

Nev. students to face heavy year of testing

By Trevon Milliard, Reno Gazette-Journal

Last school year was anything but normal for Washoe County students.

From elementary to high school, every state-required standardized test was replaced with a new one designed to demand more of students, including the exit exams required to graduate in Nevada.

High school students were also forced, for the first time, to take an additional test – the ACT college-entrance exam. Students who don't participate won't graduate.

All these new tests will return this fall and affect even more of Nevada's 450,000 students. But the state has some big kinks to work out. Almost every standardized test stumbled in its 2014-15 rollout, with some exams falling flat on their faces.

For the first time, students took to the computer for the annual tests given to every Nevada student from third through eighth grade. They were supposed to be "smart" tests, adjusting the difficulty of the next question based on students' previous answers.

Read the whole story

Law bars fines for dead lawns during drought

By Melanie Mason, Los Angeles Times

Cities and counties will no longer be able to impose fines on residents for unsightly brown lawns while the state is in a drought, under a bill signed by Gov. Jerry Brown.

The measure, by Assemblywoman Cheryl Brown, D-Rialto, prohibits local governments from issuing fines for violations of “lawn maintenance” ordinances when the governor has declared a state of emergency due to drought conditions.

Brown has said she’s aware of a number of cities that have levied fines or issued warnings to residents who allowed their lawns to go brown.

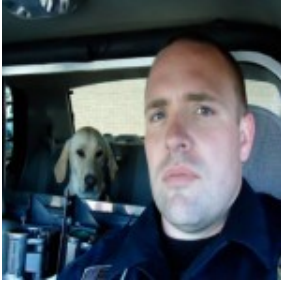
Read the whole story

Newbie to SLTPD involved in fatal shooting

By Kathryn Reed

A police officer with 10 years of experience who joined the South Lake Tahoe department in January is responsible for the killing of an unarmed suspect in June.

Officer Josh Klinge, 35, remains on paid administrative leave.



Josh Klinge

Officers were called to the Tahoe Hacienda Motel on Lake Tahoe Boulevard at 2:40am June 15 because of reports of a woman who was screaming and crying.

A single bullet fired by Klinge killed Kris Jackson, 22, of Sacramento.

Jackson was on criminal probation at the time of the shooting. On June 1, he had been arrested by South Lake Tahoe police officers for allegedly possessing several baggies of cocaine, scales and packaging materials. On May 21, he had been arrested by local officers on a Sacramento failure to appear warrant related to a drug possession charge.

The deceased's family has hired attorney Alan Laskin. The attorney questions whether proper commands were given to Jackson to stop as he was climbing out a hotel bathroom.

Shortly after the shooting the police department issued a statement saying, "The involved officer's statement explains he perceived a deadly threat from Kris Jackson. After interviews and a search of the crime scene, no firearm or other weapon was located."

The El Dorado County District Attorney's Office is conducting the criminal investigation to determine if Klinge was justified in the shooting.

District Attorney Vern Pierson told *Lake Tahoe News* he hopes the investigation will be wrapped up in 30 days, but is making no promises.

“We need forensic items to be completed,” he said.

Per protocol, SLTPD will be conducting a separate internal investigation to determine if Klinge followed department policies. This was the first officer involved shooting in South Lake Tahoe in more than 10 years.

Before starting with SLTPD, Klinge was an officer with Ceres Police Department from May 2007 to January this year. Prior to that he was a deputy with the Merced County Sheriff’s Department from December 2004-May 2007. He attended the Fresno City College police academy in 2003. At Ceres, Klinge was a K-9 officer.

Drought may increase West Nile cases

By Sophie Mattson, San Jose Mercury News

Laura Jaramillo woke up one morning in the summer of 2005 and sensed something was horribly wrong. After going to the hospital, she fell into a coma and spent six weeks fighting for her life – waking up to find her right side paralyzed.

Doctors were baffled until they discovered the culprit – the West Nile virus.

“I had to learn how to eat, walk and talk all over again,” said Jaramillo, 69, of Oakley. “But I was just glad to be alive.”

Thirty-one Californians last year weren’t as fortunate. They succumbed to West Nile infection in one of the worst outbreaks the Golden State has seen in years. More than 800 state

residents were infected.

Read the whole story

Polling places getting lonely on election day

By John Wildermuth, San Francisco Chronicle

With more and more California voters casting ballots by mail, the neighborhood polling place is becoming one of the loneliest spots in town on election day, forcing local and state officials to puzzle out what to do about it.

In the June 2014 statewide primary, 69 percent of the turnout was by mail ballots, triple the 23 percent in 2000. In November's general election, fewer than 40 percent of the ballots were cast in person at the polls.

The break between the two types of voting is even more stark in typically low-turnout special elections.

It's a situation that's frustrating for the poll workers, who have to sit with nothing to do from before the polls open at 7am until after they close at 8pm. It's also expensive for the counties, which not only have to train and pay the poll workers, but also must find and secure potential polling places and shoulder the costs of transporting and storing the voting machines and other equipment.

While tiny rural Alpine and Sierra counties already are all-mail, all the time, don't expect California to go that route anytime soon. As Secretary of State Alex Padilla noted soon after being elected in November, "Many people still prefer to vote at the polls. Including my mother."

Read the whole story

Man with Tahoe connections arrested in kidnap case

By Abby Phillip, Washington Post

A bizarre kidnapping case that police once called a hoax took yet another surprising turn Monday. The FBI issued a warrant for the arrest of a 38-year-old Harvard Law School graduate in connection with the case and a separate alleged home invasion that occurred last month.



Matthew Muller

In court documents unsealed Monday, the FBI said that there is probable cause to believe that Matthew D. Muller of Orangevale kidnapped Denise Huskins from a Vallejo home on March 23.

At the time, her boyfriend Aaron Quinn told police that assailants entered the home in the early morning, drugged them and tied him up, and disappeared with Huskins. She appeared mysteriously days later in her hometown, unharmed after a person or persons claiming to be her kidnapper demanded thousands of dollars in ransom.

Vallejo police said after Huskins reappeared that the situation was likely a hoax and that there was no evidence that there had even been a kidnapping.

Months later, the FBI's statement on Muller's arrest appears to vindicate Huskins's and Quinn's story.

Muller had been arrested in connection with a home invasion robbery case on June 5 at his South Lake Tahoe home and was charged with home invasion, burglary, assault with a deadly weapon and great bodily injury in that case.

Read the whole story

Man claims self-defense in Tahoe bear killing



The bear that was shot to death last week is removed from the forest. Photo/Toogee Sielsch

By Jeff DeLong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Authorities are investigating the shooting death of a bear at Lake Tahoe last week and say they already know who did it.

The unidentified South Lake Tahoe resident said he shot the black bear Thursday night in self-defense, said Capt. Patrick Foy of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Foy said game wardens had previously offered the man a permit to legally shoot the bear due to damage at his property but he turned it down due to fear of retribution by animal activists.

Bear advocates dispute accounts as described by the Department of Wildlife based on an interview with the man, with some suggesting the animal may have been shot out of a tree.

Read the whole story

Exxon knew of climate change in 1981, email says

By Suzanne Goldenberg, Guardian

ExxonMobil, the world's biggest oil company, knew as early as 1981 of climate change – seven years before it became a public issue, according to a newly discovered email from one of the firm's own scientists. Despite this the firm spent millions over the next 27 years to promote climate denial.

The email from Exxon's in-house climate expert provides evidence the company was aware of the connection between fossil fuels and climate change, and the potential for carbon-cutting regulations that could hurt its bottom line, over a generation ago – factoring that knowledge into its decision about an enormous gas field in south-east Asia. The field, off the coast of Indonesia, would have been the single largest source of global warming pollution at the time.

“Exxon first got interested in climate change in 1981 because it was seeking to develop the Natuna gas field off Indonesia,” Lenny Bernstein, a 30-year industry veteran and Exxon's former in-house climate expert, wrote in the email. “This is an immense reserve of natural gas, but it is 70% CO₂,” or carbon dioxide, the main driver of climate change.

However, Exxon's public position was marked by continued refusal to acknowledge the dangers of climate change, even in response to appeals from the Rockefellers, its founding family, and its continued financial support for climate denial. Over the years, Exxon spent more than \$30m on thinktanks and researchers that promoted climate denial, according to Greenpeace.

Exxon said last week that it now acknowledges the risk of climate change and does not fund climate change denial groups.

Read the whole story

California overusing its natural resources

By Mathis Wackernagel, Sacramento Bee

The drought in California has made the economic risks of living beyond the means of nature all too clear. Just last month, estimates pegged the state's economic losses from the drought at \$2.7 billion, an enormous number that still fails to capture the toll on individual farmers and farmworkers.

Water, however, isn't the only natural resource that our state is overusing and must manage more carefully to ensure a resilient future.

On Tuesday, the United States will go into ecological deficit. That means our nation will be using more of nature's renewable resources and services than our ecosystems can regenerate in the entire year. Of all 50 states, California is running the largest ecological deficit, according to our analysis, which we will release Tuesday in a report called "State of the States." We found we would need a land area equal to eight – eight! – Californias to support the "ecological footprint" of California residents.

Read the whole story

Deputies rescue injured man from Rubicon Trail

A man was seriously injured in the Rubicon Spring area of the Rubicon Jeep Trail.

Because of low clouds, thunderstorms, lightning, wind, and heavy downpours in the area, no helicopter could respond on the morning of July 8.

.The patient was stabilized as best as possible and the decision was made to drive him out by an El Dorado County sheriff's OHV unit. The deputies loaded the patient into the EDSO Rubicon Jeep at Buck Island Lake.

While transporting the patient, there was only room for one deputy and the injured male. The second deputy had to walk. The trail was extra dangerous due to the heavy rain and limited visibility.

As of today, the patient is reportedly in good condition. The name and hometown of the person have not been released, nor has any info about how the person was hurt or what the injuries were.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report