6 skiers rescued from Heavenly on Sunday

Six skiers were rescued Sunday just outside Heavenly Mountain Resort’s boundaries.

At approximately 1pm, Douglas County Search and Rescue was called out for a lost 16-year-old snowboarder in the Palisades area, off Lower Kingsbury Grade in Stateline. The subject had called 911 via cell phone after unintentionally snowboarding out of bounds at Heavenly when his visibility was reduced due to heavy snowfall. He had become lost and did not know how to extricate himself from the area.

DCSAR responded with 18 members consisting of several snowshoe and snowmobile teams, and a tracked Sno-Cat to search the area where the subject was believed to be lost. After approximately an hour of searching, DCSAR located the lost 16-year-old, as well as four other lost and disoriented skiers/snowboarders. All five subjects were transported to safety.

Later that same day, at approximately 5pm, DCSAR was called out to search for a 19 -ear-old skier trapped on the mountainside near the Heavenly gondola. The skier had intentionally skied out of bounds, and had mistakenly run into a tree well, causing his skis and legs to become entangled in branches, trapping him to the point that he was unable to free himself. The skier called 911 via cell phone to request emergency assistance.

This was a high-priority call for DCSAR due to continued heavy snowfall, a rapidly approaching nightfall, and the potential of having a fallen skier lying wet and injured in the snow throughout the night.

DCSAR quickly remobilized their rescue team and began a new search. DCSAR was able to access the area only by snowshoe.

The teams located the subject, and began extrication and providing emergency medical aid. Due to potential injuries sustained by the subject, DCSAR transported him off the hill in a rescue toboggan. The subject was later transported to Barton Memorial Hospital.

Scattered school closures; brunt of storm still to come

Douglas County School District decided not to take any chances today with chains and snow tires required on Kingsbury Grade. Schools at the lake are closed.

Most highways in and around the Lake Tahoe Basin have some sort of controls.



South Tahoe snowplow crews widen roads March 22 in the Tahoe Island area. Photo/Kathryn Reed

All schools are also closed in the Tahoe Truckee Unified

School District.

The National Weather Service in Reno is calling it a “parade of winter storms through Saturday.”

Although only about an inch of white stuff had fallen in South Lake Tahoe by 7am, this is just the beginning. For today, the NWS says 5-10 inches could fall at the lake, with 10-18 inches above 7,000 feet.

On Thursday afternoon into Friday morning, snow and strong winds are likely, with 2-3 feet above 7,000 feet. At the lake, another 10-18 inches could fall.

Saturday is calling for another foot.

“Anyone planning travel over the Sierra passes this week should prepare for dangerous driving conditions or consider postponing travel. Due to recent heavy snowfall many roads have narrow lanes available for travel resulting in additional delays and possible closures,” the National Weather Service warns. “Anyone planning back country activities should remain aware of the avalanche danger this week.”

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

LTUSD makes administrative changes

Lake Tahoe Unified School District board of trustees shuffled administrative positions Tuesday night.

With the retirement of Human Resources Director Jim Watson at the end of the school year, it means starting this summer

Superintendent Jim Tarwater will be in the district office full time.



Ryan Galles

The district office is also losing the staff development position.

Tarwater, in addition to being superintendent, has been sole principal of the Environmental Magnet School since Beth Delacour became principal of South Tahoe Middle School.

Ryan Galles, principal of Sierra House Elementary, in the fall will divide his time between that school and the magnet school. He will not be receiving any extra pay.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Hwy. 50 bike trail in S. Tahoe moves forward

By Kathryn Reed

It took a bit of arm-twisting, but South Lake Tahoe Councilman Tom Davis finally acquiesced to colleagues' desires to go forward with the bike trail from El Dorado Beach to Ski Run Boulevard.

“I’m frustrated with the process and amount of money,” Davis said at last week’s council meeting.


Tom Davis

The issue has been on the books since at least 2004 when the California Tahoe Conservancy gave the city money to design the project.

Design work has mostly been delayed to coordinate with Caltrans’ Highway 50 improvement. That three-year project is slated to start in May.

About 90 percent of the project has been designed, with the environmental documents expected to be released later this year.

The council, with members Claire Fortier and Bruce Grego absent, agreed to use $157,700 from the Congestion Mitigation Air Quality fund to move the project forward.

Voter approved Measure S money would pay for maintenance of the trail.

In other action:

• Jerry Bindel questioned the city’s desire in its five-year financial plan that was approved March 15 to raise the hotel tax in 2014. Bindel runs Lakeland Village, is a board member of the South Lake Tahoe Lodging Association, Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority and Tourism Improvement District.

Council and staff told him interested parties would be

consulted before voters are asked to increase the tax.

• Jere Copeland, representative for some employee bargaining units, reiterated the need to make sure necessary items are negotiated and don’t become a matter of policy in terms of the fiscal plan and reorganization plan. The latter was also adopted March 15.

Exercise to train crews to fight wildland fire on Hwy. 50

If you notice a large number of public safety units on Spooner Summit on Friday, don’t be alarmed – it’s a drill.

The planned scenario will simulate that a small brush fire has started alongside Highway 50, approximately halfway up the grade to Spooner Summit from the Carson City side. It will be simulated that the fire has occurred during a dry August, and therefore brush fuels will be extremely susceptible to combustion.

Afternoon winds have complicated containment of the fire, causing it to quickly expand. The fire then starts burning downhill toward Clear Creek Road. At a particular point in the scenario the fire will “jump” across the highway, further expanding complexity of the event by simulating requirement for closure of Highway 50 and evacuation of residences in danger.

Douglas County Emergency Management and Sierra Front Wildland Fire Cooperators are putting on the training.

The event is designed to exercise inter-agency involvement during a large-scale manmade or natural disaster utilizing the federally mandated National Incident Management System.

Numerous public safety agencies will participate in the event, including East Fork Fire and Paramedic District, Tahoe-Douglas Fire District, Carson City Fire Department, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Nevada Division of Forestry, Douglas County Sheriff's Office, Nevada Highway Patrol, Nevada Department of Transportation, and numerous public utility companies.

Nevada lawmakers seek to sever ties with TRPA

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Characterizing the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency as a heavy-handed bureaucracy treading on property rights and overly influenced by California, Nevada lawmakers are seeking to pull the state from the organization.



Legislators from Southern Nevada, Washoe County and Douglas County are backing legislation to withdraw Nevada from the Tahoe Regional Planning Compact, ratified by Congress in 1969 as a needed step to protect an endangered Lake Tahoe.

Supporters insist a pullout is needed to allow long-stifled property improvements on Tahoe's Nevada side. Detractors say the bill stands to endanger a carefully engineered approach to regulating land use while protecting the environment.

SB 271 – the seventh attempt to distance Nevada from TRPA – is needed to rescue Tahoe's Nevada side from a stifling regulatory environment largely controlled by California interests, said the bill's primary sponsor, Sen. John Lee, D-North Las Vegas.

"The pendulum has swung so far it won't swing back," Lee said. "We no longer want to be told by California what we can and cannot do. The thrust of this is Nevada just wants to control Nevada."

The Legislation would create a new Nevada-based planning body, with members appointed by the governor, lieutenant governor, state forester, administrator of state lands, and Washoe, Douglas and Carson City counties.

Another member would represent the public.

The panel, Lee said, would likely work in coordination with a similar California-appointed commission but would give Nevada greater control over its own land use.

In its current structure, Lee said, TRPA is "stopping growth, stopping business, stopping everything."

Read the whole story

Skier injured in avalanche at Mt. Rose

By Frank X. Mullen Jr., Reno Gazette-Journal

Early Tuesday, Bryce Henderson and Trent Marietta, two experienced back country skiers from Reno, followed nearly all

the avalanche safety precautions when they set out for an area called Fireplug near the summit of Mt. Rose Highway.

But a wall of snow, 18 inches deep and 200 yards wide, broke loose, swept down the mountain and swallowed Marietta as Henderson watched helplessly.

“We did a pit test to check snow safety and went down separately. The first run was fine,” said Henderson, 22. “Trent went first on the second run. He did three turns and the snow just crowned on him.”

The avalanche caught Marietta in its grasp. He tumbled and rolled inside the snow wave. He tried to swim out of it, Henderson said. The moving shelf of loose snow approached trees. His backpack caught on a branch and when the snow stopped moving Marietta was buried up to his waist.

After checking on his friend, Henderson went for help. Marietta had injuries to his chest and face and was brought by Careflight to Renown Regional Medical Center in Reno, where he remained under treatment late Tuesday. He was able to ski a short distance down to the helicopter after it landed.

Read the whole story

Body of skier found at Sugar Bowl

By Frank X. Mullen, Reno Gazette-Journal

The body of a California skier missing since Monday was found Tuesday on a run at the Sugar Bowl Ski Resort, according to the Placer County Sheriff’s Department.

Deputies and Ski Patrol members had been searching late Monday and early Tuesday for John Hoffman, 58, of Oakland, who was reported missing by his wife at 10:30pm Monday.

Hoffman was an expert skier and often went to Lake Tahoe area ski resorts, deputies said.

Read the whole story

TRPA cancels March 23-24 meetings

Following unexpected challenges to board member attendance as well as the threat of hazardous road conditions, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency is rescheduling the March 23 hearing on Boulder Bay, as well as everything else on the agenda.

Calif. bill would raise fines for cockfighting

By Torey Van Oot, Sacramento Bee

The dozens of people gathered at a south Sacramento residence on Super Bowl Sunday weren’t there to watch the football championship.

They were there, officials say, to watch two roosters battle to the death in an illegal cockfight.

That gathering was broken up by Sacramento County sheriff’s deputies, who arrested six people on animal-cruelty charges. Less than two weeks later, El Dorado County Animal Services euthanized 250 birds uncovered in a bust of what officials say was a large cockfighting operation in Garden Valley.

Animal-protection advocates and law enforcement officials say California’s relatively lax penalties for cockfighting have caused a noticeable uptick in the illegal activity, pointing to eight major busts in February alone.

Thirty-nine states and the District of Columbia classify cockfighting or related crimes as felonies. Unlike in neighbor states Arizona, Nevada and Oregon, some cockfighting violations, including being a spectator at a fight, are misdemeanors here, while participation can be a felony on a second offense.

Read the whole story