

CHP truck totaled during storm in Truckee

During the Christmas Eve storm in the Sierra a California Highway Patrol vehicle was totaled.

The officer was not injured, just “shaken up”, according to the department.

The patrol truck was on eastbound Interstate 80 in Truckee when it was hit. There were whiteout conditions at the time.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Even legal pot use a reason to be fired

By Rebecca Greenfield, BloombergBusiness

With marijuana legalization spreading state-by-state across America and the U.S. government backing away from aggressive enforcement of federal laws, employers in the Weed Belt have begun to reconsider their substance abuse policies. They’re making them tougher.

In a first-of-its-kind survey, the Society of Human Resource Management asked 623 HR managers in states where marijuana is legal about their drug policies. Unsurprisingly, getting stoned at work is largely frowned upon, SHRM found, regardless of legality. But it turns out a large chunk of workplaces also won’t hire employees who smoke on their own time.

Marijuana is legal for recreational use in the nation's capital and four states. In almost 20 others, it's allowed for medicinal purposes. More than half of the HR managers surveyed by SHRM said they have policies, or plan to implement them, restricting employment of marijuana users. Some 38 percent said they will flat-out reject users even if they claim medical reasons. Six percent said their policy will exclude only those who partake for fun.

Read the whole story

Cops out in force targeting DUI drivers

Fifteen people were arrested in El Dorado County on charges of driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs from 12:01am Dec. 18 through midnight Dec. 23.

This is the second weekend of the National 17 Day DUI Mobilization DUI-Saturation Patrols that will be conducted in Placerville, South Lake Tahoe and the unincorporated areas of El Dorado County. All regularly scheduled traffic and patrol officers will focus efforts at stopping and arresting DUI drivers during their normal shifts.

CHP is conducting its maximum enforcement period beginning Friday tonight and ending at midnight Dec. 27.

Regulators deal a blow to Nev. rooftop solar industry

By Daniel Rothberg, Las Vegas Sun

With no discussion, state regulators this week voted unanimously to slash the value of credits rooftop solar customers earn for generating excess energy.

The three-member Public Utilities Commission adopted a proposed order that would reduce by 75 percent the amount NV Energy pays customers for excess power their solar panels produce and change the flat service rate for customers with solar panels. The changes in so-called net metering policies would phase in over four years, starting Jan. 1. Regulators deal a blow to rooftop solar industry

The PUC's position in the order is that higher bills are being paid by nonsolar users to provide "hidden subsidies" for those with solar panels. The PUC said solar users in Southern Nevada have been getting an annual subsidy of about \$623. The subsidy for solar users in Northern Nevada is about \$471.

[Read the whole story](#)

EPA wants toxic Nevada mine on Superfund list

By Scott Sonner, AP

Fifteen years after U.S. regulators started assessing damage and health risks at an abandoned Nevada copper mine, the

Environmental Protection Agency is moving to add the contaminated site to its Superfund National Priority List, according to documents obtained by the Associated Press.

Rural neighbors of the World War II-era mine that has leaked toxic chemicals for decades won a \$19.5 million settlement in 2013 from companies they accused of covering up the contamination – some of it radioactive – near Yerington about 65 miles southeast of Reno.

The EPA sent a letter to Gov. Brian Sandoval this week announcing the agency's intention to place the mine on the list of the nation's most polluted sites to "mitigate exposures that are a substantial threat to the public health or welfare or the environment."

Nevada has opposed past EPA proposals to list the site based on fears about the impact on property values, as well as any precedent that could be set by federal intervention in the mining-friendly state that is the world's sixth-biggest producer of gold.

But earlier this year, the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection estimated it would cost \$30.4 million to address only what EPA considers the most immediate health and safety concerns, and the state has been unsuccessful in obtaining financial assistance from those responsible for the damage.

Under the Superfund listing scenario, the EPA would cover 90 percent of the costs.

"Without an identifiable private source of funding, the only mechanism to make federal funding available is to add the site to the NPL," said Jared Blumenfeld, the EPA's regional administrator in San Francisco, using the acronym for the Superfund's National Priority List.

"If we do not receive a written response from the state by Jan. 29, we will assume that Nevada is in agreement with EPA

and will proceed with proposing the site for addition to the NPL," he wrote in the Dec. 22 letter obtained by AP.

Aides to Sandoval had no immediate comment.

The class-action lawsuit filed in 2011 accused Atlantic Richfield Co. and its parent company, BP America Inc., of "intentionally and negligently" concealing the extent of uranium, arsenic and other pollutants leaking into their drinking water wells from the mine covering 6 square miles of land owned partly by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

Atlantic Richfield acquired the property in 1977 from Anaconda Copper, which built the mine in 1941.

Previous owners left behind 90 million gallons of acidic solution that continues to threaten the groundwater, Blumenfeld said. That's equivalent to the amount of liquid it would take to cover about 80 football fields, 10-feet deep.

In 2008, a U.S. Labor Department review panel upheld a whistleblower claim by ex-mine cleanup supervisor Earle Dixon who said the Bureau of Land Management illegally fired him for speaking out about the risks in defiance of local politicians who tried to muzzle him.

Peggy Pauly, a Yerington minister's wife, helped organize efforts to demand additional cleanup and filed the lawsuit joined by about 700 past and present neighbors.

"She's the real hero in all of this," said Steven German, a New York-based attorney who represented the residents.

"This is an important next step in getting this massive old mine cleaned up," he told AP Wednesday. "It is going to cost a fortune."

Anaconda produced 1.7 billion pounds of copper from 1952 to 1978 at the mine in the Mason Valley, an irrigated agricultural oasis in the otherwise largely barren high

desert. The EPA determined the uranium was produced as a byproduct of processing the copper and that the radioactive waste was initially dumped into dirt-bottomed ponds that – unlike modern lined ponds – leaked into the groundwater.

EPA studies showed 79 percent of the wells tested north of mine had dangerous levels of uranium or arsenic or both that made the water unsafe to drink, including one a half-mile away with levels more than 10 times the legal drinking water standard.

At the mine itself, wells tested as high as 100 times the standard. Although the health effects of specific levels are not well understood, the EPA says long-term exposure to high levels of uranium in drinking water may cause cancer and damage kidneys.

Drone crashes, just misses ski racer

By Associated Press

The international ski federation is banning camera drones from its World Cup races after a drone crashed and nearly hit Austrian skier Marcel Hirscher during a slalom race in Italy.

FIS men's race director Markus Waldner tells the Associated Press that drones will be prohibited "as long as I am responsible ... because they are a bad thing for safety."

The unmanned flying object carrying a TV camera came down and shattered on the icy slope just behind Hirscher during Tuesday night's race in Madonna di Campiglio. The four-time overall

champion was unhurt and continued his run, finishing second behind Norwegian winner Henrik Kristoffersen.

The company responsible for the camera drone, sports marketing agency Infront, says in a statement “the circumstances leading to (the crash) are currently being examined.”

How to market to millennials

By Howard Riell, Vegas Inc.

Business owners increasingly are recognizing the need to market to millennials, young people ages 22 to 34 – as well they should.

“Millennials are the chosen generation for many marketers because of their sheer number and perceived buying power,” according to NPD Group, a market research company.

Millennials comprise nearly three-tenths of the adult population (29 percent) and are more ethnically diverse than Gen-Xers and baby boomers.

“Millennials are different from other generations for a number of reasons,” said Kirk Jacobson, managing partner of JW Advisors, a business financial consulting firm.

Read the whole story

Turmoil beginning with Adelson's purchase of paper

By Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — When several reporters for the main newspaper in Las Vegas were taken off their beats and assigned to investigate three judges, the decision seemed strange because it came from the paper's new owners, not a newsroom editor.

The mystery deepened weeks later, when the public learned that casino mogul Sheldon Adelson and his family had purchased the paper in a secretive deal. And the questions only intensified, leading the staff of the *Review-Journal* to publish a front-page story about suspicions that the owners had attempted to use the paper to settle a personal score with a judge handling a lawsuit against Adelson, a wealthy political donor known as a Republican kingmaker.

On Tuesday, the *Review-Journal* editor who decided not to run anything on the three judges told the staff he was stepping down after accepting a voluntary buyout.

Mike Hengel stunned the newsroom with his departure, which was announced Wednesday on the front page in an article that said an unspecified number of other employees had also accepted buyouts.

"I think my resignation probably comes as a relief to the new owners," Hengel said in an audio recording obtained by the Associated Press.

Many of the questions center on a small Connecticut newspaper that published a story singling out Elizabeth Gonzalez, one of the Nevada judges who was monitored by the Las Vegas reporters. The *New Britain Herald* called her rulings "inconsistent" and "contradictory" and cited them as evidence

for why Connecticut may not want to consider creating specialized business courts.

The judge has clashed numerous times with Adelson's attorneys in a high-profile wrongful-termination lawsuit brought against Adelson's casino company, Las Vegas Sands.

Earlier this year, Gonzalez admonished Adelson in court for not answering a routine question about work e-mails, telling him he could not argue with her.

The publisher of the Connecticut paper is Michael Schroeder, who also happens to be the manager of a Delaware company formed to facilitate the purchase of the *Review-Journal* for the Adelsons.

Schroeder was introduced to the *Review-Journal* newsroom on Dec. 10, and he was the one who initially refused to identify the newspaper's new owners.

It was not clear if the other two judges – a Las Vegas justice of the peace and a Clark County family court judge – had any connection with Adelson. The newspaper report said they were selected by the reporters.

Gonzalez was selected by someone at the *Review-Journal*, but not within the newsroom, because she specializes in business lawsuits and is handling unrelated cases involving Adelson and fellow casino mogul Steve Wynn, the report said.

As news organizations adapt to an ever-changing media landscape, many newspapers have changed hands, with some being acquired by billionaires. But few American newspaper owners have a political agenda to rival that of Adelson, who has contributed tens of millions to GOP campaigns.

Gatehouse Media, the paper's former owner that will continue managing it, has said Adelson has no intention of using the newspaper as a platform.

Andrew Seaman, chairman of the ethics committee of the Society of Professional Journalists, stresses that the story in the Connecticut newspaper could be a coincidence but acknowledges the only way to describe the sequence of events is “weird.”

“The implication is that there is some connection with the Connecticut newspaper, and it’s all connected to the sale,” Seaman said. “It’s very concerning.”

After he decided against publishing any of the material about the judges, Hengel said, he sent the research to Publisher Jason Taylor and never heard more.

“I didn’t see the point of it. I still don’t see the point of it,” Hengel said Tuesday, adding that he had not talked with anybody from the Adelson family or Schroeder. “I wasn’t interested in publishing it.”

Schroeder did not return phone calls and emails. He declined to comment to the *New York Times*, but told the newspaper the Las Vegas reporters were “stirring up trouble.”

Adelson’s spokesman for the Las Vegas Sands, Ron Reese, declined to comment, as did Gonzalez, who spoke through her executive assistant, and longtime *Review-Journal* attorney Mark Hinueber. He said he could not say anything about whether he or other employees were still employed by the paper.

The Adelsons bought the *Review-Journal* and a handful of other Nevada papers for \$140 million – nearly \$40 million more than what Gatehouse paid for the properties in February. The family did not disclose the purchase until the newspaper staff, media watchdogs and politicians, including some presidential candidates, demanded to know the identity of the new owners.

The Adelsons said they held back revealing themselves as the owners because they did not want an announcement to distract from last week’s Republican presidential debate held at the Venetian, the casino-hotel on the Las Vegas Strip that is part

of Adelson's empire.

Seaman said Review-Journal reporters have earned respect for their dogged reporting about their own sale.

"It shows," Seaman said, that "they are not afraid to stand up to the people who sign their paychecks, which is very admirable."

Snowpack exceeds average for first time in years



Kirkwood received so much snow earlier this week that when the roads were closed employees spent the night at the resort. Photo/Provided

By Bettina Boxall, Frank Shyong and Joseph Serna, Los Angeles Times

A series of powerful snowstorms in the Sierra Nevada has resulted in a small milestone in drought-stricken California: The snowpack is now higher than average for this time of year.

The storms, which are likely to continue into Friday, have fattened the mountain snowpack to levels California hasn't seen for two years, said Steve Nemeth, water supply forecaster for the state Department of Water Resources.

The announcement was welcome news to a state that has struggled with extremely dry conditions for more than four years. However, experts were quick to point out that California's drought is far from over.

Statewide, the snowpack is 111 percent of average for the date. In the northern Sierra, it is 116 percent of the norm; in the central Sierra, 121 percent of average and in the southern Sierra, 85 percent of the norm.

Read the whole story

Tornado on West Slope, steady snow in Tahoe



It will be a powder at
Sierra-at-Tahoe on
Christmas, as well as all
Tahoe resorts.
Photo/Provided

The National Weather Service in Sacramento has issued a tornado warning for the West Slope of El Dorado County until 4pm Dec. 24.

A 3:14pm the public reported a tornado near Folsom or El Dorado Hills. Doppler radar showed this tornado moving east at 20mph, according to the NWS. Locations impacted include Placerville, Cameron Park, El Dorado Hills, Shingle Springs, Rescue, Cameron Park and other nearby towns.

KCRA-TV has coverage of the tornado.

A winter storm warning is in effect for the Lake Tahoe Basin until 10pm Christmas Eve.

As of 3:30pm about 1 foot of snow had accumulated in South Lake Tahoe and was continuing to fall.

Many city streets have not been plowed.

Highways are mess, with several accidents and spinouts being reported. At times the roads have been closed to clear the wrecks. For current road conditions, click on the state icons on the home page of *Lake Tahoe News*.

Scattered snow showers are forecast for Christmas, with mostly sunny skies on the weekend.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*