

Hwy. 50 between South Shore-Carson closed



Highway 50 in Douglas County at the lake is closed.
Photo/LTN

Updated 7:10pm

By Kathryn Reed

Access to Carson City from the South Shore via Spooner Summit is off-limits for an indeterminate amount of time because boulders keep falling onto Highway 50.

Wednesday marked the third consecutive day boulders as large as a vehicle have come loose from the hillside.

Nevada Department of Transportation officials are worried about yet another boulder that looks like it could shake loose at any moment. It is more round and therefore could roll easier.

"We don't want it to roll onto traffic or the houses below," Meg Ragonese with NDOT told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Crews will not be able to stabilize the hillside until it dries out a bit. Rain is in the forecast through Friday. The other option to try is to dislodge the rock before Mother Nature does.

A concrete barrier has been placed in the Logan Creek Drive area to help prevent more rocks from reaching the road.

With safety being NDOT's priority, though, no vehicles are getting from the South Shore to Carson City for the foreseeable future.



Tahoe storm issues:

- Highway 50 between Meyers and Placerville has issues with mudslides; traffic controls are in place
- In South Lake Tahoe: Bill Avenue, Shirley Avenue and Bijou Creek are currently closed due to flooding. Lake Tahoe Boulevard between Glorene and Viking Way have been reduced to one travel lane due to flooding.
- Snow has taken out part of the roof at the California

Highway Patrol office in Meyers. The parking lot looks more like a pond.

- Caltrans says Highway 89 around Emerald Bay will remain closed through these storms because of instability in the slide area.

- An avalanche on Feb. 7 near Stanford Sierra Camp at Fallen Leaf Lake took out the power for a few hours, but did not damage any buildings.

- Lake Tahoe Boulevard at Sawmill Road is closed.

- For current highway information, click on the state icons on the home page of *Lake Tahoe News*.

A flood watch is in effect for the Lake Tahoe Basin from 10am Feb. 9 to 4am Feb. 10.

From the National Weather Service in Reno, "Occasional light rain will continue today with streams running high. Another period of heavy rain is expected Thursday afternoon and Thursday night with even higher flows and more flooding possible. Areas where snow has clogged drainage paths may remain flooded for longer periods of time. Rock and mudslides may also impact travel."

Douglas County is urging residents to prepare for flooding and high winds. Residents can expect intermittent road closures due to flooding. Douglas County has sandbags available at nine

locations, including Zephyr Cove Park.

Truckee residents near the southwest corner of the Donner Lake area along the streets of Washoe Circle, Conifer Drive, and parts of South Shore Drive in the known avalanche areas are advised the potential avalanche danger in these areas is currently high and this danger is likely to persist for several days.

Widespread flooding in Truckee is not expected to occur with this storm, however minor flooding along drainage ditches and small streams is possible.

Homewood Mountain Resort issued this statement, "Due to inclement weather we will be suspending operations for the 8th." Limited trails are open at Tahoe Donner Cross Country. Check with the ski resort before going because the weather is likely to impact operations at all of them.

There is one-way traffic control on Highway 50 at the Silverfork Cafe area in El Dorado County due to drain clearing work. Caltrans has not estimate when it will be cleared.

Current highway conditions are available by clicking on the state icons on the home page of *Lake Tahoe News*.

The sun should come out again on Saturday.

Bill would remove Nev. from 9th Circuit Court

By Debra J. Saunders, Las Vegas Review-Journal

WASHINGTON — How big is the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals?

The San-Francisco-based circuit is so big that it represents nine states, including Nevada, 20 percent of the U.S. population and 40 percent of the nation's land mass. It's so big that Congress has looked at bills to split the circuit since 1941, and it's so big that none of those measures have succeeded.

This year, however, Sens. Jeff Flake and John McCain, both R-Ariz., see the possibility of success. They've introduced legislation to create a new 12th Circuit by peeling away six states – Nevada, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Arizona and Alaska.

The slimmed-down 9th Circuit would continue to hear appeals from California, Oregon and Hawaii, as well as Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands.

Read the whole story

Calif. not 'out of control,' leaders tell Trump

By Sharon Bernstein, Reuters

California leaders pushed back on Monday against President Trump's claim that the state is "out of control," pointing to its balanced budget and high jobs numbers in the latest dustup between the populist Republican and the progressive state.

The state's top Democrats called Trump cruel and his proposals unconstitutional after the businessman-turned-politician threatened to withhold federal funding from the most populous U.S. state if lawmakers passed a so-called sanctuary bill

aimed at protecting undocumented immigrants.

“President Trump’s threat to weaponize federal funding is not only unconstitutional but emblematic of the cruelty he seeks to impose on our most vulnerable communities,” state Senate Pro Tem Kevin de Leon, a Democrat from Los Angeles, said in a statement on Monday.

Read the whole story

How hard has Airbnb hit hotels?

By Chabeli Herrera, Miami Herald

Is Airbnb a significant threat to the hotel industry? For the past few years, that question has been a hot topic for hospitality associations, city councils, hoteliers and tourism promoters across the globe.

Now industry-watchers are getting a window into Airbnb’s place in the business.

This month data and analytics firm STR, the leading tracker of hotel performance, released the first independent comparison of Airbnb data and hotel industry performance.

In an analysis that compared daily data directly from Airbnb against STR’s own hospitality data over a two-and-a-half-year period, STR confirmed what most suspected: that Airbnb is hitting the industry in its bottom line. But, the study concludes, it is still too early to determine how large that impact may be.

[Read the whole story](#)

Rain on snow causing flooding in Tahoe basin



Water is across all lanes of Pomo Street in the Meyers area on Feb. 7. Photo/CHP

Updated 4:18pm:

By Lake Tahoe News

Continued rain on snow is bringing the threat of flooding to areas in the Tahoe-Truckee region.

For Tuesday there are flood, high wind and avalanche warnings

in effect. A flood watch is in effect until 4am Feb. 8 for South Lake Tahoe, Truckee, Stateline, Incline Village, Bridgeport and Mammoth Lakes.

“A moderate to strong atmospheric river will bring heavy rain with high snow levels today. This heavy rain and snow melt will contribute to increasing flows on rivers and streams with an enhanced flooding potential through late tonight,” the National Weather Service in Reno warns.

The wind warning is in effect through 10pm Feb. 7 for the Tahoe basin, with south to southwest winds at 20-35 mph, gusts up to 50 mph, and ridge gusts hitting 130 mph.

Storms are expected to continue through the week before a break in storms this weekend, according to meteorologists.



A backyard in the state street are of South Lake Tahoe is flooded Feb. 7 after a sump pump distributed water from

under a house to this area. Photo/LTN

As of 9am Feb. 7 here are the 24-hour rain and snow totals provided from the National Weather Service in Reno:

- South Lake Tahoe – 2.03 inches
- Truckee airport – 1.81
- Ward Creek (Tahoe City) – 4.9
- Heavenly – 12
- Mount Rose – 20
- Homewood – 19.

Roads in the state streets area, Julie Lane, Tahoe Sierra and other parts of South Lake Tahoe have standing water of several inches as do other roads around the basin.

“We are cutting and moving berms to allow runoff as we can. The ground is so saturated though,” Jim Marino, South Lake Tahoe public works director, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Pomo Street in the Meyers area is flooded.

Two large vehicle-sized boulders fell onto Highway 50 on Tuesday in the Logan Creek area. These are in addition to the event on Monday. No injuries were reported and no vehicles damaged.

Both directions of traffic are open, but lanes are reduced to a single lane in each direction.

“The heavy precipitation that the region continues to see brings with it an increased chance of rockslides, mudslides and avalanches. We remind motorists to drive safely and always watch the road ahead,” Meg Ragonese with the Nevada Department of Transportation told *Lake Tahoe News*.

El Dorado County has closed both directions of Mt. Aukum Road indefinitely due to multiple sinkholes. The road is closed at the north end at the North Fork of the Cosumnes River Bridge and at the south end at Happy Valley Road, just north of Grizzly Flat Road.

Highway 50 on Tuesday morning had one-way traffic control from two miles east of Ice House Road to approximately five miles east of Ice House Road because of a mudslide.

Snow is falling at higher elevations, requiring chain controls in some locations. Mount Rose Highway has been closed for hours because of multiple spinouts.

For updated state highway conditions, click on the state icons on the home page of *Lake Tahoe News*.

Nevada Highway Patrol reported Tuesday morning that flooding closed the Carson Street southbound ramp on Highway 50.

Douglas County on Feb. 6 issued a flood warning.

Sand bags are available at Zephyr Cove Park. They are also available at all North Tahoe Fire Protection District stations, Lake Valley fire station in Meyers, and on Rufus Allen Boulevard in South Lake Tahoe.

Equipment failure has 273 NV Energy customers in the Incline Village area without power.

Deceased in Placer officer

involved shooting ID'd

A Colorado man has been identified as the suspect who was killed last week by a Placer County sheriff's deputy after he held a hostage at gunpoint.

Jose Gonzales Lera, 27, of Lakewood, Colo., was killed Feb. 3 near Squaw Valley. He led deputies and California Highway Patrol officers on a chase on the North Shore. They then put down spikes on Highway 89 to stop him.

Lera got out of his vehicle with a gun pointed at his female passenger and then pointed it at officers. A deputy then fatally shot him.

The name of the officer involved in the shooting has not been released.

The investigation is ongoing.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Dissecting wage gap in Nev. and elsewhere

By Julie Ann Formoso, Las Vegas Sun

Seventy-nine cents to the dollar. You've probably heard that statistic on the gender pay gap, a longtime wedge issue and soapbox topic for politicians, feminists and celebrities.

Some say the gap – a simple Census Bureau ratio of the difference in median earnings – is a myth, or at least

misleading. The *Washington Post*'s Fact Checker emphasizes the significant effect of life choices tied to gender, and the fact that the gap narrows going from median to weekly wages, or that women on average have less work experience than men and favor flexible hours over higher pay. So, while public figures and pundits on both sides of the issue make definitive pronouncements about what's true, economic experts continue to examine questions of gender circumstance as well as gender bias.

Compared with the 79-cent national figure, Nevada looks progressive. With women making about 85 cents for every dollar earned by men, the state is among those with the narrowest gaps (alongside New York, Maryland and Hawaii), according to a 2016 report by the U.S. Joint Economic Committee.

Numbers from the Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation align with the wage gap at its widest among professionals and utility workers, though women do earn more than their male counterparts in wholesale trade.

[Read the whole story](#)

Future of USFS, BLM law enforcement threatened

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Federal law enforcement agents who combat illegal dumping, conduct wildland fire investigations and eradicate environmentally damaging illicit marijuana growing operations would lose their jobs under a proposal by seven western lawmakers.

A bill by Rep. Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah, seeks to eliminate the law enforcement branches of the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management.

The bill, which includes Rep. Mark Amodei, R-Nev., among co-sponsors, would shift their duties to sheriff's departments which would receive block grants to pay for the extra work. Lawmakers have introduced similar measures in past years, to no avail.

[Read the whole story](#)

Mudslide on Hwy. 50 in Nev. hampers traffic



A boulder the size of a car slid onto Highway 50 Feb. 6 in Nevada. Photo/LTN

Updated at 2:09pm:

From NDOT: All lanes of Highway 50 are anticipated to reopen this afternoon, but minor lane closures and travel delays are to be expected as final roadway repairs are made over the coming days.

—

Mud and rock slides have closed one east bound lane of Highway 50 in the Logan Creek area.

Nevada Department of Transportation officials are on scene trying to clear the slide that was reported about 8am Feb. 6.

Local road contractors have been contacted in order to use their heavy equipment to remove the boulder

"We had rock and snowfall come down on the slow lane of eastbound of U.S. 50 near Glenbrook," Meg Ragonese with NDOT told *Lake Tahoe News*. "That covered pretty much the entire slow lane of U.S. 50. Subsequently a large vehicle-size boulder also fell onto that same travel lane."

No vehicles were damage and there were no injuries.

Neither NDOT nor the Nevada Highway Patrol have an estimate when traffic will be flowing freely.

Crews will remove the debris. Then they will assess if the mountainside needs to be shored up in some manner.

The majority of the roadside slopes in the Glenbrook area have already been stabilized with rockfall netting or terraced slopes or have barrier rail/wall built at the bottom to contain and collect rockfall.

"With traffic safety as top priority, NDOT has dedicated approximately \$15 million to enhancing traffic safety by stabilizing roadside slopes in U.S. 50 at Tahoe," Ragonese

said.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

South Lake may end retiree health care benefits

By Kathryn Reed

Health care benefits for former and current South Lake Tahoe employees may soon look dramatically different.

South Lake Tahoe is about to start negotiations with its six labor unions. Health care will be one of the main subjects. This affects retirees because they get whatever their respective labor group agrees to. Through the years everyone has endured changes in premiums, deductibles and coverage.

The skyrocketing price of health care is making it almost impossible for public and private sector employers to offer a reasonable plan. South Lake Tahoe is trying to be creative with how it does business, with the desire to be equitable to current workers, retirees and taxpayers.

“It is very chaotic in the health care industry. The only way employers can manage those costs is with the continuation of cuts,” City Manager Nancy Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Salaries have not kept up with health care for anyone in this country.”

The premium for the city ‘s medical plan is \$556.07 per month for retiree only coverage, \$1,112.14 for retiree plus one, and \$1,573.68 per month for family coverage. This is for those not on Medicare.

On Tuesday the City Council will be presented with an option to revamp retiree health coverage. The approximately 150 retirees, as well as those whose dependents qualify for coverage, may be given the opportunity for a one-time buyout.

Staff is proposing using the \$6.5 million in the Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) trust fund to pay the retirees. The amount each person would receive depends on years of service, whether they are on Medicare and other criteria. The average compensation would be \$68,000 for those who are not on Medicare, and \$32,000 for those in the Medicare group.

The OPEB account was created in fiscal year 2008 by then City Manager David Jinkens and the council at the time as a way to begin dealing with the city's \$42 million unfunded liability for retiree health care. That obligation ballooned to \$55 million at its highest point. The amount the city contributes to OPEB fluctuates each fiscal year, with \$250,000 allocated for 2016-17. During part of the recession zero dollars were earmarked for OPEB.

A step toward curtailing these defined benefits took effect Jan. 1, 2008, with the mandate that no new hires would be eligible for health care upon retirement.

In 2014, the council approved City Manager Kerry's plan to radically change health care. The main outcome was that all the employee groups agreed to give up their retiree health care effective Oct. 1, 2014. Some opted to retire before that date.

These changes brought the unfunded liability to about \$20 million.

In December 2015 South Lake Tahoe was sued by a group calling themselves the South Lake Tahoe Retirees Association. **Last August** a judge said the group will not receive monetary compensation.

The case is still active. The proposal before council on Feb. 7 is not expected to impact that lawsuit.

Kerry's rationale for the lump sum is that it provides more security for the retirees than what they have today. Today they are at the whim of what their old bargaining unit decides. Retirees have no voice at the negotiating table. If the city and labor groups agreed to do away with health care coverage, the retirees would have nothing. Or a plan could become cost prohibitive for a retiree. The point is they have no guarantee what their health coverage will be from contract to contract.

The lump sum being proposed would go into a health savings account. This way the individuals would not be subjected to paying income tax.

The ultimate long-term savings to the city will be determined after it is known how many retirees decide to take the offer – assuming the council on Tuesday approves the plan. The retirees would have until May 31 to make a decision. They would then be on their own to come up with health care coverage once all the paperwork is processed.