

Fire prevention critical when living in a forest

By Kathryn Reed

An ember should be able to hit a house, drop and not start a spot fire. That's called defensible space.

John Pickett, forester with Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District, talked recently about all things fire and what homeowners can do to make their home less combustible.

Five feet from the structure is the most critical. Pickett said there have been too many times when firefighters have needed to use a chain saw to cut the deck from the house. When it comes to the 5-foot space, it includes that distance from the deck. In the fire world the deck is a structure.

Pine needles under a wood step are an accelerant. While they may be a pain to dislodge, the alternative could be destructive, even deadly.

Homeowners in the basin are discovering that without defensible space they are unable to get insurance.

Pickett said 350 dwellings in his district in Nevada were dropped from State Farm. The fire department worked with the homeowners and insurance company to get 300 of them to retain their coverage.

He said Hartford is no longer writing policies in Tahoe Douglas and that USSA is studying the area.

A woman at the talk sponsored by the South Lake Tahoe Friends of the Library said she was unable to get AAA. However, a AAA rep in Carson City told *Lake Tahoe News* the company has an aggressive fire line underwriting restriction, but policies are still being written throughout the South Shore.

AAA was one of the better companies during Angora.

It was nine years ago this summer those 254 houses on the outskirts of South Lake Tahoe went up in flames in the Angora Fire. Six weeks later five houses were lost on the West Shore in the Washoe Fire when a gas barbecue was left on.



While all fire cannot be prevented, there are steps that can be taken to make individual properties less combustible.
Photo/LTN file

Most wildland fires are human caused – as were these two. Angora was from an illegal campfire at Seneca Pond that wasn't fully extinguished.

Besides residents needing to do their part, fire agencies in the basin are doing theirs, too. Part of this includes working with locals by doing inspections. Tahoe Douglas inspects every house on a four-year rotation. While they can't go on the property without permission, a lot can be seen from the road. The goal isn't to issue fines – though, that's possible – but instead to get people to comply.

Fire departments throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin will do a defensible space inspections for residents for free. It's all about creating a fire adapted community. More information is

available **online**.

In Tahoe Douglas the Zephyr Fire Crew is responsible for keeping the forest healthy through controlled burns and thinning the forest.

“It is not a haphazard sport. We take the time to do it right,” Pickett said after he showed a video of the crew starting a prescribed fire.

These weren’t slash piles, but instead underbrush that was deliberately set on fire. It’s a low intensity fire that consumes the ground fuels. Like a surgeon the marks left behind are deliberate and well thought out.

Hospitality workers target of sexual harassment

By Bernice Yeung, Reveal

It started out innocently enough when, in the spring of 2014, a Hilton Hotel housekeeper in Southern California was cleaning a set of rooms on the sixth floor. A guest from the next room asked her for extra towels.

She told him to take as many as he needed and he responded by saying, “Would you like to help me with them? I’m going to take a shower.”

The comment made the cleaner feel uncomfortable. A few minutes later, she alleged that he returned to the room, wearing only a towel around his waist. He asked the housekeeper about a late checkout before dropping his towel and moving toward her, she said.

The cleaner – who shared a police report with Reveal from the Center for Investigative Reporting on the condition of anonymity – said she ran out of the room, afraid that she'd be attacked. She tearfully told a coworker what had happened, and the workers called hotel security and management.

She was eventually told to return to the sixth floor to finish her shift. Dissatisfied with how the Long Beach hotel dealt with the situation, the cleaner went to the police a month later. The police weren't able to locate the suspect because the hotel said it did not have a record of that guest. Hilton did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Female hotel cleaners from across the country have similar stories of sexual harassment and indecent exposure. In the past decade, 818 incidents of sexual harassment were reported to the federal government by hotel industry workers.

And this month, Unite Here Local 1, a union that represents hotel workers, will issue a report about the state of sexual harassment in the industry. According to its survey of nearly 500 Illinois hospitality industry workers, 58 percent of hotel employees and 77 percent of casino workers said they'd been sexually harassed. Forty-nine percent of housekeepers said that a guest had opened the door naked, exposed themselves or flashed them.

The survey was spurred by a case from an Illinois casino where a guest pulled a 21-year-old waitress into his lap and asked her for a blow job.

"This indecent and gross behavior from guests is almost normalized," says Sarah Lyons, one of the union organizers who conducted the survey. "Women talk among themselves, but it is not being brought into the light of day."

Cleaners can be especially susceptible to sexual abuse on the job. They're often isolated, working in hotel rooms by themselves. And they're often low-wage immigrant workers,

worried about the repercussions of speaking up. These are conditions we've previously detailed for female farmworkers and night-shift janitors.

Hospitality workers also said that they did not feel that they could report harassment by guests. According to the Illinois survey, only 33 percent of workers reported the harassment, mostly because they don't think that there is anything that can be done to address indecent guest behavior. Others said that they were embarrassed or that they had normalized the problem and had simply become "immune" to it.

Nereyda Soto, a 23-year-old Long Beach hotel worker who was not part of the survey, said that the hospitality industry's "guest is always right" mentality means that management tolerates behavior that it wouldn't from its own employees. "When you walk into a hotel as a guest, they make you feel safe – like there's nothing to worry about, and the only thing you have to worry about is relaxing, and they make you feel like everything is clean and safe in your room," she says. "And if you promote this level of security to guests, why are you not promoting it for the workers?"

The American Hotel and Lodging Association says that the industry takes the issue of sexual harassment "very seriously." In an email, a spokeswoman for the American Hotel and Lodging Association, said each hotel has its own protocols and procedures.

"As an industry, we are committed to ensuring hotel employers and operators have tools and resources to educate employees on guidelines and best practices to help avoid unsafe situations, protect themselves from harassment, assaults or injuries, and respond to and report any kind of inappropriate behavior or misconduct," Vanessa Sindors wrote.

Nevertheless, various workers' organizations and local chapters of Unite Here are working together to push for local

laws in at least three cities across the country. In Long Beach, Seattle and Chicago, workers are calling, in part, for hotel companies to track complaints against guests and for a ban on those who sexually harass workers.

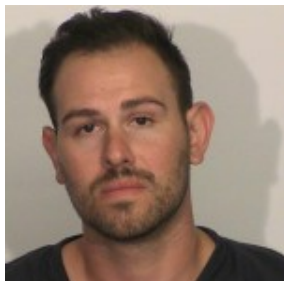
Advocates for these new local laws also want workers to have access to wearable panic buttons. New York City cleaners began using them after a Sofitel New York Hotel worker claimed in 2011 that the French dignitary Dominique Strauss-Kahn had sexually assaulted her in his room. (The charges against Strauss-Kahn were eventually dropped.)

Juana Melara has been cleaning Southern California hotel rooms for 21 years, and she says she has dealt with sexual harassment nearly every day on the job. Guests have flirted with her, asked her for massages and exposed themselves to her, she says.

Melara currently works at a Westin hotel in Southern California, and she knows that not everyone wants to talk about the harassment because it's embarrassing and because some workers are afraid that they'll lose their jobs for being outspoken. But she's willing to break the silence. "We are women, and we deserve respect, and the hotel industry, especially in housekeeping, is dominated by women," she says. "If some women aren't going to speak out, I am going to do it."

"I'm going to do whatever it takes to make it better for me and my coworkers," she adds.

Interaction with Timberlake at ACC lands man in jail



Keith Michael
Weglin

A Sacramento man was detained during the weekend celebrity golf tournament in Stateline for inappropriately touching singer Justin Timberlake's face, according to Douglas County sheriff's deputies.

Deputies said Timberlake declined to press charges after the July 23 incident at Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course.

However, Keith Michael Weglin, 29, allegedly became argumentative when Timberlake told him to leave. Weglin was arrested on disorderly conduct charges. Deputies said Weglin had been drinking.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Accident closes Hwy. 50 in

Meyers

A multi-vehicle accident is blocking both lanes of Highway 50 in Meyers.

Caltrans said the road should be open just after 5pm July 26.

“There were minor injuries and they are waiting for tow trucks and ambulances,” Caltrans spokesman Steve Nelson told *Lake Tahoe News*.

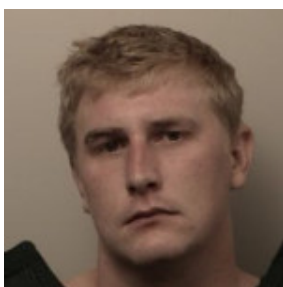
The accident occurred just before near the gun mount at the base of Echo Summit.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Bandaged Bandit bank robbery suspect behind bars

Updated 1:15pm:

A West Slope bank robbery suspect didn't get far before being apprehended on Monday.



David Jarrell

David Jarrell, 22, of El Dorado Hills reportedly robbed the US

Bank on White Rock Road in El Dorado Hills on July 25 at 2:35pm. Not long after that he was found by sheriff's deputies in a creek.

Investigators said they recovered evidence on land and in the water. They said additional evidence related to the bank robbery was found at Jarrell's residence.

Jarrell is believed to be the Bandaged Bandit who robbed banks in Stateline, Rocklin and Folsom

Anyone with information about Jarrell or other recent bank robberies is encouraged to call 530.642.4712.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Jacks Valley still closed; water line work under way

Jacks Valley Road in the Carson Valley remains closed from Montaña to the second entrance of Genoa Lakes Golf Course because of a sink hole caused by a water line break.

Douglas County crews installed a valve Monday night allowing water to be transferred from Genoa Lake to Montaña.

The water tank level in the upper James Canyon tank is increasing slightly. Residents, though, are still being asked to conserve water. The boil water notice still remains for Montaña residents.

The repair process is complicated by the depth of the pipes

and myriad utilities in the same area.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

California officials adopt landmark LGBT coursework

By Jill Tucker, San Francisco Chronicle

State officials this month added the evolution of gay rights and the contributions of lesbian and gay figures in history to the list of topics that public-school students will be taught in California, a landmark move that puts the ongoing LGBT civil rights fight into the mainstream of public education.

The state Board of Education unanimously approved the new social studies curriculum framework in Sacramento after several years of debate, public input and revisions. The effort drew thousands of written comments as the state board considered what kind of history should be taught in each grade.

The vote officially implements provisions of a law signed by Gov. Jerry Brown in 2011 requiring that social studies instructional materials include the roles and contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans. Challenges to that law, as well as recessionary budget cuts, had delayed the adoption of revised social studies content at each grade level in K-12 schools.

Read the whole story

2 people on motorcycle die on Monitor Pass

Two Carson City residents died Sunday in a motorcycle accident on Monitor Pass.

They were both on the motorcycle that was going south on Highway 89 on July 24. Their names have not been released pending notification of next of kin.

According to Alpine County sheriff's deputies, the motorcycle crossed into oncoming traffic for unknown reasons. Two vehicles in the northbound lane were involved. One person from one of the vehicles was injured.

The accident remains under investigation.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

It's not a housing bubble, it's just expensive

By Patrick Clark, Bloomberg

Home prices have hit record highs in some major U.S. metropolitan areas, and house-flippers are behaving like it's 2005: It's no wonder people are chattering about another housing bubble.

But residential real estate isn't in a speculative bubble, industry observers contend. Instead, a low inventory of available homes is driving prices higher—prices, however, will eventually recede as buyers throw up their hands, or as more new homes come on line. The structural issues that led to the housing collapse last decade aren't present.

"The havoc during the last cycle was the result of building too many homes and of speculation fueled by loose credit," said Jonathan Smoke, chief economist at Realtor.com. "That's the exact opposite of what we have today."

Read the whole story

Sanders supporters demand apology at Nev. delegation meeting

By Megan Messerly, Las Vegas Sun

PHILADELPHIA — Minnesota Rep. Keith Ellison, a longtime Bernie Sanders supporter who has endorsed Hillary Clinton, attempted to preach a message of unity at the Nevada delegation breakfast this morning.

Ellison said it was OK to "duke it out" in the primary, but it's time to come together. "We got to be real crystal clear on what's in front of us," Ellison said, describing Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump as a "fascist dictator."

He didn't get far into his message, though.

Less than halfway through his speech, Ellison was interrupted

by members of Nevada's Sanders delegation, who pointed to discord at state Democratic convention and the recent WikiLeaks release of emails as reasons they still don't trust the party.

Read the whole story