

EDC schools chief hasn't worked since DUI arrest

By Diana Lambert, Sacramento Bee

El Dorado County schools chief Jeremy Meyers hasn't returned to work since he was arrested Thursday for allegedly driving drunk for the second time this year, and the county Office of Education does not have an official explanation for his absence.

Meyers, 45, allegedly had a blood alcohol content of 0.19 percent, more than twice the legal limit of 0.08 percent, according to the CHP. He was arrested after he crashed his truck into a utility box at about 2pm and was suspected of driving while intoxicated.

County Office of Education spokeswoman Dina Gentry said Tuesday she doesn't have any information about when Meyers plans to return to his duties. She had no information on whether he has contacted anyone at the office about his plans. As an elected official, Meyers can set his own hours.

Read the whole story

Deputies: Man kills mom, brother in EDC home

By Sarah Heise, KCRA-TV

A man was arrested Wednesday after he shot and killed his mother and brother inside an El Dorado County home, deputies

said.

At about 5:15pm Nov. 11, officers went to a home in the 5400 block of Rocky Ridge Road in the Oak Hill area.

According to the El Dorado County Sheriff's Department, a woman said her husband, who drove up Tuesday from Sacramento County to his mother's house to help his mom with some chores, had not come home Wednesday afternoon.

Read the whole story

Caesars misses earnings mark

By The Street

Caesars Entertainment's third quarter earnings results missed analysts' expectations.

The Las Vegas-based holding company, which operates casinos such as Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Harveys at Stateline, reported a loss of \$5.44 per share.

Revenue increased to \$1.14 billion, up from \$1.01 billion in the year-ago period.

Read the whole story

Scientists gain understanding of untapped reservoirs

By Amy Miller, KTVU-TV

According to a widely held belief, you can't squeeze water from a rock. But researchers from UC Berkeley who are trying to better understand where water is stored in nature are challenging that old adage.

After nearly 10 years of studying a steep, 20-square-mile area near the South Fork Eel River in coastal Mendocino County, the scientists have shown that for trees and other plants, deep and highly fractured rock formations beneath the Earth's surface are a much larger water reservoir than was previously known.

The work to understand the role that "rock water" plays in the hydrologic cycle began in 2006 when researchers from UC Berkeley embarked on a multi-year study sponsored by the Keck Foundation called the Hydrowatch project. It was designed to precisely monitor and measure the pathways of water in Mendocino County's Angelo Coast Range Reserve as it cycles from the groundwater table to the tops of trees and into the atmosphere.

"We were really interested in learning the fate of precipitation in the land surface," explains Todd Dawson, professor of Integrative Biology at UC Berkeley. "So really trying to figure out when precipitation arrives at the site, where does it get into the rock, where does it get into the stream, how does it recharge the ground water, how much of it is used by the vegetation, and ultimately, how much of it ends up in the streams and going back out to the Pacific Ocean."

Read the whole story

UC proposes major enrollment expansion

By Katy Murphy, Bay Area News Group

Students applying to the University of California were heartened to hear Tuesday that the university has a new plan to help meet the soaring demand of in-state applicants by increasing in-state undergraduate enrollment by 10,000 – roughly 20 percent – over the next three years.

The budget state lawmakers approved last June earmarked an extra \$25 million for the University of California if the system registered 5,000 more in-state students by the 2016-17 academic year. But UC also plans to add 5,000 more slots over the two following years.

The proposed expansion follows a period of intense criticism of UC and months of intense wrangling with the Legislature over funding, tuition and enrollment.

[Read the whole story](#)

Gaming association, FBI ask the public to report illegal

gambling

By J.D. Morris, Las Vegas Sun

The American Gaming Association is asking the public for help with one of its top priorities at the moment: fighting against illegal gambling.

The Washington, D.C.-based casino industry lobbying group said Tuesday that it's cooperating with the FBI in asking the public to use the Internet Crime Complaint Center to report illegal gambling activities. The complaint center, also referred to as the IC3, allows individuals to submit information to the FBI about suspected criminal activity fueled by the Internet.

Those who fill out forms do not need to be victims of such crimes – the IC3 says it accepts reports from third parties, too.

Read the whole story

Officials: Public needs to be engaged because threat of catastrophic fires keeps growing



The Angora Fire destroyed 254 houses
on the South Shore in 2007.
Photo/Lake Valley Fire

By Linda Fine Conaboy

RENO – It may seem nonsensical to be thinking about wildland fire now that snow has fallen and skiers are gearing up for the season. But putting 2015's fire year to bed and preparing to confront 2016 head-on with a new action plan is what the Nevada Network of Fire Adapted Communities aims to do. And to their way of thinking, the time is now, not when fire is again an ugly threat.

The University of Nevada Cooperative Extension's Living with Fire Program hosted its second annual conference this week at the Atlantis hotel-casino in Reno.

"Our forests are not museums just sitting out there," Elwood Miller, the event coordinator, said. "They are changing. We must learn to live with fire, not continually suppress it. It's a part of our natural world, like wind, rain and sun. Fire is an enormous issue, particularly in the West."

In 2015, Miller said, 9.5 million acres burned with costs chewing through more than half of the U.S. Forest Service annual budget, costing upward of \$4 billion and going higher.

"We cannot afford this. Last year was a perfect storm of

threat, devastation and destruction,” Miller said. “Collaboration is the foundation of the national wildfire cohesive strategy, with a sustainable partnership containing a common goal, equal footing among the stakeholders and a sense of mutual obligation.”

According to each of the speakers, fire is a natural element; however, it is beginning to exhibit behaviors not seen before.

“We have unbounded development—an invasion of people, which is not compatible with fire,” Miller said.



The Super Scooper is a new tool in the U.S. Forest Service's box of suppression. Photo/LTN file

The collective wisdom of each of Monday's speakers allowed that fires occur naturally about every century and the burn is a good thing for the forests. But now, Miller said, fires are hotter, bigger and faster than ever before and firefighters are being asked to risk their lives to fight them.

“We should let fire play more of a role, but we also need to keep people safe,” he said.

Miller mentioned the Native American view of fire in the wild—a fire will let you know when it's ready to be fought. Consequently, there is little loss of life on Indian land, he said.

Many recent Western wildfires were discussed, including the devastating 2012 Waldo Canyon Fire in Colorado. Miller said in this disaster the recipe for death and destruction was in place: high temperatures, high winds and low humidity.

The fire covered more than 18,000 acres, caused the evacuation of 32,000 people, destroyed 346 homes and resulted in insurance claims of more than \$450 million.

The largest fire in Washington state's history and described in detail by Carlene Anders, executive director of the Carlton Complex Long Term Recovery Group, occurred in July 2014.

In an emotional talk, Anders said the fire moved in a massive tidal wave, first burning sagebrush, then bitter brush and finally trees. To add to the misery a fierce rainstorm began, not enough to douse the fire, but not letting up until considerable destruction occurred from the downpour.

"The impact of the fire is immense," Anders said. "Now we're facing going on two years of cascading effects. People still have emotional issues, we lost our tourist base, and wildlife has been decimated. Nearly 750,000 acres burned. We're now having to do surveys to re-establish property lines.

"You will never be made whole again after a fire," she said. But her sense of humor showed itself when she laughed and said, "Amazingly, not one marijuana crop was lost."

Along with the fact that fire is a natural element and suppression is not always the best medicine, speakers concluded that not everything can be saved by the fire department. Most agreed that the reality is people must learn to protect themselves.

How can individuals keep fire from knocking on our doors? By creating defensible space around their properties and removing debris from forest floors.



Mike Brown

Mike Brown, North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection District's chief, said everybody has a fire problem, cities as well forest communities; however, some of those city folk don't agree.

"Think about the Caughlin Fire and the Washoe Drive Fire [both in Washoe County]," he said. "In the Caughlin Fire, embers were blowing around the city, setting fire to people's junipers. We all need to be responsible to take care of our property. Fuel beds [like junipers] are susceptible to embers.

"Citizens must realize they have a responsibility to prevent fires. People need to assist us so we can assist them. They must be engaged with their firefighters, get to know them. We all need to be educated."

He commented on the 2007 Angora Fire on the outskirts of South Lake Tahoe, which he was a part of. There were 254 homes destroyed, \$11.7 million in direct firefighting costs and \$1 billion in lost tourist trade. It took nine days to knock down the fire—some people have rebuilt, but not everyone.

Firefighters will do everything possible to fight a fire, Brown said, including triage work. We make decisions on what we can defend, we train and we know our objectives.

"Safety and suppression is our No. 1 issue. But we don't have enough suppression personnel to put someone in front of everyone's home. Fire doesn't discriminate. We decide what's savable and what's defensible," Brown said. "Suppression costs are surging and insurance companies are starting to decline coverage in some areas."

He described the hidden logistics involved in fighting the recent massive and lengthy fires that have happened in the West –things like food, toilets, laundry, security, medical personnel, helicopters, securing local water for suppression and housing among myriad details.

Brown said this is why everyone needs to work together to establish fire-adaptive communities.

The free conference drew people from all venues committed to establishing fire-adapted communities. Attendees included community leaders, homeowners, governmental officials, landscape professionals and others representing volunteer firefighting groups as well as fire professionals.

When asked what she would take away from her day at the conference, Julie Habara from Reno said she attended because she's an interested homeowner and thought this would be a good way to get fire information for both she and her neighbors.

"The sessions expanded my expectations. I think every resident should have this knowledge; it's good for the community at large. I think the awareness of what I need for emergency preparedness, like cleaning up my yard, defensible space, maintaining my property in excellent condition and having emergency contact information is vital," Habara said.

A fire-adapted community is one located in a fire-prone area that requires little assistance from firefighters during a wildfire. These residents know the dangers of living in a potentially hazardous area and understand that the responsibility for living there is theirs. Additionally, they have educated themselves and learned the skills needed to survive wildfire. They know that they must evacuate early and effectively and how to survive if trapped.

Like every state, Nevada has specific rules and regulations pertaining to insurance, all covered succinctly by Rajat Jain, chief insurance examiner in the property and casualty section

for the Nevada Division of Insurance.

State Forester Bob Roper said that fire-adapted communities represent a culture change, something that takes time to achieve. It doesn't happen overnight, he said, but "we try to get everyone who's a stakeholder to understand their roles."

According to Roper, government involvement is not the answer; the public is the No. 1 ingredient in fire strategy.

The steps to make a community fire safe are:

- Remove the huge fuel loads that have been allowed to accumulate in the forests
- Create defensible space
- To improve smoke management determine the proper time to do prescribed burns
- Ensure communities become fire adaptive so that structures can survive fire.

"Fires don't respect jurisdictional lines. We can't let those barriers inhibit success," Roper said.

He added there needs to be better fire-response times and to make sure that the closest resource is the one that responds to a fire.

Alicia Reban, executive director of the Nevada Land Trust said her agency was established to preserve the open spaces in Nevada for people and wildlife. The group has three goals: land restoration and stewardship, education, and acquisition. To that end she says there's a big need for fire-adaptive communities.

"We want to bring all the stakeholders together and not simply apply Band-Aids after a fire," she said.

Notes:

• For more information on this program or to join the Fire Adapted Communities Network, go **online** or call 775.784.4848.

Toxin in crab among impacts of warm sea that alarm scientists

By Peter Fimrite and Kurtis Alexander, San Francisco Chronicle

The poisoning of Dungeness crab off the California coast by a mysterious algae bloom may be bad news for the seafood industry, but to marine biologists and climate scientists, it is a frightening omen of future distress to a vibrant ecosystem.

Experts say the toxin in the algae, which likely flourished in this year's record-high ocean temperatures, is one symptom of a wholesale shift in the physical and biological makeup of the Pacific Ocean – a transformation so abrupt and merciless that it is endangering species and forcing migrations before our eyes.

“We are talking about a whole ecosystem change – including a lot of changes besides just the blooms,” said Raphael Kudela, a professor of ocean sciences at UC Santa Cruz. “It’s really restructuring the way California looks.”

The poisonous algae, multiplying since April, is now estimated

to be 40 miles wide, in some places reaching down as far as two football fields, marine biologists say. It is the biggest and most toxic bloom researchers have ever seen.

The primary culprit, the experts say, is consistently high ocean temperatures caused by climate aberrations that are being reinforced by a strengthening El Niño weather pattern in the tropics.

Read the whole story

Snow impacting some school districts

Students at Zephyr Cove and Whittell High schools will be picked up at only the main bus stops today because of the snow.

Washoe County schools are on a two-hour delay.

No other schools in the basin are reporting impacts to the school day because of the snow.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

6th-grader's parents sue

LTUSD, TVES



Crystal Aguilar is at the center of a lawsuit against Lake Tahoe Unified School District. Photo/Provided

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe Unified School District faces a lawsuit stemming from an incident at Tahoe Valley Elementary School that nearly killed a student.

Todd and Marisela Aguilar on behalf of their daughter, Crystal, who is now a sixth-grader at South Tahoe Middle School, are suing the district, TVES and Grace Magnussen. Magnussen was a physical education and special education teacher at TVES at the time of the April incident. She has since left the district.

“For us we would like the school to take more responsibility with these types of children and their needs,” Todd Aguilar told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Crystal was born with a crushed aortic valve and three holes in her heart. Two were repaired within days of her birth. She has had health issues ever since as well as learning disabilities. Each year her parents explain to school officials what their daughter’s limitations are.

On April 15 Crystal was told to run laps with the other kids; this in turn caused her to have a heart attack, her father said.

It is what happened that day that has led to the lawsuit. A claim was filed with the district in May and it was rejected in June. A court date has been set for February.

"We are working on it together," Superintendent Jim Tarwater said of the lawsuit. He could not discuss the district's stance as is normal with any litigation.

Mike Doyle, who is on the school board, is also Crystal's pediatrician.

The Aguilers contend the teacher should have known having Crystal run would have risked her health. It in turn meant more medical expenses for the family. The suit also contends Crystal faces permanent disability because of the incident, will have more expenses and that the family is losing income based on Todd Aguilar having to miss work because of his daughter's needs.

"The best outcome for Crystal is it's all about her health. We want to make sure she gets the proper care she needs and she can move on with her life," Aguilar said.

The couple also hopes the lawsuit will ensure teachers are properly trained to handle the needs of children like Crystal.

Crystal has been having seizures lately, which according to her father, was not happening before the heart attack. A trip to UC Davis Medical Center in Sacramento is scheduled for this month to try to address this latest medical issue.