

SnowGlobe worker accused of grand theft

A Reno man working at SnowGlobe is accused of stealing items worth more than \$17,000 from the lost and found bin of the three-day outdoor concert in South Lake Tahoe.

Jermaine Williams, 38, was arrested Jan. 1 on grand theft charges.



Jermaine
Williams

Police officers said Williams stole smart phones that had been turned into security. The phones had been locked in a storage case in the Lake Tahoe Community College gymnasium.

Police were notified after someone allegedly saw Williams putting the phones into a suitcase. That suitcase with the 44 phones has since been located with all the phones inside.

“During the investigation one of the theft victims arrived at the event location, looking for Williams. This victim explained that she had called her own phone in an attempt to find it. Jermaine Williams answered this call. According to the victim, Williams had instructed her to meet him near the SnowGlobe stage. Williams told the victim that he would return her victim phone for \$20,” police said in a press release.

Officers are investigating whether additional contract workers

stole other lost and found items.

All lost and found goods from the Dec. 29-31 event are now in the possession of the police department; with officers in the process of trying to find the rightful owners. To retrieve an item, call 530.542.6145.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Queen not allowed to sail after NYE incident

By Kathryn Reed

While the Tahoe Queen did not sustain any damage during a mishap New Year's Eve, it is still grounded by the U.S. Coast Guard.

During an inspection on Jan. 1, Coast Guard investigators from San Francisco found an unrelated mechanical problem that is keeping the paddle-wheeler docked. USCG Ensign Jake Urrutia called it an "unrelated deficiency", but had no more details.

"I don't know how long that will take before that is lifted," Urrutia told *Lake Tahoe News* of the "no sail" edict.

There are conflicting reports as to whether the boat with more than 200 passengers hit a sandbar or winds disabled it during the annual New Year's Eve cruise. Urrutia said that is what investigators are trying to determine. He told *Lake Tahoe News* on Friday morning that investigators don't know why the Queen required the assistance of a tugboat.

At 1:29am Jan. 1 Christi Murphy tweeted this from the boat, "Stuck in the middle of Lake Tahoe on the queen tahoe... Jerks keep lying to us. Boat is stuck in 5 ft deep water with 200 people+kids. Suck."

Coasties were not notified of the incident until about 2:30am Jan. 1, and by that time the vessel was no longer disabled.

Multiple calls to Victor Gomez, tour manager of Aramark's operations on the South Shore, went unreturned. Aramark runs the Queen as well as the M.S. Dixie II, Zephyr Cove Lodge and other operations. Dave Freireich, with corporate offices, also was not available.

With the Queen out of service indefinitely, it means there is no paddle-wheeler operating on the South Shore. This is because the Dixie is undergoing \$1 million worth of renovations and is not expected to be plying the waters of Lake Tahoe until the spring.

The Queen hit a sandbar near Regan Beach on Aug. 4, which necessitated the 257 passengers be ferried to shore by much small vessels. No one was injured in either incident. The August incident is still under investigation by the Coast Guard.

Driver in fatal accident on Mt. Rose Hwy. found

Update 8:10pm:

Nevada Highway Patrol troopers say alcohol may have played a role in a fatal accident on the Mount Rose Highway on Jan. 1.

Two vehicles collided near Incline Village about 6:18 Thursday night.

The driver of a 1998 silver Isuzu Rodeo going west crossed the center line, striking a blue 2003 Jeep Liberty that was going east, according to troopers

Two occupants of the Jeep were transported via helicopter to Renown Medical Center in Reno with major injuries and one occupant went by ambulance with serious injuries.

Hugo Barrios, 40, a passenger in the Isuzu died at Renown.

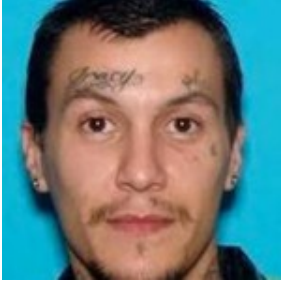
The driver of the Isuzu fled on foot immediately after the crash. Manuel Mejia Verdusco, 49, was found hiding at a residence in Incline Village on Jan. 2. He was taken to a hospital with injuries to his face, a wrist and an ankle, according to troopers. Charges are pending.

Officers have not released the names or hometowns of the others involved in the accident. Anyone who may have witnessed this incident or who may have information is asked to call 775.689.4625.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Idaho murder suspect arrested in Truckee

A suspect in a murder in Idaho was arrested New Year's Day in Truckee.



Kevin Michael
McQuilliams

Kevin Michael McQuilliams, 26, was spotted driving in the area of Dorchester Drive and Rolands Way in the Glenshire subdivision of Truckee on Thursday about 4:50pm.

McQuilliams is believed to have been involved in the shooting death of his 34-year-old girlfriend and was wanted by the Idaho Falls Police Department. The shooting occurred about 1:15am Jan. 1.

Truckee officers said McQuilliams has no connection to Truckee. However, they are also not releasing any specific information regarding the arrest or investigation.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Hospitals abandoning New Year baby tradition

Publisher's note: *Barton Memorial Hospital in South Lake Tahoe is still recognizing the first baby of the New Year. The expected New Year baby, though, arrived New Year's Eve, so the first South Shore baby is not likely to be a New Year's Day baby.*

By Associated Press

Bye, bye Baby New Year. The crowning of the year's first baby is being kept secret in many communities as hospitals say safety concerns are more important than tradition.

Community Health Systems – one of the largest health care operators in the United States – recently ordered its 207 facilities to stop publicizing the first baby of the year, citing the potential for abductions and identity theft. Other U.S. hospitals have either removed themselves from the tradition or limited the amount of information provided to the media.

“We know the birth of the new year baby is a joyous and exciting event, but protecting patient safety and privacy is our most important responsibility,” said Tomi Galin, a spokeswoman for the company.

Galin said the policy change came after several of the company's hospitals stopped publicizing New Year's births on their own. She described it as a preventative measure and that it was not a reaction to threats or abduction attempts. She pointed to guidance from the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, which has suggested health care providers obtain parental consent and eliminate home addresses and other identifying information from birth announcements or stop providing them to media.

Still, the head of the center's missing children division said, the tradition of publicizing a hospital's first birth of the year is relatively low-risk.

“We've never given direction to hospitals that they shouldn't do it,” said the center's Robert Lowery, stressing caution, not overreaction.

Community Health's decision made front-page headlines this week in many states after journalists learned they would need

to look elsewhere for news on the usually slow holiday. The company's Pennsylvania spokeswoman, Renita Fennick, said doctors will still let parents know if their baby arrived first and that new moms and dads could still contact the media on their own, so long as reporters and photographers stayed away from the maternity ward.

The Joint Commission, a health care accreditation organization, suggested hospitals stop providing birth notices to local newspapers more than a decade ago after a rash of hospital abductions, but it has not required that they be eliminated. Other hospitals continue to highlight the first baby of the year, same as ever, with parents' permission.

The New York Health and Hospitals Corporation, which runs the city's 11 public hospitals, gets written permission before releasing the mother and baby's names, measurements and borough of residence. They also send out a photo.

"If there is hesitation from the family, we will only release the information they are comfortable with," city hospitals spokeswoman Jen Bender said. "We've only had positive experiences promoting the first baby of the new year."

Stateline casinos deal with busted pipes

Frigid temperatures caused pipes to burst at Harveys and Hard Rock casinos in Stateline on Dec. 30.

A call to Harveys was not returned so it is not known how extensive the damage was, where it occurred or how many people were affected by it.

Some flooding occurred at the unoccupied Lake Tahoe Hard Rock, according to Tahoe Douglas fire officials. A Hard Rock spokesperson did not have any information to provide to *Lake Tahoe News*.

South Lake Tahoe fire officials have not had any reports of busted pipes because of the cold, but said that could change as temps rise into the 40s this weekend.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Tahoe Queen runs into sand bar – again

By Anjeanette Damon, Reno Gazette-Journal

The Tahoe Queen ran aground shortly after midnight Thursday during a New Year's Eve cruise, stranding revelers in the icy cold weather for about two hours, the U.S. Coast Guard reported.

About 200 people made it safely off the boat after a tug pulled the stranded ship off the sand bar in Zephyr Cove, Ensign Jake Urrutia said.

"By the time we got the report, the 200 passengers were off the vessel," Urrutia said. "The vessel had been pulled out by the tug and moored out. We don't know exactly what happened yet."

No injuries were reported on the popular paddle-wheel boat. But the weather was extremely cold, with a low of about 8

degrees.

Read the whole story

17 New Year's arrests in South Lake Tahoe

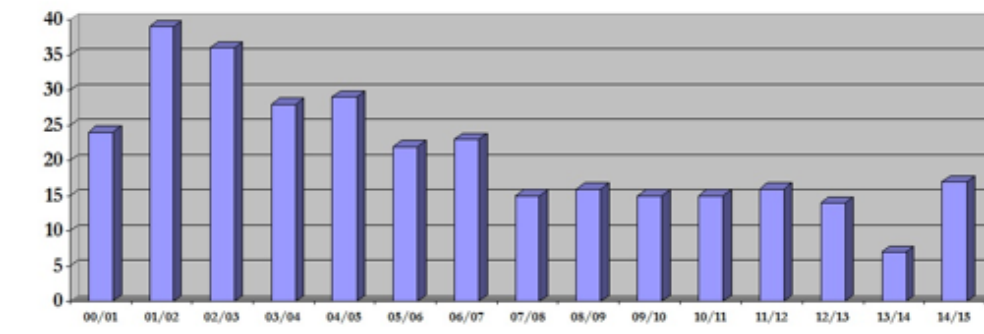
Between 12:01am Dec. 31 and noon Jan. 1, South Lake Tahoe police officers made 17 arrests.

The majority of these were for either drunken-disorderly conduct in public or driving under the influence. Some arrests also involved incidents of domestic violence and drug possession.

These arrest numbers do not include arrests made by allied law enforcement agencies, such as the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, which cited several individuals SnowGlobe for misdemeanor violations.

Officers said the number of arrests is similar to previous years. Since 2000, the most number of arrests was in 2001 at 39, with 2013 having the fewest arrests at seven.

"Since the beginning of 2008, a clear trend indicates that the size and associated arrests generated by the celebration at the state line has gradually diminished. While the SnowGlobe festival has generated thousands of attendees over the past four years, the number of arrests generated there have not caused an overall uptick in arrest stats," police said in a press release.



Number of arrests in South Lake Tahoe in the 36-hour New Year's period.

Source: *SLTPD*

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Backers: Plastic bag ban referendum has enough signatures

By Jeremy B. White, Sacramento Bee

Extending the fight over California's ban on single-use plastic bags, manufacturers and other opponents of the law on Monday submitted what they said were enough signatures for a referendum that would dispose of the ban before it can take effect.

Numerous cities, like South Lake Tahoe, and counties in California prohibit or charge for single-use plastic bags, and

a bid to extend the policy statewide fueled one of the fiercest fights of the 2014 legislative session. Soon after Gov. Jerry Brown signed Senate Bill 270, an industry-backed organization called the American Progressive Bag Alliance announced the referendum drive.

Working under a narrow 90-day window – referendums have less time to qualify than other ballot initiatives – referendum backers said they had accumulated more than 800,000 signatures, many more than the 504,760 needed to qualify. Some of those signatures could be invalid, however, and now counties must conduct random samples to determine if enough of them are legitimate.

“We are pleased to have reached this important milestone in the effort to repeal a terrible piece of job-killing legislation and look forward to giving California voters a chance to make their voice heard at the ballot box in 2016,” American Progressive Bag Alliance executive director Lee Califf said in a statement.

Read the whole story

11 arrested NYE at Stateline

Although the crowd was small at Stateline, 11 people were arrested New Year’s Eve.

Charges included battery, domestic battery, disorderly conduct, minor consuming alcohol and possession of a dangerous drug. Three arrests were related to traffic offenses and driving under the influence.

Highway 50 was closed for about 30 minutes as revelers began

to fill the street about 10 minutes before the New Year.

Crowds in this area of the South Shore have dramatically decreased in recent years with the introduction of SnowGlobe and Heavenly Holidays – both in South Lake Tahoe. There was a time when Stateline crowds topped 60,000 people.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report