

Calif. schools chief urges districts to become 'safe havens'

By Loretta Kalb, Sacramento Bee

California's education chief has called on districts throughout the state to declare schools as safe havens against deportation and offered the Sacramento City Unified School District as a model.

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson urged educators serving about 6.2 million students in California to take action, citing rising reports of bullying, harassment, and intimidation of K-12 students. The recommendation was distributed this week to county and school district superintendents, charter school administrators, and principals.

Torlakson said that after the November presidential election, families face "anxiety and in many cases outright fear. We want to use this as an opportunity to reassure parents that, regardless of immigration status, schools are welcoming places."

[Read the whole story](#)

Kingsbury Grade fixed and

open

Kingsbury Grade is open.

In December, a sinkhole formed where a drainage pipe crosses underneath the road at mile marker 4.3, approximately 10 miles up from Foothill Road. The road was temporarily repaired and reopened before recent flooding caused more extensive erosion to the road.

Q&D Construction worked 14-hour days between storms. They excavated approximately 150 feet across and 50 feet below the road surface to completely remove and replace the eroded drainage pipe, and then rebuilt and repaved the roadway.

As weather warms up and dries out in future months, additional drainage improvements may be needed along the same section of road.

Contract approved for body cameras for NHP

By Sean Whaley, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Nevada Highway Patrol troopers soon will wear body cameras to record their interactions with the public with the approval of a \$1.25 million five-year contract to purchase and operate the devices for its uniformed officers.

The Board of Examiners, including Gov. Brian Sandoval, approved the contract between the state Department of Public Safety and TASER International. The cameras cost \$1,414 each.

The board was told the cameras should be fully operational on all troopers by the summer. About 600 cameras will be provided as part of the contract, along with data storage.

Read the whole story

3rd consecutive hottest year on record

By Seth Borenstein, AP

WASHINGTON – Earth sizzled to a third-straight record hot year in 2016, government scientists said Wednesday. They mostly blame man-made global warming with help from a natural El Nino, which has since disappeared.

Measuring global temperatures in slightly different ways, NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced that last year passed 2015 as the hottest year on record.

NOAA calculated that the average 2016 global temperature was 58.69 degrees – beating the previous year by 0.07 degrees.

NASA's figures, which include more of the Arctic, are higher at 0.22 degrees warmer than 2015. The Arctic "was enormously warm, like totally off the charts compared to everything else," said Gavin Schmidt, director of NASA's Goddard Institute of Space Studies in New York, where the space agency monitors global temperatures.

Records go back to 1880. This is the fifth time in a dozen years that the globe has set a new annual heat record. Records have been set in 2016, 2015, 2014, 2010 and 2005.

The World Meteorological Organization and other international weather monitoring groups agreed that 2016 was a record, with the international weather agency chief Petteri Taalas saying “temperatures only tell part of the story” of extreme warming.

“This is clearly a record,” NASA’s Schmidt said in an interview. “We are now no longer only looking at something that only scientists can see, but is apparent to people in our daily lives.”

Schmidt said his calculations show most of the record heat was from heat-trapping gases from the burning of oil, coal and gas. Only about 12 percent was due to El Nino, which is a periodic warming of parts of the Pacific that change weather globally, he said.

“Of course this is climate change, it’s overwhelmingly climate change,” said Corinne Le Quere, director of England’s Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, who wasn’t part of the NOAA or NASA teams. “Warming (is) nearly everywhere. The Arctic sea ice is collapsing. Spikes in fires from the heat. Heavy rainfall from more water vapor in the air.”

According to NOAA, 2016 was 1.69 degrees warmer than the 20th Century average. The first eight months of 2016 all broke heat records. NASA has last year at 1.78 degrees warmer than their mid-20th Century average and about 2 degrees warmer than the start of the industrial age in the late 19th Century.

The effects are more than just records, but actually hurt people and the environment, said Oklahoma University meteorology professor Jason Furtado. They’re “harmful on several levels, including human welfare, ecology, economics, and even geopolitics,” he said.

Caesars wraps up \$18B bankruptcy case

By Tracy Rucinski, Reuters

Caesars Entertainment Corp has wrapped up the \$18 billion bankruptcy of its main operating unit, allowing the casino company to focus on restoring the tarnished Harrah's, Caesars and Horseshoe brands after two years of Chapter 11 proceedings.

Caesars' subsidiary, Caesars Entertainment Operating Co Inc., won court approval on Tuesday for a plan to shed \$10 billion of debt and separate its U.S.-based property assets from its gaming operations.

The company expects to emerge from bankruptcy later this year.

Caesars is the parent company of Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Harveys at Stateline.

Read the whole story

SLT recaps storm, applauds its response

By Kathryn Reed

Snowmageddon tested South Lake Tahoe personnel and infrastructure in ways that are still being assessed.

The full impact of last week's rain and snow storms might not be known until things fully dry out. This is especially true

of roads and drainage systems.

The City Council on Jan. 17 received an update by department heads about how the multi-day event played out; what worked, what didn't and what needs to be improved upon. Overall, though, staff was pleased how everyone and everything worked. Training was lauded as being a key for everyone knowing their job.



South Tahoe firefighters respond to water in a garage. They use a sump pump to clear the area. Photo/Provided

The electeds voted to declare a state of emergency, which will allow the city to apply for money from the state and feds. Businesses and residents would be able to seek financial relief, too, not just the city.

"During the height of the storm we doubled our capabilities," Fire Chief Jeff Meston said.

The police department brought in more people, too. When snow removal personnel came to work, so did the mechanics; such are

the requirements with old equipment.

Meston headed up the emergency operations center at the airport. It was a fluid situation. When urgent care flooded it was necessary to have a backup plan. When the recreation center, which is the usual shelter, flooded, Plan B was implemented. When the school district didn't want pets at South Tahoe High School, education by the Humane Society was necessary to explain how animals wouldn't damage the school-shelter.

City staff helped Denny's and Pet Supermarket deal with their flooding. The Knights Inn and residences on streets in that vicinity are still recovering. Flooding was also an issue in the state streets. Sump pumps are still running to clear water from under houses.

The width of the roads was problematic at times for fire personnel. Meston admitted there is damage to some of the apparatuses. He said it's either that or risk not reaching a patient in time.

It wasn't until this Tuesday that streets started to be widened. The snow gang was given the weekend off to recover; especially with more storms arriving today.

In preparation for last week the police department had a small boat, motorcycles and snowmobiles ready in case standard vehicles wouldn't suffice.

Cops had their own flooding to deal with when the roof at the station started to leak. Plastic was already in the building since this wasn't the first incident.



A plow works to clear the parking lot at the library in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/Susan Wood

For the first time the city used a drone. This provided near live coverage to the EOC regarding how high the Upper Truckee River was. Had roads been blocked and post-storm assessment been needed, the drone could have provided a visual.

During the chaos regular conference calls were made with about 100 people from throughout the region, including the National Weather Service.

Staff assessed various businesses for safety concerns, issuing one of three flyers: a) all is safe; b) some storm damage; and c) do not enter.

While the bubble on the pool sustained damage, the facility will reopen this morning at 10.

Ray Jarvis, head of public works, said one of the biggest

problems was dealing with parked cars on streets. It delays plows and then sometimes a backhoe had to be employed to dig out the vehicle just so it could be towed.

He is going to be in contact with Caltrans to see if that agency can do anything to provide a longer left turn lane, which would make travel safer. This was a request of Councilman Jason Collin's.

Councilman Tom Davis was critical of Liberty Utilities, saying no one was telling the city when power would be restored. He wanted them to be part of the emergency operations center. The reality is if they have their own command post and cannot allocate personnel to every EOC in their service area.

Police Chief Brian Uhler said if Liberty were to give out more information, he believes dispatch would not have received as many power outage related calls.

Other city staff, in talking with *Lake Tahoe News*, was less critical of Liberty.

"Every time we respond to wires down we ask for an ETA, which is done by our dispatch," Fire Chief Jeff Meston told *Lake Tahoe News* after the meeting. "The utility then puts them into a priority system; generally with widespread emergencies they do not offer an ETA."

City Manager Nancy Kerry told *LTN*, "Throughout the event, I spoke to Randy Kelly (with Liberty), who accepted my phone call every time and directed me to the person who could provide more detail as to when the power would be back on; he also provided us a direct phone number to Liberty's EOC that was activated on the North Shore, because power was out and the conditions on the South Shore – snow-flooding – were more substantial.

"What Tom Davis was referring to is that we have to take the initiative to contact Liberty, we seek out information.

Previously Liberty would often send emails regarding outages. Also Liberty does not have any social media presence, which would greatly assist everyone in knowing when power would be restored – or that they are working on it – and people could share information on Liberty’s social media platform.”

Lake Tahoe News on the other hand received regular emails from Liberty during the storms, which were then included in the multitude of updates on the news site each day.

Things the city will consider in the future include moving the sand away from the Rufus Allen location so it does not interfere with city vehicle traffic, putting in a device to make it easier to load sand into bags, enlisting the California Conservation Corps members to help, having a conversation with Heavenly so the resort isn’t encouraging people to drive when the city is saying shelter in place, and assembling a volunteer snowplow team to assist those who can’t remove their own snow.



Snow finally replaced days of rain. Photo/Denise Haerr

Some stats from last week’s storms:

- Seven graders in the snowplow fleet went down; but all were fixed in house
- 2 million gallons of water tested the storm drain system

- 150 tons of sand were scooped up by residents
 - The ladder truck was used 2½ days; it was never used in 2016
 - South Tahoe Action Team was called in for the first time; mostly these volunteers helped at the emergency operations center
 - On Jan. 8 the fire department responded to 21 calls
 - 65 disabled vehicles were tended to
 - 16 flooding issues were handled by the police
 - 86 snow citations were written
 - 11 tows were required because of the snow
 - 12 other tows were made
 - More than 6 inches of rain fell between Jan. 7-10
 - 2-5 feet of snow fell from Jan. 10-15
 - More than 100 people called to complain about berms.
-

Discord on SLT council over board assignments

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe City Councilman Tom Davis practically threw a tantrum at Tuesday's meeting when he didn't get appointed to the boards he wanted.

"Thank you. I'm getting the message very clear," he told his colleagues after they chose Councilwoman Wendy David to be on the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority board instead of him. He then withdrew his name for consideration on the next two boards.

Jan. 17 was the annual meeting for the council to select who of the five represents the council on various boards.

When all the voting amongst themselves was done, Councilwoman Brooke Laine said even though she didn't get everything she wanted the important thing is for the five to work together.

Davis then said, "I'm extremely disappointed. I didn't get mayor pro tem and the appointments I wanted." (The mayor pro tem was decided last month.) "I have paid my dues in the community and on this council."

When it came time to approve all the appointments via one resolution it was a 4-1 vote, with Davis the dissenter.

Assignments include:

- California Tahoe Conservancy – Hal Cole (community member)
- City Selection Committee – Mayor Austin Sass (always goes to mayor)
- El Dorado County Lafco – Laine
- Tahoe Regional Planning Agency – Sass; Davis as alternate
- TPRA Advisory Planning Commission – Scott Weavil (community member)
- Tahoe Transportation District – Sass; alternate David
- Abandoned Vehicle Abatement JPA – Laine

- Cal-Tahoe JPA – David and Davis; alternate Laine
- Clean Tahoe Program – David
- Community Play Consortium – Councilman Jason Collin
- League of California Cities – Collin; alternate Davis
- PADMA – City Manager Nancy Kerry and City Attorney Tom Watson
- Recreation JPA – Sass
- Waste Management JPA – David; alternate Davis
- Redevelopment Successor Agency – Laine; alternate Collin
- Tahoe Prosperity Center – David
- Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce (non-voting) – Collin
- South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce (non-voting) – vacant
- South Lake Tahoe Lodging Association – Collin.

The council eliminated three internal subcommittees – economic development, development services code, and champions plaza.

Davis did get his way when he advocated to retain the senior citizens center subcommittee. He is the lone councilmember on the committee.

Other subcommittee assignments are:

- Real property negotiating subcommittee: Davis and Laine
- Vacation home rental: David and Sass.

Fire displaces South Shore family

Even though flames were contained to the garage, smoke damage is so great that a South Shore family is unable to occupy their home.

A fire erupted about 11:30am Jan. 17 on Alice Lake in the unincorporated area of El Dorado County.

The blaze started near the furnace and water heater area.

"We are not sure if it was the appliances or something around them," Lake Valley fire Capt. Chad Stephen told *Lake Tahoe News*.

No one was home at the time, and there were no injuries.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

CalStar recognized as top air ambulance

CalStar was named program of the year by Airbus Helicopters.

The award is given each year to an emergency medical services program that has demonstrated superior levels of safety consciousness, patient care, quality leadership, and community and industry service.

Founded in 1983, CalStar is now a leading provider of emergency medical transport services for critically ill or injured patients in California and Northern Nevada. CalStar, which has a base in South Lake Tahoe, has safely transported more than 62,000 patients to hospitals and specialized treatment centers.

CalStar launched a plan four years ago to replace 24 legacy aircraft with new EC135s and King Air B200s, leading to an estimated savings of \$5 million per year in costs related to maintenance, training, and support.

Power close to being restored; Emerald Bay to stay closed

Liberty Utilities expects to have power restored to the River Road area of Highway 89 by Tuesday night.

Those 136 customers have been without power for days.

There are about 80 additional customers still without power scattered throughout the service area. They, too, should have power tonight.

It took helicopters to get the work done.

Almost all Truckee Donner PUD customers have power, too. As of Tuesday morning 20 customers were in the dark. That should be rectified soon.

Caltrans has made some progress on clearing Highway 89 around

Emerald Bay, but the amount of snow and debris is substantive. With more storms rolling in this week, officials said to expect the road to remain closed for a while.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*