‘Flushable’ wipes a problem for Tahoe sewers

By Kurt Althof

Although the sewer systems around Lake Tahoe are all carefully engineered and designed to export waste from the Tahoe basin, the complex process can be dramatically affected when certain materials are flushed down the toilet.

These materials include so-called “flushable wipes,” paper towels, cotton swabs, feminine hygiene products, condoms, facial tissues (Kleenex), dental floss, or anything other than toilet paper and human waste.

In fact, toilet paper is the only “product” that is designed to break down quickly and pass harmlessly through the sewer system. The sewer system is not designed to be a garbage disposal. The consequences of using it that way are sometimes harmful, particularly in such an environmentally sensitive area as Lake Tahoe.

There is nothing pleasant about a sewer backup, but a sewer backup in your home is not only stomach

churning, it can also be costly and a significant health concern. If that sewer backup makes its way into Lake Tahoe, or any part of the environment, it creates significant challenges and harm.

Most of the time a sewer “spill” is preventable and caused by the misuse of the sewer system.



Wipes clog sewer systems, even ones that say “flushable” on the container. Photo/TCPUD

The sewer system’s No. 1 enemy is the misnamed “flushable wipe.” Many wipe products are marketed as “flushable,” and although they do go down the toilet, they cause tens of thousands of dollars in damage and numerous sewer back-ups each year. To make matters worse, the concept of flushable wipes has established a perception that wipes in general are flushable and subtly encourages customers to flush any and all wipes.

Although makers of these so called “flushable wipes” contend their products break down appropriately in the sewer system, test after test proves this is not the case.

When you or your neighbors flush non-flushable items, the risk of a sewer backup increases significantly, not only in the lateral that connects your house to the main, but in the main system and in sewer pumps. Regular routine maintenance and inspections of sewer mains are performed throughout the

region, but this cannot catch every problem before it causes a backup and damages homes, businesses, and the environment.

The best approach is to keep it simple: nothing but human waste and toilet paper should go down the toilet. Flushing anything else will damage your household plumbing, the environment, and the wastewater system.

Kurt Althof is the grants and community information administrator for the Tahoe City Public Utility District. This article is republished from the summer 2017 edition of ***Tahoe In Depth****.*

How California's community colleges are changing

By Emily DeRuy, Bay Area News Group

As the jobs that keep California's economy running change at a rapid clip, the workers who fill them are expected to keep pace. That puts enormous pressure on all schools in the state, but especially on the state's community colleges – which help prepare more than 2.1 million students across 113 campuses to enter or move up in the workforce.

In 2013, California's community colleges began restructuring – talking to each other more, scaling up programs in high-demand fields and paring back others, working more closely with companies that want to hire new employees and creating course schedules that let students balance school and jobs. In the next five years, the system is set to spend $1 billion trying to move those changes forward.

Now, a new report from the Institute for the Future, which the system asked to evaluate its work so far, shows the schools are making good progress. But the terrain they're navigating is moving.

Read the whole story

Nevada ramping up apprenticeship programs

By Nicole Raz, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Equipped with new legislation, Nevada is ramping up its workforce training programs.

The Governor's Office of Workforce Innovation aims to boost the number of apprenticeship programs in the state by 10 percent within the next five years.

Nevada is a combined 200,000 jobs short of the national average in five of the state's emerging target industries.

Read the whole story

Linkin Park concert at Harveys canceled

The Linkin Park concert scheduled for Sept. 1 at the Harveys Lake Tahoe Outdoor Arena has been canceled.

The following is a statement from Linkin Park's management: "We are incredibly saddened to hear about the passing of Chester Bennington. The Linkin Park One More Light North American Tour has been canceled and refunds are available at point of purchase. Our thoughts go out to all those affected."

Bennington committed suicide July 20. He was 41.

Ritz-Carlton Lake Tahoe adds lakefront club

By Mark Anderson, Sacramento Business Journal

The Ritz-Carlton Lake Tahoe hotel has opened a luxury perk for guests called the Lake Club on the shore of Lake Tahoe.

The hotel and spa is at the Northstar California Resort, which is mid-mountain at a ski resort in Truckee. The new Lake Club is about 20 minutes away on the lake.

Lake Club adds to the resort's summertime offerings.

Read the whole story

Calif. economy will suffer plenty from climate change

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

Higher crime rates and electric bills. Crops and laborers wilting in the sun. A new study says California's economy is going to lose billions of dollars a year to climate change.

But hey, it will be a picnic compared to states like Florida and Texas.

The groundbreaking study, led by two UC Berkeley scientists, says global warming will punish some areas of the country more severely than others. California will suffer, but not as badly as the national average. The situation will be far worse in Gulf Coast states, which can expect to get ravaged by increasingly frequent hurricanes, and areas of the Deep South and Midwest, where agricultural yields will plummet.

Read the whole story

School districts give revised Nev. star-ratings a failing grade

By Meghin Delaney, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Changes to the state's ranking system for public schools will result in many more low ratings, damaging morale among educators and confusing parents, Nevada's two largest school district say.

"Schools have been working for two years without an updated ranking, now is not the time to change how these rankings are established," Nicole Rourke, the Clark County School District's government affairs director, told the state Board of Education last week at its July meeting.

Rourke was referring to changes made by the state Department of Education to the Nevada School Performance Framework, a rating system that rates schools on a scale of one to five stars, with one star being the lowest.

Read the whole story

Safety a concern at SLT jail, juvi center

By Kathryn Reed

The lack of bullet proof glass in the lobby of the South Lake Tahoe jail as well as in the administrative office of the juvenile treatment center are a concern.

The adult facility had a full body scanner that was inoperable for more than a year. The youth facility doesn't have one.

The lack of bullet proof glass separating visitors and inmates was another red flag.



The culinary program at the

South Lake Tahoe jail received praise. Photos/LTN file

These were some of the findings in the El Dorado County Grand Jury report that was recently released.

The civil grand jury each year looks into a variety of issues that are usually driven by citizen complaints. The jails, though, are always on the inspection list. The grand jury operates July 1-June 30.

While there have been no deaths at either South Lake Tahoe facility since the last inspection, two adult inmates tried to commit suicide and one juvenile.

“Ninety percent of inmates currently incarcerated at the SLT Jail are housed on felony charges. Twenty-five percent are there as a result of Assembly Bill 109 which is the Public Safety Realignment Bill. This resulted in some inmates who had been incarcerated within California’s State Prison system serving their time in county jails throughout the state,” the report says. “Inmates received under AB109 pose a hardship for the general population of the jail. These inmates are often hardened offenders, gang members, and/or more violent, and are housed in county jail for longer than the 12-month maximum prior to AB109. Many inmates contained within the jail system have mental health problems but they are not segregated unless a safety and/or behavioral issue arises.”

The jail continues to have a difficult time retaining people, with 10 open positions.

Another safety concern is that the cameras in the gym area don’t work. The South Tahoe jail only has an indoor gym because of weather. Inmates may exercise for one hour at a time, two to three times week.

At the juvenile center there is an indoor exercise room, but

because it doesn’t have heat or insulation it cannot be used year-round. An outdoor facility is also available.

The adult facility is aging and looks like it even though the maintenance log doesn’t capture all the needs, according to the grand jury.

While the culinary program received high praise, that is the lone vocational offering.

“Lack of vocational programs does not serve the rehabilitation needs of the inmates. Availability of additional vocational training programs could lessen the chances that an inmate will re-offend upon release,” the report says.

The sheriff and county as a whole have until Aug. 15 to respond in writing.

It was noted by this grand jury that Sheriff John D’Agostini never responded to the 2015-16 grand jury report.

Committee votes to allow destruction of wild horses

By Tom McGhee, Denver Post

A Congressional committee vote on Tuesday amounts to a death warrant for the mustangs and wild burros that roam America’s range land, an advocate for the animals said.

The House Appropriations Committee voted to reverse a ban on destroying healthy wild horses and burros that was contained in a spending bill signed into law by President Trump in early May.

“Let’s be clear: House Appropriations Committee members just signed a death warrant for America’s mustangs and it will lead to the wholesale destruction of these irreplaceable national treasures,” said Suzanne Roy, director of the American Wild Horse Campaign in a news release.

Read the whole story

Linkin Park lead singer commits suicide

By Joe Coscarelli, New York Times

Chester Bennington, the ferocious lead singer for the platinum-selling hard rock band Linkin Park, was found dead in his home near Los Angeles on Thursday. He was 41.

Brian Elias, the chief of operations for the Los Angeles County coroner’s office, confirmed the death, in Palos Verdes Estates, and said it was being investigated as a possible suicide after law enforcement authorities responded to a call shortly after 9am.

Bennington, who was known for his piercing scream and free-flowing anguish, released seven albums with Linkin Park. The most recent, “One More Light,” arrived in May and debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard album chart. The band was scheduled to start a tour with a concert on July 27 in Mansfield, Mass.

Linkin Park was supposed to start its tour in a week, with a stop scheduled for Sept. 1 at Harveys in Lake Tahoe.

Read the whole story