

Truckee crews keep fire to less than 1 acre

Truckee firefighters were able to contain a fire in the South Ponderosa neighborhood on Palisades Drive to one-quarter acre.

Officials said no structures were damaged nor were they threatened in the June 23 blaze. The fire consumed natural vegetation.

The cause is under investigation.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Cyclist hit on Pioneer Trail dies

By James Gilbert, Yuma Sun

Yuma, Ariz., resident Donald Michael Irwin, who was hit by a vehicle last week while riding his bike in South Lake Tahoe has died, according to the family.

Jay Irwin, a federal magistrate judge for the U.S. District Court for the District of Arizona in Yuma, said his brother was taken off life support and passed away that afternoon.

“(Donald) was probably out riding in preparation for another triathlon,” Jay Irwin said of the accident in which his 70-year-old brother was killed.

The California Highway Patrol reports that the incident happened as a 35-year-old California man was driving his 1997 Jeep Grand Cherokee northbound on Pioneer Trail while going between 45 and 50 mph. Irwin was traveling in the same direction at about 20 mph.

Read the whole story

Taxing time ahead for Nevada business

By Bill O'Driscoll, Reno Gazette-Journal

Come July, life will get more taxing for Nevada business.

That's when the so-called "commerce tax," a new state levy based on annual gross revenue and the core of the historic tax package approved by the 2015 Legislature, starts.

The first annual payment to the state Department of Taxation won't be due for another year – summer 2016 – but the levy will be based on gross revenue generated within Nevada's borders as of July 1, 2015.

And, observers say, it behooves businesses – even those small enough not to meet the tax's minimum threshold of \$4 million annual adjusted gross revenue – to pay attention now given its size and complexity.

Read the whole story

Markleeville fire grows, smoke fills valley

While the Washington Fire continues to grow, the town of Markleeville has not been hit.

The fire burning south of the Alpine County enclave is at 16,544 acres.

It was first spotted the night of June 19. Lightning ignited the blaze and horrendous winds have fanned it.

There are 11 helicopters and eight air tankers working to contain the fire. This is in addition to the personnel on the ground. The fire is burning out of control – with zero percent containment.

Highways 4 and 89 in the Monitor Pass area are closed. Turtle Rock and Indian Creek campgrounds are closed.

One firefighter has been treated for a heat-related injury.

Smoke is a factor for the Carson Valley and Carson City areas.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Nev. No. 2 in nation for

private job growth

By Associated Press

CARSON CITY — Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval announced last week that the state ranked second in the nation for private sector job growth in 2014.

The Republican governor said Thursday that the state added 40,700 new jobs last year, the second largest percent increase in the country behind North Dakota.

Nevada was ranked high in job growth in the years before the economic downturn, and bottomed out between 2008 and 2010. Sandoval said in a statement that the improved numbers meant the state's economy was moving in the right direction.

The state's Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation also reported Wednesday that Nevada's jobless rate dropped to 7 percent in May, down from 7.1 percent recorded since January. It's the first time the unemployment rate has dropped this year.

Crews lose ground, no containment in Washington Fire



One of the many aircraft drops retardant on the Washington Fire on June 22. Photo/Susan Wood

Updated 10:43pm

MARKLEEVILLE – Alpine County's largest town was like an eerie ghost town Monday evening.

A few kids were playing in front of the cafe on Highway 89. One man was in front of his studio. Otherwise it was like everyone else had abandoned the town. A bowling ball could be rolled through town without hitting anything.

With the 14,942-acre Washington Fire threatening Markleeville, people were not waiting for mandatory evacuation orders before leaving.

More than a dozen structures in the outlying are still threatened. Turtle Creek and Indian Creek campgrounds are closed.

"Today the section of the fire that was initially heading to

the northwest toward the town of Markleeville progressed more to the west than north," firefighters said. "Tactical priority is to keep the fire from spreading farther northwest toward the town of Markleeville."

The fire is now at zero percent containment, whereas it had been at 10 percent. This is because the high winds made it unsafe for firefighters on June 22. More than 500 firefighters are trying to get a handle on the wildland fire that is burning in a rugged area. It was started by lightning.

Fire crews will be discussing the situation at June 23 at 8am at the Board of Supervisors meeting room, 99 Water St., Markleeville.

— *Reporting by Susan Wood*

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Updated 3:50pm

Hundreds of firefighters are trying to gain control of the Washington Fire, which as of Monday afternoon had burned 9,500 acres.

"Resources are focusing their efforts on the northwest flank of the fire in an effort to protect the town of Markleeville," officials said.

Markleeville residents have been told to prepare to evacuate, though no evacuations have been ordered.

Heavy smoke is covering the area and can be seen for a great distance.

The fire started by lightning remains 10 percent contained as of 3pm June 22.

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The Washington Fire burning near Markleeville has charred

between 6,500 and 8,900 acres, officials told *Lake Tahoe News* on Monday morning.

It is about five miles from the town of Markleeville.

"We are forecasting heavy winds again to day. It grounded the use of aircraft for most of all day yesterday and we're worried it will happen again today," Larry Lucas with the U.S. Forest Service told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Winds are forecast to subside on Tuesday.

The fire is burning in a rugged, remote area that makes it difficult to get ground crews to it.

Officials believe the cause of the fire is lightning. It was first spotted on June 19.

Lucas explained that when there are heavy bursts of lightning and a lot of trees are hit that usually it amounts to nothing. But when there are windy days like what occurred over the weekend, it can whip a smoldering tree into a raging forest fire.

Highways 89 and 4 in the area remain closed. About a dozen structures remain threatened. The fire is 10 percent contained.

—Lake Tahoe News staff report

Casinos improve efforts to fight money laundering

By J.D. Morris, Las Vegas Sun

The gaming industry's fight against criminals who want to use casinos to disguise illegal money was front and center Thursday at the Paris resort.

There, industry leaders and government officials gathered for a conference that addressed how casinos are handling their obligations under anti-money-laundering law.

The verdict, according to one government official: Casinos have done a better job lately of reporting suspicious financial activity, but there's still room for improvement.

Last year, the director of the Treasury Department's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network – or FinCEN – spoke at this same Bank Secrecy Act conference and reminded the casino industry of how it needs to instill itself with a “culture of compliance” when it comes to money-laundering law.

Read the whole story

Calif. water districts challenge state's drought order

By Associated Press

FRESNO – Three California irrigation districts sued the state on Friday, claiming officials overstepped their authority by ordering farmers with some of the strongest water rights to stop pumping from some rivers during the drought.

The legal challenges came from three districts that provide water to farmers in the San Joaquin River watershed – prime California farmland that relies on the river to produce a significant portion of the nation's fruits, nuts and vegetables.

The districts allege the state Water Resources Control Board threatened them with financial ruin and violated their rights last week when it sent orders to 114 water users that hold senior water rights dating back to 1914 and earlier.

"This is our water," Oakdale Irrigation District general manager Steve Knell said in a statement. "We firmly believe in that fact and we are willing to take on the state bureaucracy to protect that right."

Peter Rietkerk of the Patterson Irrigation District said the walnut and almond orchards of growers could wither and die, costing them half-a-billion dollars.

George Kostyrko, a spokesman for the state Water Resources Control Board, declined to comment, saying the agency will respond in court.

California is enduring its driest four-year period in recorded history. The water board action marked the first time since a 1977 drought that California has directed a significant number of senior water rights holders to stop pumping.

The South San Joaquin Irrigation District in Manteca and Patterson Irrigation District also filed lawsuits. The Banta-Carbona Irrigation District in Tracy filed a day earlier.

"I can only think they do not understand the devastation their

actions will cause in our district and in the local economy,” Rietkerk said of state officials.

Lawsuits challenge California's drought plan

By Dale Kasler and Phillip Reese, Sacramento Bee

A group of water districts sued California regulators Friday over the state's order prohibiting holders of some of the oldest water rights from pumping water out of rivers and streams.

The lawsuit, filed in Stanislaus Superior Court, challenges the State Water Resources Control Board's decision last week to ban diversions by 114 different rights holders in the Sacramento and San Joaquin river watersheds.

The affected groups are senior water rights holders. That means they've held the right to divert water since before 1914, when California established its rights system. Last week's decision by the water board marked the first time since the drought of 1977 that any senior rights have been curtailed.

Read the whole story

Incline first responders learn from evacuation drill

By KOL0-TV

Evacuation calls were sent out to more than 28,000 people in the North Lake Tahoe area during an evacuation drill June . Yet, only 8,100 people were actually contacted.

According to fire officials, two main lessons were learned from the exercise. First the call only went out in English.

Second lesson was the call did not come from a 775 area code.

Read the whole story