

Portion of Meyers without power

A small area in the North Upper Truckee area of Meyers is without power this afternoon.

A power pole has been damaged and needs to be replaced.

Liberty Utilities as of 3:30pm Dec. 21 had no estimate of when the power will be restored. The power has been out since about 1:30pm.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Will global warming heat us beyond our physical limits?

By Cheryl Katz, National Geographic

If greenhouse gas emissions are not reduced, rising temperatures and humidity wrought by global warming could expose hundreds of millions of people worldwide to potentially lethal heat stress by 2060, a report suggests.

The greatest exposure will occur in populous, tropical regions such as India, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. But even in the northeastern United States, as many as 30 million people might be exposed at least once a year to heat that could be lethal to children, the elderly, and the sick, according to the study.

It's the first study to look at future heat stress on a global

basis, says Ethan Coffel, a doctoral candidate in atmospheric sciences at Columbia University, who presented the results last week at the American Geophysical Union meeting in San Francisco. Coffel and his colleagues used climate models and population projections to estimate how many people could face dangerous heat in 2060—assuming that greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise sharply on a “business-as-usual” course.

The findings are based on forecasts of “wet bulb” temperatures, in which a wet cloth is wrapped around a thermometer bulb. Whereas standard thermometer readings measure air temperature, a wet bulb measures the temperature of a moist surface that has been cooled as much as possible by evaporation.

Read the whole story

West Slope fire chief accused of DUI

Updated Dec. 21, 1:36pm:

An El Dorado County fire chief was arrested last week in the middle of the afternoon on charges of driving under the influence.

William Dekker, who is the top guy with Garden Valley fire, has a history with alcohol.



William Dekker

The 60-year-old's latest arrest came Dec. 17 at 1:49pm in Greenwood.

According to El Dorado County sheriff's deputies, they were called to a dispute about a loose dog between neighbors in Greenwood. The neighbor told deputies that Dekker threatened to shoot him.

Deputies flagged Dekker down as he was driving by. They suspected he had been drinking, conducted several field sobriety tests and then arrested him for suspicion of driving under the influence of alcohol.

In 1996 Dekker was arrested in Dayton with a blood alcohol level of 0.10. A settlement resulted in no jail time even though he hit a firefighter while driving a fire engine.

A no contest plea to disorderly conduct led Dekker to resign as chief of the Pine-Strawberry Fire District in Arizona in September 2007. Three months later he became chief of Garden Valley.

In 2012 the El Dorado County District Attorney's Office began an investigation into Dekker's **credit card use**.

In 2011, his current fire district paid for him to get substance abuse treatment.

Dekker has a 10-year contract that expires in 2020. To fire him takes all five board members to agree. He makes nearly \$130,000 a year.

Calif. may propose water conservation changes

By Scott Smith, AP

State regulators are expected to propose changes this week to California's water conservation mandate that has required communities throughout the state to reduce use by 25 percent.

The move comes as California is in its driest four-year span on record, and officials anticipate a possible fifth year of drought. Weather forecasters say a strong El Nino weather system could drench the state, but one good year won't be enough to rehydrate the parched landscape.

Gov. Jerry Brown earlier this year required communities throughout the state to reduce water use by one-quarter. State water regulators set individual targets for local agencies to meet, varying between 4 and 36 percent compared with 2013, but those targets will expire in February.

Brown recently extended his executive order, giving regulators authority to enforce conservation measures through October 2016, if California still faces drought this January.

Local community leaders have criticized the individual targets as unfair and unrealistic. In Southern California, local governments argued state officials should acknowledge huge investments in new supplies to prepare for drought.

This year, the San Diego region completed a \$1 billion seawater desalination plant, the largest in the Americas.

Orange County recently expanded wastewater recycling to produce 100 million gallons of drinking water daily.

“It has been difficult to tell our ratepayers that their investments in local supply projects have not resulted in providing the buffer against drought as intended,” Halla Razak, the city of San Diego’s public utilities director, wrote state regulators this month.

Some environmental groups oppose giving local governments credit for new supplies, saying it might discourage conservation.

After the State Water Resources Control Board staff releases its proposed changes, the public will have about two weeks to comment, spokesman George Kostyrko said. A formal proposal is expected in January, he added.

Associated Press writer Elliot Spagat in San Diego contributed to this report.

Nevada food bank helping Tahoe’s working poor

By Linda Fine Conaboy

RENO – The Food Bank of Northern Nevada services an area of about 90,000 square miles. Included within their client base are communities on the eastern slope of the Sierra, which covers California locations such as Lake Tahoe, Susanville, Bridgeport, Bishop and many points in between. In Nevada, a food truck makes the rounds of Ely, Winnemucca, Gerlach, Elko as well as other small towns in Nevada once a month.

“It would be pretty drastic for us not to show up with our food truck,” Laura Hellen, one of two development officers at FBNN told *Lake Tahoe News*. “About two weeks ago, when we had a major snowstorm, our patrons wondered if we were coming. It would have to be something pretty drastic for us not to show up.”

Not surprisingly, the Food Bank is extremely busy this time of year.



Volunteers with the Food Bank of Northern Nevada load boxes for recipients.

Photo/Provided

According to marketing director Jocelyn Lantrip, “This is when we raise a lot of money and a lot of food, but the truth is, we feed people year-round. If you talk to our partner agencies, they’ll tell you they are even busier in the summer because kids are out of school then.”

The client base includes more than children, although kids and seniors make up half of the 103,000 people who receive food each month. Additionally, the Food Bank supplies food to emergency food pantries, mobile pantries, commodity

supplemental food programs and other senior programs.

"We feed kids after school, distribute fresh produce and also feed kids in the summer. We work with senior centers and operate another USDA program, which provides boxes of food to about 2,500 seniors monthly," explained Hellen.

The USDA money is considered "pass through" money. "We raise money to hire cooks, but we're reimbursed by the government for meals. This includes summer meals and after-school meals."

It's easy to see why record keeping is meticulous. "Counts are important. We must be very careful to note both the number of kids fed as well as the location. In Nevada, 53 percent of the children qualify for a free lunch," Hellen said.

Lantrip told *Lake Tahoe News* that if a school qualifies for free lunch, then the entire neighborhood is eligible. "That relieves us of having paperwork on each child."

Seniors can receive a box of food containing staples like beans, rice, oatmeal, cheese as well as canned fruits and vegetables. There is also a mobile pantry offering mostly fruits and veggies, which is available to all of the FBNN partner agencies depending upon their refrigeration capabilities.

The refrigeration unit at the Food Bank's new headquarters east of Sparks is massive and can easily accommodate the fresh produce they provide—at least 50 percent of all their food consists of fresh fruit and vegetables.

"We happen to have moved next door to the Walmart distribution center," Hellen said. "Consequently, we get about 2 million pounds of food from them, including lots of fresh produce. We tell other food banks to try to build next door to a Walmart," she laughed. "Their employees even come here to donate time."

While much of the produce is sourced from California, not all

of it can be returned there. According to Lantrip, there is a list of fresh food that cannot be returned back across state lines to California distribution points.

“Food like some citrus and yams. We follow this list carefully. It’s an isolated thing based on state agriculture laws,” Lantrip said.

Many of the service boundaries within FBNN’s distribution locales are decided by Feeding America, their parent organization, populated not only by the Nevada facility, but also by 200 other food banks throughout the United States.

“We’ve had underserved counties and areas identified by them and now we’re meeting that need,” Lantrip said.

One of these partner agencies, which distributes food not only to Nevadans, but also to California residents, is Project MANA based in Incline Village.

Heidi Allstead, the executive director, told *Lake Tahoe News* that each year Project MANA serves 3,000 people more than 11,650 meals through their four mobile food distribution sites, including Tahoe City, Kings Beach and Truckee.

This group receives food not only from FBNN, but also Placer Food Bank and several local grocery stores, weekly.

“We assist the working poor,” Allstead said. “Most of the people we serve work seasonal jobs and many have multiple jobs, but still can’t make ends meet. This is mostly due to low wages and the high cost of living at Tahoe.”

She added that nearly 10 percent of the people living in her local service area are below the poverty line. According to statistics provided by the Placer Food Bank, 1 in 8 individuals in Placer, Nevada and El Dorado counties—43,000 people—struggle with hunger.

With two vehicles, one being a refrigerated truck and the

other a refrigerated van, employees and volunteers deliver food and also rescue food from grocery stores and food drives. Besides weekly distribution to the local sites, they also make once-a-week rounds to home-bound people.

Project MANA's offices and warehouse are in the Don W. Reynolds Community/Non-Profit Center in Incline Village, where, among other activities, they train volunteers, meet with the public and pack bags for the Food and Companionship Exchange program.

Drivers spinning out; more snow coming



Several vehicles spun out in the North Upper Truckee area of Meyers on Dec. 20. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

California Highway Patrol in Meyers is reporting numerous

fender benders today because of the icy roads.

Dispatch said people have been spinning out, and with the snow drivers are trying to figure out how to maneuver with chains.

Several wrecks were seen in the North Upper Truckee area on Dec. 20. This is often a route people take to avoid chain controls over Echo Summit.

South Lake Tahoe police and Douglas County sheriff's offices said it has been a quiet Sunday in their jurisdictions.

The roads are bound to get worse as the temperature drops and the storm arrives. The National Weather Service in Reno has issued a winter storm warning for the Lake Tahoe Basin for the 24-hour period starting Dec. 21 at 10am. Up to 3 feet could fall at elevations of 7,000 feet and above, with 4-12 inches at lake level.

"Snowfall rates will exceed plowing capabilities at times," the NWS said in a statement.

For current road conditions, click on the state icons on *Lake Tahoe News'* home page.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Report: Gray water risks need to be studied

By Matt Stevens, Los Angeles Times

As water utilities and their customers increasingly look to gray water and runoff from storms to supplement their supply

amid drought, more guidelines and research are needed to ensure that the water is safe, researchers said in a report released Wednesday.

These sources “have substantial potential to contribute to local water supply needs,” according to the 326-page study, but “additional examination of risk is necessary” as use of stormwater and gray water becomes more widespread.

Gray water is untreated wastewater from washing machines, showers or bathroom sinks.

“This is water you have now that you can take advantage of,” said Richard Luthy, a Stanford professor and one of the report’s authors. But, he added, “there’s the opportunity there for exposure to pathogens. And that’s something that needs to be studied more carefully.”

Read the whole story

Congress refuses to pay the bill to fight fires

By Darryl Fears, Washington Post

As Congress headed home for the Christmas break after passing a budget deal, Agriculture Department Secretary Tom Vilsack presented lawmakers with an angry ultimatum: Put up more cash if you want the U.S. Forest Service to keep putting out huge wildfires.

Vilsack is fuming because Congress set aside \$1.6 billion to pay for wildfire suppression in 2016 despite the service, which he controls, spending \$100 million more than that to

fight blazes this year. Year after year, Congress has underfunded the firefighting effort, forcing the Forest Service to borrow hundreds of millions of dollars from other departments in the agency to pay for equipment and firefighters.

Congress allocated \$1 billion for fire suppression in 2015 – a year fast approaching another record for most acres burned.

Read the whole story

Casinos explore use of robotic dealers

By Daniela Wei, BloombergBusiness

She has an hourglass figure, an unflappable manner and a friendly face. Meet “Min,” the robot whose creators say could revolutionize card-dealing in the world’s casinos.

The svelte brunette is a prototype of a human-like electronic croupier, which Paradise Entertainment Ltd., a

Hong Kong-based gaming machine manufacturer and supplier, says could cut labor costs and open up new markets for casino operators. While her function is currently limited to dealing cards, planned enhancements could have her recognizing customers’ faces and speaking to them in multiple languages, Chairman Jay Chun said.

After making her debut at a gaming show in Macau last month, Min and her clones will initially be introduced in the U.S., where labor costs in casinos are proportionally higher than in Asia and where humans, but not machines, are prohibited in

some states from working as croupiers. Paradise is talking to potential overseas buyers, Chun said, declining to say how much the robots will cost.

Read the whole story

Hard Rock-contractor unable to resolve dispute

Mediation between Lake Tahoe Hard Rock owners and the construction firm that remodeled the Stateline hotel-casino have failed. The lawsuit is moving forward toward a trial.

Earlier this fall it looked like a resolution had been found, but brothers Jon and David Park wanted their lending institution to sign-off on the deal before they inked their names to the documents. That didn't happen.

The brothers put in \$60 million to renovate what was the dilapidated Horizon.

SMC Contracting was hired to do the bulk of the work. In May the company sued the Parks because they had not received nearly \$10 million in payment.

Cost overruns associated with needing to make the Jan. 28 opening date are being blamed for the construction costs going up. SMC says the Parks approved those bills. The brothers say otherwise and in part blame Warner Hospitality, the management firm at the time, for approving cost overruns. The Parks have since fired Warner.

At a court hearing on Dec. 18 the judge denied a partial summary judgment proposed by SMC.

SMC's attorney has the right to amend its complaint after Neva One, the parent company of the Hard Rock, turns over what is expected to be 5,000 more pages of documents.

Also on Friday, the \$820,000 mechanics lien filed by plumbing firm Savage & Sons against Neva One and SMC was consolidated into the larger lawsuit.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report