

Missing Nevada woman found dead in vehicle



A Sparks woman was found deceased Dec. 14, two weeks after being reported missing. Photo/Provided

A Sparks woman who was missing for two weeks was found deceased Monday, having driven down an embankment off Highway 28 near Sand Harbor.

Betti Jean Fernandes, 72, was traveling south when the vehicle left the road and rolled downhill for more than 50 feet.

Nevada Highway Patrol officers are investigating the accident to determine what led to the accident. She was not wearing a seat belt.

Troopers said it's possible the vehicle has been there since Fernandes went missing on Nov. 30. The vehicle was not discovered until Dec. 14.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Enviros give Calif. mixed marks for drought management

By Matt Stevens, Los Angeles Times

More than four years into a drought, California's efforts to manage the crisis have produced mixed results, according to a report card issued Monday by a leading environmental nonprofit organization.

The state received high marks from the Natural Resources Defense Council for its urban conservation and water recycling but performed poorly in areas such as stormwater capture and restoring the San Francisco Bay Delta.

"The state is making decent strides in some areas, while completely falling down on the job in others," said Kate Poole, the report card's lead author and senior attorney for the council's water program. "The bottom line is that we can take steps to create enough water for the residential, business and agricultural needs of California, while protecting the healthy environment that Californians deserve."

The council used a point system to issue the state letter grades across five categories. Each category, they said, represents a strategy the state can use to "achieve a sustainable and drought-resilient water future." The group gave California a B, B-minus, two Ds and an F.

Read the whole story

Aging equipment impacts NDOT crews

By Catherine Van, KOL0-TV

When winter storms hit, the Nevada Department of Transportation works around the clock to make sure roads are safe for drivers, it has a bigger concern than the weather this year. It's looking at potential problem that could its operations system out of order.

NDOT has up to 25 snow plows in the Reno area and 10 plows at Mt. Rose, working 24/7 before, during and after a snow storm.

"Some plows are from 1970, a handful that are in the 80s and bunch of snow plows and trucks in the 90s," said Thor Dyson, a district engineer for NDOT. "These trucks never turned off. We had people switch out every 12 hours, a whole new group of people will jump into the trucks and take off."

Read the whole story

Gaming part of presidential campaign

By J.D. Morris, Las Vegas Sun

Casinos and gambling have been on the minds of presidential candidates at several key moments during the 2016 campaign.

Even when not debating at a big Las Vegas casino-resort, which Republican contenders will do Tuesday night, gambling

references have worked their way into the campaign rhetoric multiple times. And there's evidence that such moments matter, particularly to Nevada voters.

The American Gaming Association touted a poll Monday indicating that 80 percent of Nevada gaming employees were more likely to vote for a candidate who supports their industry. The results of the poll, based on 320 interviews, also suggested that most workers in the state gaming industry are closely following the race and plan to vote next year.

Workers favored Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, who were seen as understanding the gaming industry better than any of the other candidates. The poll prompted the association's president, Geoff Freeman, to call gaming employees "an electoral force to be reckoned with" in Nevada.

Read the whole story

Nevada trying to curtail fatal accidents

With there being more fatalities on Nevada roads compared to a year ago, law enforcement wants to change that trend.

The Nevada Highway Patrol is working in conjunction with the Douglas County Sheriff's Department, Washoe County Sheriff's Department, Reno Police Department, Sparks Police Department, Carson City Sheriff's Department and Lyon County Sheriff's Department to boost enforcement efforts.

Impaired driving fatalities have consistently been the most common cause of motor vehicle accidents resulting in injuries

and death in Nevada. While alcohol related crashes and fatalities have decreased 48 percent compared to this time last year, there has still been an increase in overall fatalities to date.

Officers offer these tips:

- designate a sober driver before drinking;
 - use a taxi, call a sober friend or family member or use public transportation if impaired;
 - take advantage of local sober ride programs;
 - call 911 if a drunk driver is spotted on the road;
 - take the keys or assist in making other arrangements for someone who is about to drive or ride while impaired.
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Historic Coloma structure erupts in flames

By Loretta Kalb, Sacramento Bee

The historic Sierra Nevada House in Coloma on Highway 49 erupted in flames Monday afternoon, forcing evacuation of customers and drawing mutual aid from firefighting crews throughout the area, a CalFire spokesman said.

The fire was reported at 3:05pm Dec. 14 and more than an hour later was still actively burning, said CalFire spokesman Brice Bennett.

He said there was no immediate word on how the fire started, and the cause will be part of a upcoming investigation.

Owners of Nev.'s largest paper remain a secret

By Ric Anderson and Ray Brewer, Las Vegas Sun

Questions about who owns the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* and why they continue to refuse to come forward remained unanswered today, days after the publication sold for nearly \$40 million more than the paper and its parent company sold for just nine months ago.

The sale has prompted speculation about who's behind the purchase, but one name can be taken out of circulation: Brian Greenspun, owner, publisher and editor of the *Las Vegas Sun*.

"I already have a daily newspaper," Greenspun said today, denying he was the new buyer.

Greenspun said the backers of News + Media Capital Group LLC, which made the purchase, hadn't revealed themselves to him, even though the Sun is published and distributed under a joint operating agreement with the *R-J*. The Sun receives a portion of the *R-J*'s revenue under the agreement, which is regulated by the U.S. Department of Justice.

Greenspun said he has a good idea of the new owner's identity.

New Media Investment Group, which paid \$102 million for the holdings of the *R-J*'s parent company, Stephens Media, in March, will continue to run the organization's day-to-day operations. It is a publicly traded company, which netted \$37.5 million in accepting News + Media's offer of \$140 million.

Read the whole story

Public workers a burden to taxpayers in retirement

By Brad Branan, Sacramento Bee

The highest-paid local government official in the capital region last year worked just eight months as city manager in Lincoln, a suburb of 40,000.

A separation agreement with the city allowed James Estep to collect severance worth six months of pay and benefits, as well as money for unused leave time, putting his total pay for the year at \$470,000, more than three times his base pay for the time he worked.

While Estep represents the extreme, his story shows a key aspect of how local government employees are compensated. Base salary makes up just a portion of each employee's take-home pay, which can also include credit for unused vacation, allowances for uniforms and other job costs, and overtime pay. Collectively the extra pay can add up quickly, especially when an employee retires and cashes out his or her unused benefits.

The 50 highest-paid local government officials in Sacramento, Yolo, El Dorado and Placer counties made an average of \$265,000 last year, and one-third of the income was from special pay, the *Bee* analysis found. The income does not include employer payments for health care or pensions.

Read the whole story

Fake cell tower trees irk Placerville area residents

By Associated Press

Wireless communications companies have erected several cell towers dressed up as evergreen trees along Highway 50 under El Dorado County's strict design guidelines. But some residents are pushing back as new cell towers are proposed for areas deeper in the wilderness.

At least six highway-area "mono-pines" – cell towers dressed as faux trees – have been erected along Highway 50, but residents are organizing against a 90-foot tower to be built by Verizon Wireless on private acreage amid oak-studded hills above Arrowbee Lake in Placerville, the *Sacramento Bee* reported.

The complaints of residents highlight the challenges local governments face in trying to accommodate expanded cellular service in some of Northern California's picturesque areas.

Janet Barbieri, who lives about 400 feet from the proposed tower site, created a **website** with the support of some neighbors and is organizing community meetings to discuss the project.

"We all bought our property here because of the way it looks," Barbieri said. "It looks like a fake pine tree that doesn't belong there. It looks like it should be in an urban or industrial area."

The tower, which in a simulated photographic design looks like a spindly pine with gray panels sticking out, would serve a

remote region that includes upscale 5-acre country estates.

Verizon said in the documents submitted to the county for the Arrowbee Lake project that it had reviewed six other sites for a cellular tower to alleviate “poor coverage” and “reoccurring lost calls” in the area. The company deemed three sites inadequate for cellular transmission and said property owners at three other sites declined leasing agreements.

“We tried to find a site that will not only meet the technical and engineering requirements” for cellular service providers “but is also suitable for the neighborhood,” said Heidi Flato, a Verizon Wireless spokeswoman.

Placer County steps in to pay for Kings Beach lights

Placer County has agreed to pay for the electricity costs of 38 outdoor lights in Kings Beach.

Most of the lights are located within the county’s road right-of-way and were previously funded by the North Tahoe Public Utility District.

The district approached the county earlier this year about potentially taking over the payment of electricity for some or all of the lights. The district determined that paying for lighting was outside its mission and budget. The county reviewed the location and public benefit of the lights and determined that 38 lights, based on their illumination of roadway intersections, sidewalks, and the Kings Beach Elementary School, should remain functioning for public safety.

The annual cost for the lights is estimated to be \$7,500, and will be paid from the department of public works and facilities' road fund.