

4-car wreck injures 8 on Hwy. 88

Eight people were injured in a four-car accident on Highway 88 on Valentine's Day.

It started when Maria Gonzalez, 23, of San Jose was headed west just east of the Kirkwood Inn. Her vehicle, for unknown reasons, left the highway and hit a snowbank on the south side. She had five passengers in her vehicle.

Karen Carver, 58, of Chico was not able to avoid hitting Gonzalez's vehicle. Both were then blocking the road.

To avoid the wreckage Christian Nelson, 19, of Elko went into the snowbank.

John Steffens Jr., 70, of Reno was unable to avoid Nelson's vehicle, and hit it.

A 4-year-old in the first vehicle was airlifted to Renown Medical Center in Reno with major injuries. Seven others went to Barton Memorial Hospital with either minor or moderate injuries.

The 1pm Feb. 14 accident is under investigation.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

South Shore survives Hwy. 50

road closures

By Kathryn Reed

It isn't until the roads close that residents and business in Tahoe realize how isolated it can be living and working here.

Fortunately, Highway 50 on the California and Nevada side were not closed for very long. Both reopened on Feb. 14. But there is a lot of winter left and no guarantee the roads won't be closed again this winter or into spring, especially with the slopes so saturated and rain in the immediate forecast.

Strawberry Lodge in the American River Canyon had to close on Monday after the last guest checked out because of the road closure.

Tom Davis was mayor of South Lake Tahoe in 1997 when Highway 50 closed that January. He didn't accept Caltrans' declaration the road would be off-limits for eight to 12 months. With Duane Wallace, who was then executive director of the South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce, the two worked with then Assemblyman Tim Leslie to persuade Gov. Pete Wilson to put pressure on Caltrans to open it sooner. It worked.

California's highway storm damage this winter totals \$401 million at 190 locations.

For businesses that have been here through the more serious slides of 1982 and 1997, when Highway 50 in California was closed for 75 and 27 days, respectively, they have protocols in place to contend with the adverse conditions.

"In anticipation of the blizzards and floods, Barton Health ordered additional and back-up supplies. Patient care and hospital operations were not impacted," Barton spokeswoman Molly Coolidge told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Emergency vehicles were able to get through on the Nevada side

even though passenger vehicles could not. Most patients are transferred to Nevada facilities.

“At times, when routes were closed, patients were transported using the closest alternate route and, as appropriate, transported by air,” Coolidge said.

Grass Roots in South Lake Tahoe had an issue with a produce delivery that arrived hours after normal, but otherwise was faring OK. The small market gets deliveries four days a week.

“Right now I don’t feel like we are out of a lot of things. It was synergistic with not a lot of people coming to Tahoe so we didn’t run out of a lot of stuff,” Stephanie Hrbacek, Grass Roots’ beer and wine buyer, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Raley’s, which has two stores in South Lake Tahoe, has been using alternative routes to bring goods to the South Shore, relying on the California Highway Patrol for the most up-to-date information.

“We are delivering less because there is less tourism,” Raley’s spokeswoman Chelsea Minor told *Lake Tahoe News*. She said the goal is to make sure residents have enough food.

Safeway would not comment, nor would their corporate offices.

Conditions never got to the point where businesses in town needed to shutdown, unless it was for storm damage.

During the previous road closures there were times when hotels were not able to provide clean linens because laundry service is out of town and it wasn’t happening. People back then lost their jobs, store shelves were empty. For the 1997 closure it was estimated that the impact was a \$1 million per day loss to the South Shore economy.

This week residents were talking about filling up on gas just in case trucks could not make it to the South Shore.

One item that is still hard to find in the area is a sump pump. Those were flying off shelves earlier this month.

Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority took the approach that it was still possible to get here, it was just going to be more scenic via Highway 88. With Emerald Bay reopening, it meant Interstate 80 traffic could easily get down here. With this being a three-day weekend, it was even more critical to get the roads open.

The U.S. Postal Service was using Kingsbury Grade to service the post offices on the South Shore in California and Nevada. Mail that goes to and from this area goes through Reno. However, many people who use the Glenbrook Post Office didn't receive mail for about a week or took about a three-hour drive to retrieve it.

"In the spirit of Snowshoe Thompson, there are no delays," David Rupert with the USPS told *Lake Tahoe News*. "We continue to encourage residents to keep their mailboxes clear so we can continue to deliver the mail in a manner that is safe for our employees."

For those who went to Sierra-at-Tahoe last weekend it was glorious. A winter weekend without crowds, awesome snow and sunshine. The resort coffers were not as flush, though, because so many people come up from the Sacramento area and they couldn't do so via the most direct route.

"This year, the few days Highway 50 has been closed, we relinquish our position as best location to Sacramento and the Bay Area. Which is tough for our guests, especially when conditions are incredible with all the new snow," Thea Hardy, Sierra spokeswoman, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

During these few dry days it has meant cleanup time as water has been receding. South Lake Tahoe crews this week have been: Cleaning up streets as needed, filling potholes, inspecting basins, rivers, creeks for obstructions, repairing and

prepping heavy equipment in preparation, clearing drainage areas, inspecting and checking drainage pump systems at Colorado Court and Bijou area, and documenting issues.

Staff will be before the South Lake Tahoe City Council in March to address overtime issues. Public works crews have been working almost without a break since the start of the year.

Now it will be up to Mother Nature to determine if the roads stay open and commerce continues a normal, after all she always has the last word.

Nev. seeks storm relief from Washington, D.C.

Nevada has asked the federal government for disaster relief from the January storms that caused widespread flooding.

The affected regions include Douglas, Washoe, Carson City, Lyon, and Storey counties, as well the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe and Washoe Tribe.

The damage from the storms is estimated to be about \$15 million.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Bill would prevent sanctuary cities in Nevada

By Colton Lochhead, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Senate Minority Leader Michael Roberson wants to prevent any city or county in Nevada from becoming a sanctuary city for undocumented immigrants.

In response to recent comments from a Clark County commissioner, Roberson, R-Henderson, plans introduced a bill Monday aimed at blocking local municipalities from being declared as sanctuary cities and counties. The law would allow the state to withhold funding to jurisdictions that refuse to cooperate with federal immigration authorities.

Sanctuary jurisdictions typically refuse to cooperate with federal immigration enforcement by not detaining undocumented immigrants for federal agents when those agents don't have a warrant.

Read the whole story

Donner Lake level a concern for property owners

Truckee officials are warning Donner Lake property owners of potential flooding.

While there is currently no risk of infrastructure failure, lake levels rising above the high water mark could result in low level flooding of some properties around the lake front.

The Truckee River and streams remain swollen and the Donner Lake water level remains high as a result of the unprecedented amount of rain and snow.

Even though the lake level has stabilized and is dropping, that could change with the next set of storms that will be arriving this week.

Lake front residents are encouraged to survey their property and make adjustments as needed.

U.S. dams aging; many don't have emergency plans

By Benjamin Spillman, Tracy Loew and Jill Castellano, USA Today

As the nation's 84,000 dams continue to age, a growing number of people downstream of these structures are at risk, according to experts and data of the nation's dams.

It's a problem highlighted this week as nearly 200,000 people evacuated the area near Oroville Dam, which suffered a potential failure of its emergency spillway.

The *USA Today* Network reviewed the latest data in the National Inventory of Dams, which is compiled by the Army Corps of Engineers and shows 15,498 dams across the United States are characterized as high hazard, meaning the loss of at least one human life is likely if the dam were to fail.

The average age of the 84,000 dams in the country is 52 years old, according to a 2013 report by the American Society of Civil Engineers.

Read the whole story

Help possible for damaged Truckee homes, businesses

Truckee residents or business owners who have substantial uninsured damage from the Jan. 7-12 or Feb. 6-11 storms may be able to get some relief.

Truckee declared a state of emergency for the January storm system and anticipates declaring a second state of emergency for the February storms. Based on damages to residences and businesses that occurred during these two emergency declaration periods, Nevada County may be eligible for a U.S. Small Business Administration emergency declaration. An emergency declaration by the SBA would enable individuals and businesses to apply for SBA's low interest disaster loan program.

Truckee and Nevada County Office of Emergency Services are reaching out to potentially-impacted residents and businesses to determine if the county has enough impacted parties for SBA eligibility.

Substantial economic injury means the business is unable to meet its obligations and to pay its ordinary and necessary operating expenses.

For more information, contact the town by March 3 at 530.582.2914 or hhobbs@townoftruckee.com.

Hwy. 50 open in Nevada and California



Minor slides on Highway 50 didn't stop traffic early Feb. 10.
Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

Update Feb. 15, 6:25am:

By Kathryn Reed

Highway 50 on the Nevada and California sides is open.

One lane of Highway 50 in each direction is open on the Nevada side, allowing traffic to flow between the South Shore and Carson City.

The Nevada route had been closed since Feb. 8 because SUV-

sized boulders had fallen onto the road and others were resting precariously on the hillside.

According to the Nevada Department of transportation, "Travel speeds are reduced to 35 mph. The traffic shifts are anticipated to be semi-permanent until a full-scale improvement project to stabilize and reinforce the roadside slope where the slides occurred is constructed."

Crews put two rows of concrete rail on the eastbound side in an attempt to be a barrier if more rocks come cascading down.

While this current road closure in California has been an inconvenience, it is nothing compared to 1982 and 1997. In 1982, Highway 50 was closed for 75 days and was off-limits for 27 days in 1997.

"We are working on the cleanup. Most areas are buttoned up," Bob Ericksen, Caltrans engineer, told *Lake Tahoe News* on Tuesday afternoon. The road opened late Tuesday night.

The highway had been closed since Friday when several sizable slides crossed all lanes of traffic. Most have been in the Whitehall, Kyburz areas. The most problematic one involves sand coming down from the hillside.

"It's basically a giant sand dune in the mountains," Ericksen said. It has been pushed back as far as possible and stabilized to the point crews believe it's safe for traffic to resume.

The sand kept coming down as crews were clearing the area. Ericksen said 14,000 cubic yards of debris have been hauled away in the last few days. In 1997, 80,000 cubic yards were removed.

"Mud has reached the river, but not enough to cause any blockage. The water is running with such force there is very little possibility of blockage without a massive slide like

what happened in 1982 and 1997,” Ericksen said.

Sixty people had been working to clear the area, with work occurring 24/7. It has involved five large excavators, four loaders, 25 semi-trucks, one paver, one grinder and other support equipment.

Ericksen, though, is concerned that another storm is just hours away.

“More rain is going to be a challenge up here. We are staging equipment up and down 50 in case we have more problems,” Ericksen said.

NDOT is worried about the oncoming storm systems as well.

From the National Weather Service in Reno: “A series of weak to moderate storms is expected to impact the region beginning Thursday and potentially lasting through the middle of next week. Current projections don’t indicate any strong storms. However, with very wet antecedent conditions in lower elevations and exceptionally deep snowpack at higher elevations, even small amounts of precipitation could create renewed flooding concerns.”

The rain in the basin is supposed to start Wednesday night and turn to snow by Thursday night.

Road closures can happen at any time. It is important to check the respective state departments of transportation websites for current info, or click on the state icons on the home page of *Lake Tahoe News*, or call 511 in each state for road info.

Water level of Lake Tahoe continues to rise

As of Monday, Lake Tahoe is more than 3 feet above its natural rim of 6,223 feet.

The National Weather Service in Reno said on Feb. 13 the lake is at 6,226.37 feet at the Fanny Bridge in Tahoe City.

The lake is $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet higher now compared to Oct. 1. That equates to more than 138 billion gallons of water having come via rain, snow or runoff.

With more storms coming this week, it's likely to be even higher.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

CalPERS asset allocation less than projected

By Robin Respaut, Reuters

California Public Employees' Retirement System expects a 5.8 percent annual investment return under its new portfolio asset allocation, significantly lower than the fund's assumed rate of return of 7 percent by 2020.

The reduced expectation, disclosed late Monday in documents from the largest U.S. public pension fund, is based on a lower-risk, lower-return asset allocation adopted by CalPERS in September and announced in December.

CalPERS' caution mirrors outlooks from public pension funds across the United States as they try to grapple with investment forecasts of slow market growth over the next decade.

[Read the whole story](#)