

Authorities criticized for lack of warning about wildfire

By Associated Press

High school math teacher Bill Davis watched from his home as smoke mounted from one of the most destructive fires in California in recent memory.

From a previous fire in late July, he knew to expect a recorded call on his cellphone or look for someone coming through the neighborhood with a bullhorn yelling for people to evacuate.

“None of that happened,” he said. His house in Lake County burned after he finally rounded up his cats and left.

Davis was among a number of survivors who say they never got an official evacuation notice Saturday about the blaze – a situation that raises questions about whether more could have been done to notify residents.

Authorities defended their warnings and rescue attempts, saying they did all they could to reach people in the remote area of homes, many prized for their privacy.

“You may get that notice, or you may not, depending on how fast that fire is moving. If you can see the fire, you need to be going,” said Lynnette Round, a spokeswoman for CalFire.

Round said two men in Calaveras County – 66-year-old Mark McCloud and 82-year-old Owen Goldsmith – died after rejecting orders to evacuate.

Three people were killed in a separate fire in Lake County. It wasn't clear if they received evacuation notices. However, two

of them declined requests by friends and family to leave.

The body of 72-year-old Barbara McWilliams, who used a walker, was found in her home in Anderson Springs. Her caregiver, Jennifer Hittson, said there were no evacuation orders when she left McWilliams' home around 3 p.m. Saturday and no indication the fire was that serious.

She asked McWilliams if she wanted to leave but the retired teacher declined, saying the fire didn't seem bad.

Elsewhere in Anderson Springs, the body of former newspaper reporter Leonard Neft, 69, was found near his burnt car after what may have been an attempt to escape, his daughter Joslyn Neft said Friday. His wife had asked him to leave earlier Saturday, but he said the fire looked far away.

Elsewhere in Lake County, the body of Bruce Beven Burns, 65, was found in a building on the grounds of his brother's recycling business, where Burns also lived. It's unknown why he stayed.

Davis said he waited for an evacuation notice until the electricity failed. At that point, he called CalFire for information and waited on hold for an hour.

"When I finally got through ... they said my street was not on an evacuation order, but you might want to leave. I was never told, 'Get the hell out of there, there's a huge fire coming at you,'" he said.

The Lake County sheriff's office has declined to respond to repeated phone calls and emails seeking comment on how and when residents were notified. In a statement issued earlier this week, sheriff's Lt. Steve Brooks said CalFire requested evacuation assistance at 1:50 p.m. Saturday but it remains unclear which communities were notified and how.

CalFire spokesman Richard Cordova could not confirm early

evacuation details but said that given the speed of the fire, the death toll could have been much higher.

“Any loss of a life is heartfelt, but there should have been a lot more lives lost with the way that fire was moving,” he said.

The Lake County fire tore through 62 square miles in 12 hours, burning nearly 600 homes and causing thousands of residents to flee. Lucas Spelman, fire captain for CalFire, said 15,400 people were under evacuation.

Lake County Supervisor Jim Comstock, 65, who lives in Middletown, said he didn’t receive an evacuation order and he believes authorities didn’t have time to issue orders in person, given the fire’s speed.

Comstock stayed on his 1,700-acre ranch with his wife, daughter and grandchildren, battling the flames. The fire scorched all but 50 acres of his land and spared his house and barn.

“I’m old, and I’m ornery,” he said of the reason he stayed.

Gary Herrin defended his 3 acres in Middletown. No one told him to leave, he said, and he wouldn’t have anyway.

When the fire hit his street around 5:30 p.m. Saturday, Herrin said, he and several others used water from wells and swimming pools to battle flames, saving eight homes.

At 10 p.m. he collapsed by a swimming pool with about 6 inches of water left. “We were going to stand our ground, and we decided to fight,” he said.

The story brought a shudder from James McMullen, a former California state fire marshal who runs a fire consulting business in Davis.

“Some people don’t realize how intense a wildfire is and they

say, 'Oh, I'll just stay here with my garden hose and leap up on the roof, and yet that's the worst thing they can do,'" he said.

2 ex-Calif. governors come out against teacher tenure

By Bob Egelko, San Francisco Chronicle

Former Govs. Pete Wilson and Arnold Schwarzenegger and constitutional scholar Laurence Tribe joined the legal attack on California's teacher tenure laws, telling a state appeals court the job-security and seniority statutes leave some of the state's neediest students in the hands of incompetent teachers.

It is "nearly impossible to remove ineffective teachers from classrooms" because of the state laws, lawyers for Wilson and Schwarzenegger said in a filing to the Second District Court of Appeal in Los Angeles. After 15 years of legislative inaction and an unsuccessful 2005 ballot measure backed by Schwarzenegger to change the tenure law, it is time for the courts to act, they said.

No other state allows "such lopsided school laws which favor teacher interests over the rights of students," said a second brief coauthored by Tribe, a Harvard law professor with liberal leanings whose students have included future President Barack Obama and U.S. Chief Justice John Roberts. Other academics who signed the brief included Rachel Moran, a UCLA law school professor and former dean.

Read the whole story

Gaines makes it official – running for EDC supervisor



Beth Gaines

Beth Gaines, who represents part of Tahoe in the California Assembly, made it official Friday that she will be running for the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors.

Gaines, who now lives in El Dorado Hills, will seek the seat currently occupied by Ron Mikulaco.

The election is next year.

Term limits will force her out of the Assembly.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Recent moves propel more

drone flights in Nev.

By Daniel Rothberg, Las Vegas Sun

Eighteen months after its creation, Nevada's drone test site is finally gaining momentum.

After the Federal Aviation Administration broadened the state's authority earlier this year, the site conducted more flights in one week than it had in all months prior. It now has a NASA contract and a service agreement with the FAA for flight trials and research.

The test site and Nevada's developing drone industry was the primary focus of an FAA-sponsored meeting Thursday in the Clark County Commission Chambers, where officials from federal, state and local government attempted to shed light on projections for the future of the industry in the state.

Read the whole story

Law firm hired to help defend Nev. ed program

By Sean Whaley, Las Vegas Review-Journal

CARSON CITY – Attorney General Adam Laxalt announced Thursday that he has retained a nationally recognized law firm to help defend against the ACLU legal challenge to the state's new Education Savings Account program.

The firm Bancroft PLLC will provide the attorney general's office with legal strategy and analysis on the case, which

Gov. Brian Sandoval has urged be resolved as quickly as possible.

Leading Bancroft's involvement in the case will be former U.S. Solicitor General Paul D. Clement, who has argued over 75 cases before the U.S. Supreme Court and is widely recognized as a top appellate advocate in the country.

Read the whole story

Scorching year continues with hottest summer on record

By Tom Randall Brian K Sullivan, Bloomberg

This is what global warming feels like.

Last month was the hottest August on record, topping out the hottest summer on record, according to data released on Thursday by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. It was the sixth month this year to set a new record: February, March, May, June, July, and August. This has been the hottest start to a year on record and the hottest 12 months on record. It follows the hottest calendar year (2014), and the hottest decade.

In 136 years of global temperature data, we are in uncharted territory. And this year's extremes are likely to continue as a strong El Niño weather pattern in the Pacific Ocean continues to rip more heat into the atmosphere. There's now a 97 percent chance that 2015 will set yet another record, according to NOAA.

Read the whole story

Regulators OK \$1.5 million fine against Caesars

By J.D. Morris, Las Vegas Sun

Nevada regulators on Thursday approved a \$1.5 million state fine against Caesars Entertainment Corp. because of lapses in the company's anti-money-laundering efforts.

The Treasury Department's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, also known as FinCen, announced last week that Caesars would be fined an \$8 million federal penalty for failing to properly defend itself against money laundering at its flagship Caesars Palace casino.

The Nevada Gaming Commission on Sept. 17 approved the additional state penalty Caesars agreed to pay over the same charges, which dealt in part with private gaming salons at Caesars Palace that catered to high rollers.

[Read the whole story](#)

Mourning the dead in California's wildfires

By Frank Shyong, Hailey Branson-Potts and Paige St. John, Los Angeles Times

As firefighters continued to make progress on two deadly

wildfires in Northern California, there was mourning for those who could not outrun the flames and were killed.

Citing the five deaths in the Lake and Butte fires, officials urged people to heed evacuation orders.

Capt. Buck Condit, a spokesman for CalFire, said there's little firefighters can do to help people who don't leave.

Two of those killed in the Butte fire – 82-year-old Owen Goldsmith and 66-year-old Mark McCloud of Mountain Ranch – “were in the evacuation areas and did not heed those warnings,” CalFire spokesman Daniel Berlant said.

The other three known deaths resulted from the Valley Fire.

Read the whole story

Gaming Commission approves regulations for skill-based slot machines

By J.D. Morris, Las Vegas Sun

Nevada's foray into skill-based slot machines took a big step forward today when state regulators gave final approval to the rules that will govern the new games.

The Nevada Gaming Commission unanimously approved a set of regulations previously crafted by the Gaming Control Board over the course of multiple public meetings. The entire process was kicked into motion earlier this year when the state Legislature passed Senate Bill 9, which directed

regulators to adopt rules promoting “innovative, alternative and advanced technology” in casino games.

The regulations create three distinct game categories: traditional chance-based games, skill games, where a player’s abilities largely govern the outcome, and hybrid games, where a combination of skill and chance affect the result.

Read the whole story

Nevada foreclosure rate is back to No. 1

By Eli Segall, Las Vegas Sun

For the first time in almost a year, Nevada is back on top of America’s foreclosure heap as lenders repossess a rising number of homes.

One in every 507 homes statewide received a foreclosure-related filing last month, up 16 percent from July and 4 percent from August 2014, according to a new report from RealtyTrac.

Nevada’s foreclosure rate was highest in the country last month and more than double the U.S. average. One in every 1,205 homes nationally had a foreclosure filing in August, down 12 percent from July and 6 percent year-over-year.

Read the whole story