

El Dorado County man indicted on wire fraud charges

A federal grand jury returned a three-count wire fraud indictment March 11 against Jeffrey Lamson, 51, of El Dorado Hills.

According to court documents, from at least 2009 through 2011, Lamson embezzled more than \$400,000 from a company located in Placer and Sacramento counties while he was 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.

If convicted, Lamson faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000 or twice the gain or loss caused by the fraud.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Study: Calif nearly guaranteed major temblor soon

By CBS and Associated Press

LOS ANGELES – The probability California will experience a magnitude 8 or larger earthquake in the next couple of decades has increased, according to the U.S. Geological Survey.

“The new likelihoods are due to the inclusion of possible multi-fault ruptures, where earthquakes are no longer confined to separate, individual faults, but can occasionally rupture

multiple faults simultaneously,” said lead author and USGS scientist Ned Field. “This is a significant advancement in terms of representing a broader range of earthquakes throughout California’s complex fault system.”

Compared to the 2008 assessment, earthquakes around magnitude 6.7 – the size of the destructive 1994 Northridge quake – has gone down by 30 percent with a frequency from an average of one per 4.8 years to about one per 6.3 years.

The study also says the likelihood that California will experience a magnitude 8 or larger earthquake in the next 30 years has gone up from about 4.7 percent to about 7 percent.

Read the whole story

Nev. transportation director against raising speed limit

By Richard N. Velotta, Las Vegas Review-Journal

You won’t see members of the state Transportation Department’s board of directors backing a bill to increase the speed limit on rural Nevada interstate highways to 85 mph.

Fearing that encouraging a study of where higher speed limits would be feasible sends the wrong message about safe driving, the department’s director will lobby against Senate Bill 2, a measure introduced by state Sen. Don Gustavson, R-Sparks. The proposal would allow speed limits to be increased on portions of interstate highways from 75 mph.

Department director Rudy Malfabon told members of the state board on Monday that he was planning to address the Board of

Examiners this week for funding to study which sections of highways would be best suited for higher speed limits.

But board members said they prefer Malfabon not conduct a study because that would leave the impression the board is considering or supports increasing the speed limit.

While the matter was not on Monday's Transportation Board agenda, individual members weighed in, most of them opposed to an increase.

Read the whole story

Transit for South Shore seniors in slow motion

By Kathryn Reed

A van in front of the South Lake Tahoe Senior Center rarely leaves the premise. However, that doesn't mean seniors don't have any place to go.

"I don't care who owns it and I don't care who provides it, they just need the service," City Manager Nancy Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The city and El Dorado County officials are trying to resolve who owns the van and therefore who is responsible for it. A certified driver and liability insurance are other issues to be addressed.

The van seats eight, has room for one wheelchair and meets Americans with Disability Act requirements.

Tahoe Transportation District officials are also in on the discussions because they would like to use it for specialized transportation services for seniors and disabled on the South Shore much like what the pilot program on the North Shore is doing.



South Shore seniors have a van, but limited use.
Photo/LTN

“Tahoe Transportation District is in the process of making a formal request for the vehicle,” Tara Styer, TTD mobility manager, said at the March 9 Lake Tahoe Collaborative meeting. She said the vehicle is being used two hours a week now, but that is not nearly enough.

Mobility management is the latest buzz phrase in the transportation world. It’s about concentrating on the individual needs of riders. In this case, the population is primarily seniors and disabled. Others would be able to use the vehicle if there is space.

“The unmet needs are out-of-area transportation,” Styer said.

In particular, getting people to specialized medical appointments. And with the expansion of Medi-Cal, there are few local dentists who will see those patients.

Veterans in the area in 2014 lost their transportation to the hospital in Reno.

Styer envisions each week the van being used for local trips. Then out-of-town trips to Reno, Placerville, Roseville, Sacramento, Carson City, and North Shore-Truckee would be scheduled.

Grants have been applied for to help pay for the vehicle. Passengers would pay a limited amount.

Tahoe Senior Plaza has a vehicle it shares with Kelly Ridge residents. However, off the hill trips are not frequent, according to Styer. The other option for people is the on demand service provided by TTD, but at \$3 one-way it can be cost-prohibitive. These are reasons why other alternatives are being investigated.

Health benefits boost board compensation

By Brad Branan, Sacramento Bee

Most people elected to special district boards receive no compensation to oversee the agencies that provide services such as water or local park maintenance.

But some district directors receive annual salaries approaching \$20,000 and health benefits for a position that has few requirements besides preparing for and attending meetings.

Of the nearly 1,000 special district board members in the capital region, about 70 percent received no compensation, the *Sacramento Bee* found in an analysis of 2013 salary data recently released by the California State Controller's Office.

The other 30 percent, however, received an average of \$4,300 in total compensation. All of the two dozen directors who received the most compensation – \$15,000 or more – served districts in the Sierra foothills or around Lake Tahoe, in particular water districts with a long history of providing health coverage to board members and their immediate family members.

The South Tahoe Public Utility District had four of the five highest-paid board members in the region in 2013. They each received \$4,800 in wages, but the biggest expense came from health care costs, an average of \$21,585 each.

Read the whole story

Amodei wants cooperation in sage grouse preservation

By Associated Press

CARSON CITY – Rep. Mark Amodei says Nevada lawmakers have nothing to fear from working with the federal government on sage grouse preservation efforts.

Amodei assured a joint session of the Nevada Legislature on Monday evening that federal authorities were dedicated to helping preserve endangered sage grouse environments throughout the state.

The Republican congressman said the state had come a long way in dealing with the possible listing of the sage grouse as an endangered species, which would limit land use throughout the state. Amodei said Nevada and the federal government needed to

work together and were “brother and sister.”

Amodei was first elected to Northern Nevada’s 2nd Congressional District in 2011 and spent 11 years in the state Senate. Democratic Rep. Dina Titus is scheduled to address the Legislature on Wednesday.

Northern Nevada’s construction comeback

By Jason Hildago, Reno Gazette-Journal

Tracy Holland of Sparks built a career that was hewn in steel.

For the last 28 years, the 52-year-old iron worker counted on construction as his signature trade, helping create the bones of projects such as Aces Ballpark and the Mathewson-IGT Knowledge Center at the University of Nevada, Reno.

Holland counts himself as a Northern Nevada resident for an even longer time.

“My family moved here in 1971 when I was 10 years old,” Holland said. “I don’t want to leave; I mean, why would I?”

Yet leave is exactly what Holland did for three years. From 2010 to 2012, Holland worked at four different projects in the Bay Area to support his family, who remained in Nevada. The driving force behind the decision? A real estate collapse that was quickly followed by a severe recession – the worst in the state’s history.

At the close of 2006, the greater Reno-Sparks area boasted 25,900 construction workers, according to the Nevada

Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation. By the end of 2010, that number fell all the way down to 7,300, a drop of nearly 72 percent.

“We had a lot of members who left when the recession hit,” said Holland, who serves as an officer with the Iron Workers Local 118 union. “We also had members who left the construction industry and took other jobs.”

In 2013, however, Holland finally returned to his roots and reunited with his family for good.

After four years of decline during the recession, Reno-Sparks saw gains in construction employment in three of the last four years. Driving the momentum is an increase in building activity that included high profile projects such as the Apple data center at Reno Technology Park and the biggest construction prize of them all, Tesla Motors’ gigafactory at Tahoe-Reno Industrial Center.

The positive trend is backed by the latest jobs numbers, which saw construction employment in Reno-Sparks grow to 10,300 by the end of last year. Unions, meanwhile, are getting increased interest even from out-of-state members eager to land a spot at projects such as the gigafactory or the recently announced Switch supernap and Ghost Systems projects.

Read the whole story

Some ex-Caesars workers lose retirement in bankruptcy

By Howard Stutz, Las Vegas Review-Journal

An undisclosed number of former Caesars Entertainment Corp. employees have lost their retirement income because of the casino company's bankruptcy restructuring of its largest operating division.

The retired employees were notified by the company through a form letter/memorandum that was sent Jan. 15, the same day Caesars Entertainment Operating Co. filed a pre-packaged Chapter 11 bankruptcy plan in Chicago that is expected to eliminate \$10 billion of debt.

The employees were told the company would no longer make payments under a Supplemental Employee Retirement Plan (SERP).

Caesars is the parent company of Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Harveys.

"Instead of receiving notification of my direct deposit, I received this letter," said Betty Wilson, a retired certified public accountant who worked for Caesars World. Caesars World is one of the former entities acquired by then-Harrah's Entertainment in the company's 2005 buyout of Caesars Entertainment for \$9 billion.

A Caesars official familiar with the matter but not authorized to speak on behalf of the company said there are several similar retirement plans offered by other companies that were subsequently acquired by Harrah's/Caesars.

Read the whole story

Tahoe City man killed in

suspected DUI crash

A 24-year-old Tahoe City man was killed Saturday after he was ejected from the vehicle he was riding in.

Daniel Koenig was pronounced dead at the scene.

Kelley Smith, 23, of Tahoe City was arrested March 7 at 2:20am on driving under the influence charges and booked into the jail in Auburn. He sustained cuts and scratches.

Another passenger, Tony Thompson, 25, of Tahoe City was not injured.

According to the California Highway Patrol, Smith was driving west on Highway 28 between Cedar Flats and Carnelian Bay at a high rate of speed when he lost control, went into the eastbound lane, and then clipped small trees before striking a power pole on the south side of the highway.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Missing man's body found by hikers



Bruce Hutter

The body of a Carson City man who had been missing since Feb. 25 was found this weekend by hikers.

Hikers on March 8 came across a vehicle with a deceased man inside. He has been identified as Bruce Hutter, 62.

Douglas County sheriff's deputies said there is no immediate cause of death. An autopsy is pending.

The vehicle was near Spooner Summit on Kings Canyon Road.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report