

Alpine County stores pass tobacco sales test

Clerks at the Markleeville General Store and Lake Alpine Resort knew to ask a youth decoy for identification and to refuse the sale of tobacco.

Alpine County Tobacco Control Program recently conducted its annual local survey to make sure businesses are complying with laws aimed at protecting youth from tobacco. Under the supervision of an adult chaperone, a specially trained youth decoy attempts to purchase a tobacco product at each retail location.

Businesses are required to train their employees to ask for identification from anyone who appears to be under the age of 27, and to refuse the sale to any person under the age of 18.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Climate change could bring twice as many big El Niños

By Sammy Roth, Desert Sun

Scientists have long wondered whether rising global temperatures will lead to an increase in intense El Niño events, like the one that could bring major storms to Southern California this winter. According to a groundbreaking study published Monday, the answer is a resounding, “Yes.”

If human beings don’t slow their emission of planet-warming

greenhouse gases, extreme El Niños could nearly double in frequency – from once every 28 years to once every 16 years on average, the new study found. That could spell trouble for California, which experienced mudslides, flooding and \$500 million in damage during an intense El Niño in the late 1990s.

The idea that global warming will lead to stronger El Niños makes perfect sense, said Bill Patzert, a NASA climatologist who was not involved in the study. That's because El Niños are driven largely by warming water in the tropical Pacific Ocean, which will get especially hot as the world temperatures rise.

An increase in extreme El Niño events will probably be accompanied by an increase in extreme La Niña events, which lead to dry winters in California.

Read the whole story

Amodei: VA may need 'new culture' to improve

By Ray Hagar, Reno Gazette-Journal

Rep. Mark Amodei, R-Carson City, painted a sobering picture of the Veterans Administration on Monday at a veterans town hall meeting in Reno.



Mark Amodei

He said the lumbering and massive federal bureaucracy that takes care of the nation's former military members needs to change issues with its management if it is ever going to improve.

"I continue to believe that real change in the Veterans Administration will not occur until you get a new culture or a new set of personnel at the mid and upper levels of management of the VA," Amodei told a group of veterans at the California Building in Idlewild Park.

Read the whole story

Study: Ongoing drought to cost Calif. \$2.74 bil.

By Sharon Bernstein, Reuters

California's ongoing drought will cost the economy in the most populous U.S. state an estimated \$2.74 billion in 2015 and lead to the loss of 10,000 seasonal farm jobs, despite overall health in the state's agricultural sector, researchers said.

Agricultural economists at UC Davis said the drought, entering its fourth year, would impact the state more in 2015 than in 2014, when the total cost to the economy was estimated to be \$2.2 billion.

The report, released on Tuesday, also estimated that with dry conditions and difficulty obtaining water for irrigation.

Read the whole story

S. Tahoe prefers punishment over prevention when it comes to dealing with animals in trash

By Kathryn Reed

Bear boxes won't be mandatory in South Lake Tahoe any time soon.

Instead, the City Council members on Tuesday chose to continue to react to a problem instead of being proactive. The majority of the council believes mandating bear boxes punishes those who are not creating a problem.

The Waste Management Joint Powers Authority has been working for about a year to come up with regulations that would pertain to all three jurisdictions – the city, El Dorado County and Douglas County.

With the council not wanting bear boxes to be necessary with new residential construction or remodels, this conflicts with what El Dorado County already has on the books. At the last JPA meeting, Supervisor Sue Novasel made no indication the county would want to soften its rules.

"It comes down to the property owner, not the property," Mayor Hal Cole said.

The boxes also count as coverage per the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

The JPA board meets in September with the goal of adopting an

ordinance. In order for an item to be approved all three members must be in agreement.

"I'm OK with the bear-proof containers and not the box. I think they work just as well," Councilman Austin Sass said.

John Marchini with South Tahoe Refuse said bears appear to be getting smarter and learning to open the twisty tops.

He also noted it's not just bears that are getting into people's garbage. Coyotes, raccoons and dogs are common, with crows doing a bang-up job in spreading litter.

Although STR has changed its protocols to not pick up trash before 7am, people are still leaving garbage out the night before. It's put in plastic bags and topless cans that can easily become a buffet for wildlife. STR cleans up the mess on trash days. Crews have cameras and can document the situation so the offender is then notified.

Clean Tahoe, the nonprofit that deals with picking up after other people, is also out cleaning up debris.

The council agreed with the JPA's recommendations for punishment – warning the first time, buy a bear-proof container or pay a fine for the second offense, install a bear box on the third offense.

"It gives us a hammer for repeat offenders," City Councilwoman JoAnn Connor said. She represents the city on the JPA.

Sass said this protocol contradicts what the vacation rental ordinance says. There was no further discussion and no comment by the city attorney.

The council also likes the idea of mandating commercial entities – including multi-family dwellings – lock dumpsters at dusk or at the close of business.

The plan is also to have an educational component so people

can better understand why human food and wildlife are not a good combination.

While the JPA had talked about a loan program for people to buy bear boxes, that idea has been tabled for now.

Who will be responsible for the enforcement – most likely STR; and who will send out citations – most likely individual jurisdictions – still need to be solidified.

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In other action:

- The council agreed at the urging of Planning Commissioner Judy Brown to revisit the historic sign designation criteria so the Trout Farm sign might qualify. The sign is nearly 70-years-old.

- The city will be sending letters next week to all property owners advising them of the vacation home rental ordinance that takes effect Oct. 1. The letter will also include comprehensive information about how to “leave no impact”.

More California babies born addicted to drugs

By Phillip Reese, Sacramento Bee

A growing number of California infants are born addicted to drugs, according to a Bee review of new state data.

About 1,190 California newborns were diagnosed with drug

withdrawal syndrome last year, up more than 50 percent from a decade earlier, according to hospital discharge data from the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development. That translates to about one addicted newborn for every 400 births.

The increase comes as the number of California births has dropped sharply.



[Read the whole story](#)

EDC man admits embezzling from employer

An El Dorado County man on Aug. 18 pleaded guilty to wire fraud in connection with a scheme to embezzle money from his former employer.

According to court documents, Jeffrey Lamson, 51, of El Dorado Hills embezzled more than \$400,000 between 2009 and 2011 from a company located in Placer and Sacramento counties while he served as controller. Lamson used company funds to make unauthorized payments to himself and others and made payments to a fictitious vendor, controlled by Lamson, for services

that were never performed.

Lamson is not in custody. He is scheduled to be sentenced Nov. 24. Lamson faces a maximum of 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine or twice the gain or loss caused by the fraud.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

SLTPD K9 program benefits from donation



Officer Scott Crevelli and Rici are partners on the South Lake Tahoe Police Department. Photo/Tracy Franklin



Lisa Maloff paid for Rici, SLTPD's newest dog, along with Officer Scott Crevelli to be trained as his handler. Photo/Tracy Franklin

Lisa Maloff knows what it is like to have a police K9 stop a suspect in his tracks.

The South Lake Tahoe resident on Tuesday talked about her experience with a would-be robber who was apprehended with the help of a police dog. She was at the Aug. 18 City Council meeting to be recognized for the contribution she made to the local police department.

Her donation paid for Ricci, a 22-month-old Belgian Malinois,

to join the department. The contribution also covers the cost of the dog's training, a new K9 vehicle, veterinary bills, food, maintenance and continued K9 handler training for a year. Officer Scott Crevelli is Ricci's handler.

"The K9 program saves lives. I'm so glad our program is healthy," Mayor Hal Cole said.

Maloff was able see how her money was spent during a demonstration at the airport. Officers set up a scenario where the police dogs had to find a "suspect".

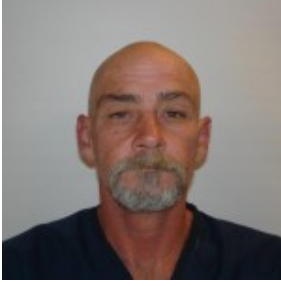
Also at the meeting, Maloff presented the South Lake Tahoe Police Canine Association with a check for \$25,000 to buy a bulletproof vest and jacket for Ricci.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

2 DCSO vehicles hit during pursuit

Two Douglas County sheriff's vehicles were damaged Monday in a pursuit of a suspected drunken driver.

Deputes on Monday about 5:13pm responded to a reported DUI on a red Dodge pickup. The vehicle was located and stopped in the parking lot of Lampe Park where deputies began a DUI investigation. Deputies said the driver, 56 year old Michael Clifford Stewart, started his vehicle and drove away from them.



Michael
Clifford
Stewart

Stewart allegedly rammed his vehicle that was behind him and continued to elude deputies. He then reportedly turned east onto Highway 88 and then made a U-turn to travel west. As he made the U-turn, Stewart rammed a patrol vehicle a second time.

However, this time Stewart's vehicle was blocked. He was removed from his vehicle and placed into custody on charges of felony DUI, assault with a deadly weapon, felony eluding, expired registration and destruction of property.

One of the deputies was treated for a minor injury.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Missing paddleboarder found safe

The paddleboarder who went missing last week in South Lake Tahoe has been located.

Zbigniew "Zibi" Moryn called officers this morning to confirm he was safe. He is traveling to several areas of the United States and is currently in Missouri.

Moryn, who is from Poland, told officers a personal watercraft wake combined with strong winds knocked him off the board. The wind quickly carried his board away from him, which had his lifejacket and GoPro camera on it. He believed it was safer to swim to shore. He returned the oar to South Tahoe Standup Paddle at El Dorado Beach.

The board was found by a boater about one-half mile offshore from Timber Cove Marina on Aug. 12 about 4:45pm.

It was the company that alerted officers to the board being found without a person.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report