Times

Southern California researchers found plastic in nearly 1 in 10 small fish collected in the Pacific Ocean in the latest study to call attention to floating marine debris entering the food chain.

The study published this week by scientists at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UC San Diego estimated that fish in the middle depths of the northern Pacific Ocean are ingesting as much as 24,000 tons of plastic each year.

Although the research found a lower percentage of plastic-

fouled fish than previous studies, it is the latest to quantify how many fish are eating marine garbage – most of it confetti-sized flecks of discarded plastic – that has accumulated in vast, slow-moving ocean currents known as gyres.

The results came from a 2009 voyage a group of graduate students made to the so-called Pacific Garbage Patch, an area with a high concentration of fragments of floating garbage about 1,000 miles off the California coast. Researchers cast nets into the water and collected 141 fish, mostly lanternfish measuring just a few inches, and took them to a laboratory in San Diego to dissect.

Scientists found plastic debris in 9.2 percent of their stomachs, much of it broken down into multicolored fragments smaller than a human fingernail. However, they believe the actual proportion of fish that have consumed plastic is significantly higher.

Read the whole story

Airline owner wants to put Lake Tahoe back on flight map

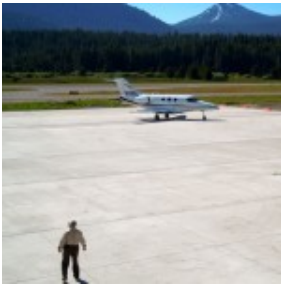
By Kathryn Reed

In less than a year, commercial air service is planned for Lake Tahoe Airport.

Mike Zeid, who runs Tahoe Air Express, resumed business operations at the South Lake Tahoe airport Friday with the first charter flight arriving about 9am. He is in the process

of filling out the paperwork for the FAA and National Transportation Safety Board to be certified to carry more than the current limit of nine passengers. The airport also must work with the feds to make this a reality.

Zeid wants 30-seat planes to fly to the South Shore.



Mike Zeid directs his pilot July 1 where to stop on the tarmac at Lake Tahoe Airport.

Photos/Kathryn Reed

This airport once had commercial service and Zeid was involved then. In the 1970s he operated Ram Airlines, which had flights in and out of South Lake Tahoe.

His business is based in Henderson, where many of the flights are scenic tours to the Grand Canyon out of McCarran International Airport in Las Vegas.

City Manager Tony O'Rourke wants to see how Zeid's service works, saying, if they can't fill a plane with nine seats, a larger plane has little chance for success.

The Beechcraft Premier that landed July 1 on the inaugural flight is sleek and quiet. The six-seater has plenty of legroom. Cargo space is ample for skis and golf clubs.

The glass cockpit is mostly digital, with few gauges that most people would be accustomed to seeing.

New, this plane would cost about \$6 million.

In the fleet are two prop jets that seat nine people, with two more coming. Zeid said, "We'll add as we go."

What needs to be done

"Once they get the certificate upgraded and we bring in 30 passengers, they will redo the terminal building and have space for us," Zeid told *Lake Tahoe News*.

At that time the planes will access the main terminal, which today is mostly used as a pseudo city hall. For now, the charter customers will use the fixed base operations that everyone else uses.

"Before we seriously discuss commercial flights we need improvements (at the airport)," O'Rourke said.

Reinstalling the baggage carousel and ticket counter space are two things on the to-do list.

"If they wanted their passengers to connect to another flight, then we would start looking at other screening and TSA," airport Director Sherry Miller said.

Zeid is talking about having packages for Europeans who would fly into Las Vegas or San Francisco and then be flown to Tahoe via his airline.

Economic factors

O'Rourke has been talking to Stateline gaming interests, who have lost a large share of travelers who can't fly here directly, to gauge their desire in having the city bring in air service. He said they are completely behind this endeavor.

The city is already making money off Tahoe Air Express. The

plane had to pay a landing fee and then the fuel truck came over.

Once people are here, they inevitably have to spend money. Airplanes also gets people off the roads – which on a weekend like this when the South Shore population is likely to swell to 100,000, is a good thing not only for the environmental, but people's mental health.

For now, Zeid will fly essentially anywhere as a charter. Price is dependent on how many people are on the plane.

Once scheduled flights are in place, he expects to fly between Tahoe and John Wayne Airport in Newport Beach, Hollywood/Burbank, and one or more of the three main Bay Area airports.

Having lived here before, Zeid knows how economically depressed the area is. He believes providing an easier way for people to get here is one way of generating income for the town. He plans to provide a discount to locals who want to get out of town for a bit.

Gary Air has been providing charter service since last fall via a smaller aircraft. Trish and Dave Guerrieri had their plane on the tarmac as well Friday. Trish Guerrieri said they have a good working relationship with Zeid and that they are not in direct competition.

Airport Director Miller said about 90 percent of the calls she receives are people in the San Jose area looking for a way to fly to South Lake Tahoe.

Michael Golden, who runs the fixed based operation Mountain West Aviation, said he gets calls weekly if not daily from people in Southern California wanting to fly to South Tahoe.

"I know they will be successful," Golden said of Tahoe Air Express.

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