A foot of snow possible in Tahoe in the next 24 hours

The National Weather Service has issued a 24-hour winter weather advisory for the Lake Tahoe Basin beginning at 10pm Saturday.

Snow accumulations are predicted to be 10 to 18 inches above 7,000 feet, with 6 to 12 inches at lake level. Highest amounts will occur south of Highway 50.

The agency said travel in the basin and in Alpine County tonight through Monday morning.

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3 stabbed at Stateline after New Year’s Eve party subsided

Ten people were arrested in the downtown casino core area of Stateline on New Year’s Eve. Charges included affray, assault, battery, domestic battery, disorderly conduct, trespassing, minor consuming alcohol and civil protective custody.

Sheriff’s investigators are also investigating a battery with a deadly weapon incident that occurred in the pre-dawn hours on New Year’s Day. The incident involved several male Hispanics who were involved in a brawl outside the casinos in Stateline. During the incident, three of the subjects were stabbed with a knife by one of the other combatants.

Two of the victims were transported to area hospitals for emergency medical care. The third victim refused medical treatment. Names of the involved parties are withheld pending

investigation.

One person was arrested outside the casino core area for DUI.

The Douglas County Sheriff’s Office reports the crowd seemed no larger than in past years.

Highway 50 was closed to vehicle traffic at about 10pm to allow celebrants to flow into the roadway as they celebrated the coming of the New Year. The highway was reopened at approximately 1am after the crowd peacefully moved off the street and back into the casinos or other locales.

The Minden-Gardnerville area reported a similarly quiet evening; with one person arrested for domestic battery and one person arrested for minor consuming alcohol.

Sale of Sierra Pacific Power Co. complete

Sierra Pacific Power Company (aka NV Energy) and Liberty Energy Utilities Co. announced today the completion of the sale of Sierra Pacific’s California electric distribution and generation assets to a subsidiary of Liberty Energy Utilities Co. and Emera Inc. Effective immediately, the customers previously served by Sierra Pacific Power Company, will now be served by the subsidiary, known as Liberty Energy – California Pacific Electric Company.

The sale was originally announced in April 2009 and last month the final state and federal regulatory approvals were granted to complete the transaction.

“We’re proud to have served this area of California for well

over 100 years," Michael Yackira, president and CEO of NV Energy, said in a press release. "Many of our long-time California employees who are experienced utility professionals are staying on with Liberty Energy to provide continuing safe and reliable electric service."

Bob Dodds, president of Liberty energy, in that same release said, "We look forward to providing a seamless transition for all of our customers and continuing to deliver the high level of service they have come to expect. As a company, we are highly focused on safety and reliability and are committed to providing a very positive customer experience well into the future."

The phone number for Liberty Energy is 800.782.2506 or go online.

NHP makes 14 DUI arrests on New Year's Eve

In a 12-hour period between 7pm New Year's Eve until 7am New Years Day, troopers from the Nevada Highway Patrol arrested 14 motorists for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Two DUI arrests were in the Carson City area, two near Fernley, and the remaining 10 were in the greater Reno-Sparks area. One of the alcohol-related arrests involved a motor vehicle collision on Interstate 80 near the Virginia Street interchange about 10:43pm. The injuries sustained in that collision were believed to be minor in nature.

One year ago the DUI arrests for the same 12-hour period were slightly higher at 18.

Several overtime shifts for this weekend's DUI saturation patrols were funded by grants from the Nevada Office of Traffic Safety and the Northern Nevada DUI Task Force.

Missing snowboarder found alive at Heavenly

Updated: 9:35am.

By Kathryn Reed

The snowboarder who went missing at Heavenly Mountain Resort on New Year's Eve was located about 2:30am New Year's Day, according to resort officials.

"He ducked the rope off Canyon chair, which we obviously don't recommend or condone. That is what we have backcountry gates for," Russ Pecoraro, Heavenly spokesman, told *Lake Tahoe News* Saturday morning.

El Dorado County sheriff's search and rescue crews on snowmobiles located the individual. The sheriff's department is the lead agency, not the resort. Law enforcement continues not to return phone calls.

The male, whose age and hometown are unknown, was found in High Meadow curled up in a ball. He was brought to a road where medics from Lake Valley Fire Department assessed him. According to fire officials, the snowboarder refused treatment and did not want to be transported to a hospital.

With snow starting to fall early this morning in the basin and overnight lows in single digits, it's possible this could have been a recovery instead of a rescue.

About 6 inches have fallen at lake level on the South Shore as of 8:30am.

Ski conditions outside designated trails are precarious because of the amount of snow that has fallen this season as well as the temperatures and consistency of the snow.

For those venturing in the backcountry, be sure to check with the Sierra Avalanche Center for current conditions. Today is rated moderate.

With storms coming one right after another, it makes it difficult for rescuers to find a missing person. This is because tracks get covered, conditions prohibit crews from going out and the missing person is not likely to be equipped to cope with such conditions for an extended period of time. Lake Tahoe had its first fatality of the season this week when a snowboarder was found in a tree well at Alpine Meadows.

A winter weather advisory remains in effect until 10 this morning. Snow is expected to taper off this afternoon, with another storm rolling in Sunday.

Fall of high-end vacation club reaches shores of Lake Tahoe

By David Migoya, Denver Post

It was to be a worldwide playground for the middle-class millionaire with nouveau riche vacation getaways for stunningly little outlay.

Denver-based High Country Club and its creator, Christian Kirschner, were tenderfoots in the rising destination- resort industry, a high-flying sector that in 2005 seemingly couldn’t miss.

In the time it operated, the club went from the world’s fastest-growing and one of the most desirable to a debt-strapped shell operating out of a coffee shop.

Existing clubs had focused on the top tier of the economic ladder, individuals whose income started in the high seven figures. Kirschner keyed in on those a few rungs down.

The one-time commercial leasing agent with a killer smile

had tapped into an overlooked client base — budding executives who had it all but didn’t want to spend it all.

Properties in desirable vacation spots were easy to come by, and as the mortgage bubble inflated, seemingly limitless amounts of money were available to buy them.

“He really did have a clever idea and an excellent execution of it,” said William Scherer, a Florida podiatrist who was among the first to join the club and traveled to most of its destinations. “But they got greedy, sloppy and went awry of their business plan.”

While some club members say they got their money’s worth, many others say they didn’t. Lawsuits and interviews paint a picture of Kirschner living as large as the members he tried to sign up, even as the financial markets pivoted against him.

Read the whole story

Skier reported missing at Heavenly

El Dorado County Sheriff's Department search and rescue crews were searching for a missing skier at Heavenly Mountain Resort on New Year's Eve.

Sheriff's officials and ski resort officials did not return calls late Friday. With El Dorado County being the lead agency, with assistance from Douglas County, it means the incident is on the California side of the bi-state resort.

More details will be forthcoming when they are available.

What could hamper rescue operations is the storm that is moving into the Lake Tahoe Basin.

The National Weather Service in Reno has issued a winter weather advisory for the Lake Tahoe Basin from 1-10am New Year's Day. Expect 3-5 inches at lake level, with 4-8 inches above 7,000 feet.

The heaviest amount is expected to come down between 2-7am.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Gaines: Wife may run for Assembly seat

By Susan Ferriss, Sacramento Bee

Roseville Republican Assemblyman Ted Gaines will be giving up his Assembly seat if he wins a special election Tuesday – and

his wife could be a contender to fill that seat, he told *the Bee* on Wednesday.

“She’s contemplating it,” said Gaines, who lives in Roseville and now represents the 4th Assembly District.

Gaines faces Democrat Ken Cooley, the mayor of Rancho Cordova, in a special election to represent the 1st Senate District. The winner will replace the late GOP Sen. Dave Cox.

Read the whole story

Environmentalists dismayed by governor’s corporate turn

By Michael J. Mishak, Los Angeles Times

SACRAMENTO – Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger’s efforts to give a boost to corporate California are colliding with his image as an environmental crusader in his final days in office.

Administration officials say their moves are needed to protect jobs in a fragile economy. But environmentalists are dismayed by what they see as a feverish push to limit restrictions on toxic chemicals in retail goods, ease key air pollution rules and permit the use of a known carcinogen to treat soil in strawberry fields.

The Sierra Club grumbles that the governor’s plan for implementing the state’s landmark global warming law is a giveaway to industry.



Arnold Schwarzenegger

The administration’s maneuvering highlights a tension present at the outset of Schwarzenegger’s tenure: the environmental activist versus the business executive.

Schwarzenegger spokesman Aaron McLear said the governor’s environmental record is indisputable, citing big strides he has made in curbing greenhouse gas emissions under the landmark global warming law, AB 32, signed by Schwarzenegger in 2006.

“This governor has implemented the most historic aggressive environmental regulations in the country and sometimes the world,” McLear said. “It’s just not credible to argue otherwise.”

But activists say they are sorely disappointed by some of the governor’s recent moves.

“I think they’d rather take heat from some environmental groups and some scientists than they would from Dow, DuPont and Exxon Mobil,” said Bill Allayaud, director of government affairs for Environmental Working Group, an advocacy organization focused on toxic chemicals.

Read the whole story

Pensions push taxes higher across the country

By Jeannette Neumann, Wall Street Journal

Cities across the nation are raising property taxes, largely citing rising pension and health-care costs for their employees and retirees.

In Pennsylvania, the township of Upper Moreland is bumping up property taxes for residents by 13.6% in 2011. Next door the city of Philadelphia this year increased the tax 9.9%. In New York, Saratoga Springs will collect 4.4% more in property taxes in 2011; Troy will increase taxes by 1.9%.

Property-tax increases aren't unusual, in part because the taxes are among the main sources of local revenue. But officials say more and larger increases are taking hold. "This year we have seen a dramatic increase in our cities and towns having to increase property taxes" for pensions and other expenses, said Jack Garner, executive director of the Pennsylvania League of Cities and Municipalities.

Local officials and government workers say a confluence of factors is driving the increases, including the need to make up for staggering investment losses from the financial crisis and rising costs as more workers retire. In addition, benefit increases promised in flush times are coming due as revenue flounders, and some cities have skipped payments to their pension funds over the years.

Read the whole story