Private S. Tahoe plow driver in jail on myriad charges

A private snowplow driver was booked into the South Lake Tahoe jail Sunday night after allegedly taking out a light standard, traffic sign, flipping off police officers, using the loader as a potentially deadly weapon and trying to outrun officers.

Steve Beattie, 55, was clearing snow from an apartment complex on Ski Run Boulevard about 9pm Feb. 20 when neighbors called police, citing erratic driving.

Officers Jake Herminghaus and Ray Poole tried to get Beattie to stop the loader.



Steve Beattie

“The driver set the loader’s bucket to a height of approximately 4 feet. Beattie gave a middle finger gesture to the officers and then intentionally drove directly toward Officer Poole, still seated inside his patrol vehicle,” Sgt. Brian Williams said in a press release. “The bucket was now approximately head level to Officer Poole. Officer Poole quickly backed his patrol vehicle in an attempt to escape the intended impact. Due to a snow berm, Officer Poole was able to back only a few feet. This was just enough so that the loader barely missed an impact with his patrol vehicle.”

Beattie headed west on Terry Lane, but had to stop because it’s a dead-end street. Officers said the suspect remained

uncooperative and took his time getting out of the loader. Officers had to physically restrain Beattie on the ground to take him into custody.

Beattie was arrested on charges of misdemeanor driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs, a felony charge of assault with a deadly weapon (his vehicle) upon a police officer, and a second felony charge of attempting to evade the police with wanton disregard for the safety of others.

Williams said Beattie admitted to using illicit drugs and to conducting snow removal operations without sleep for several consecutive days.

El Dorado County faces $264 mil. in unfunded pension liability

By Loretta Kalb, Sacramento Bee

After four years of budget downsizing and job cuts and an economy only now starting to move, El Dorado County is left with this:

The county's unfunded liability for its CalPERS pensions exceeds $264 million; that's up $172 million in just one 12-month cycle.

"It's a huge problem," county Auditor-Controller Joe Harn said

last week, “and the solution is going to be extremely painful.”

The California Public Employees’ Retirement System is asking local governments throughout the state to contribute significantly more for employee pensions this year, in large part to cover investment losses.

El Dorado County’s budget faces a projected $7 million deficit in 2011-12. Supervisors will look to close that gap in the coming months.

So far, the effects of the budget travails aren’t all that obvious in the county, which has about 148,000 residents.

“We have tried to do our best to minimize the impact to the public,” El Dorado County principal analyst Mike Applegarth said.

Read the whole story

Caltrans working on opening Hwy. 89 around Emerald Bay

By Kathryn Reed

Caltrans crews on Sunday started the multi-day process of clearing Highway 89 around Emerald Bay Road.

People trying to get up that way were being turned around at Cascade Road on the South Shore on Sunday afternoon.

A Caltrans worker who did not give his name said it would take at least two days for the several feet of snow to be removed

from the road. The state workers go from south to north to clear the highway.



Caltrans equipment heads toward Emerald Bay on Feb. 20. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Besides the mounds of snow to contend with, the route is susceptible to avalanches.

Nicole Chapman, owner and operator of Metal Towing and Transportation, was at the turn around.

She said Saturday night she helped with an Office Depot "big-box van" trying to get to the West Shore that ended up off the pavement Chapman said it caused a 14-car chain-reaction accident of fender benders and no serious injuries.

A California Highway Patrol dispatcher said she was not working Saturday night, so had no information and said no one would be available to talk about the pile-up until Tuesday.

Chapman is trying to spread the word to get motorists to be more educated about the Move-Over law, which *Lake Tahoe News* wrote about a year ago.

A colleague of hers died earlier this month. A procession of tow truck drivers made its way down Interstate 80 on Feb. 18

from Sacramento to Roseville following the funeral of Michael Sanders. The 27-year-old worked for Welcome's Auto Body & Towing in South Lake Tahoe before getting a job with Ace In The Hole Towing.

No injuries in train collision on Donner Summit

By News 10

DONNER SUMMIT – Two trains crashed at Donner Summit Friday aboout 3:30pm because of bad weather.

An Amtrak train from Chicago, headed to Emeryville, was hit from behind by a Union Pacific train, said Amtrak's Vernae Graham.

Read the whole story

County residents hit by South Tahoe tax

By Kathryn Reed

People who live in El Dorado County using the 96150 ZIP code could find themselves paying more for vehicles than they have to.

The 2004 voter approved Measure Q only applies to South Lake

Tahoe, but with the same home ZIP code for the South Shore, the tax is getting applied to county residents.

The additional 0.5 percent transaction and use tax is applied to purchases in the city limits. But that's not the only time, and that's why county residents may be getting hit with a tax that isn't applicable to them.

"Measure Q is also collected on purchase transactions made outside the city limits that must be registered such as cars and boats, or where the merchandise sale includes delivery, such as with furniture," explained Christine Vuletich, South Lake Tahoe finance director. "The tax on these types of purchases is allocated back to the city if the purchaser resides in South Lake Tahoe."

A *Lake Tahoe News* reader who lives in El Dorado County had a run-in with the Department of Motor Vehicles regarding a vehicle she was registering. She was able to get a refund when the ZIP code issue came to light, but was told by DMV she "must let them know in advance next time."

South Tahoe collects between $1.8 million and $2 million a year from Measure Q. This money goes into the general fund to pay for police, fire, snow removal, and parks and recreation, Vuletich said.

Measure Q does not have an expiration date.

The California Department of Motor Vehicles contends with many extra fees that have nothing to do with actual vehicle registration. Here are some of those DMV fees.

Food, passenger screening changes coming to Reno-Tahoe airport

By Ray Hagar, Reno Gazette- Journal

The Reno-Tahoe International Airport should have the latest Advanced Imaging Technology (AIT) passenger screening in operation by the summer and most of the food court will be switched to the post-security part of the airport, CEO Krys Bart told legislators Tuesday.

The current food court area will eventually become the new checkpoint screening area, Bart said.

“We will probably have the new AITs in the existing checkpoints by this summer,” said Bart, the CEO and president of the Reno-Tahoe Airport Authority. “But we are now going full bore in the design of the new checkpoint. So the new checkpoint should be done within 24 to 36 months but in the meantime, we are going to get AITs.

Read the whole story

Denver cops intercept pot being hauled from Tahoe

By Jordan Steffen, Denver Post

A New Hampshire man was arrested Wednesday after Wyoming troopers found $234,000 worth of marijuana in his rental

vehicle that might have been headed to Denver.

Just before 10am, Samuel Quinlan, 26, was pulled over for speeding on eastbound Interstate 80, about 13 miles east of Rock Springs, according to a news release from the Wyoming Highway Patrol.

Inconsistencies in Quinlan's story about his travel plans and the documents concerning his rental vehicle raised the trooper's suspicions. The trooper asked for assistance from a drug-detection dog from the Rock Springs Police Department.

Read the whole story

August trial date set for Red Hawk Casino

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

The Indian tribe that owns Shingle Springs' Red Hawk Casino has failed for a third time to kill off a lawsuit filed by a former business partner.

An El Dorado Superior Court judge scheduled an August trial in the lawsuit, filed by Sharp Image Gaming against the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians.

Judge Patrick Riley on Monday denied the tribe's effort to derail the suit, said Sharp Image attorney Matthew Jacobs.

Based in Chatsworth, Sharp Image is seeking more than $100 million from the tribe. The suit says the Miwoks broke a contract establishing Sharp Image as the tribe's exclusive casino partner.

Sharp Image provided financing when the Miwoks opened a small, temporary casino off Highway 50 in the mid-1990s. The facility closed after 10 months, partly over assorted legal issues.

Read the whole story

Snow snarls roads, keeps dumping in Tahoe

Updated Feb. 18 at 9:05am.

By Kathryn Reed

The National Weather Service in Reno was right – it was going to be a storm packed with feet of snow.

According to the agency, here are the storm totals as of 6am Feb. 18:

• Kirkwood – 24-48 in the last 24 hours; 48-52 inches in 48 hours

• Heavenly Valley – 21 inches in 24 hours; 32 inches in 48 hours



Traffic at 4am Feb. 18 right before the

passing lane ends in Twin Bridges. Photo/Rebecca Schwartz

• Homewood – 24-32 inches in 24 hours

• Donner Peak – 22-26 inches in 24 hours

• Reno – 4 inches in 24 hours.

The snow map tells a story of snow totals.

A winter storm warning remains in effect until 9am Saturday. Another 1-2 feet of snow could fall at the lake, with 3 feet on the West Shore. Expect 2-4 feet above 7,000 feet.

Winds will be 50-70mph on the mountain passes and ridges.

All schools in Douglas County are closed, as is Tahoe Truckee Unified and Washoe County School District.

Tahoe Regional Planning Agency offices are closed today. It will reopen Tuesday after the holiday weekend.

Roads are nasty, slick and full of snow. Check the state icons on the home page of *Lake Tahoe News* for road conditions.

Rebecca and Bryan Schwartz emailed *Lake Tahoe News* at 4am saying, “Stuck at Twin Bridges since 10:30pm. Still here at almost 4am. Twin Bridges is now a three-lane highway with all three lanes going one-way into Tahoe with no movement.”

The next email said, “Got home at 5:30. We were welcomed by a 5-foot berm in front of our house and a one lane, barely plowed North Upper Truckee Road.”

The weather map shows a possibility of white stuff through Tuesday. However, by Saturday night the likelihood diminishes

to a 30 percent chance.

El Dorado County releases funds for BlueGo

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County on Thursday wrote a check to Tahoe Transportation District for $119,294.65.

The money had been held per legal counsel after the county backed away from its commitment to transit on the South Shore when the former overseer – South Tahoe Area Transit Authority – filed for bankruptcy.



The county released its two buses back to TTD earlier this year.

The dollars are not out of the county's general fund. It its broken down this way:

• $62,633.33 – California Transit Assistance Funds

• $56,661.32 – Local Transportation Funds.

Both allocations are from Nov. 1, 2010, – after TTD took over – through June 30, 2011.

The county is not giving TTD money for the time STATA was still in charge, which was from July 1-Oct. 31, 2010.

Neither Carl Hasty nor Alfred Knotts, the two paid transportation guys with TTD, returned phone calls Feb. 17.

Despite TTD not having all the former STATA players on board, so the budget is not as flush as had been hoped for, the district has hired a public relations firm to get its message out.

The Feb. 16 press release says in part, “Latest figures indicate an 8 percent passenger increase in core service routes – most related to South Shore, while facing challenges to maintain established budget parameters.”

But the release does not say what the time frame is – such as since TTD took over or from a year ago. Nor does it explain what “core service routes” are. Without a call back from the above TTD personnel, who were listed on the press release as the contact people, the release created more questions than substance.

Nor did the release say anything about the county paying its share.

The TTD board meets again March 11, when more route modifications to BlueGo, the bus system, are expected to be voted on.