

Nevada earthquake swarm not letting up

Nevada is proving why it is the third most seismically active state in the United States behind California and Alaska.

While it hasn't had a magnitude 7.0 earthquake in 60 years, the far northwest corner of the state has been shaking for the better part of this fall. It all started in the summer.

There have been several 3.0 earthquakes this week, a 4.0 on Nov. 21 and a 4.3 on Nov. 17. The largest two events – magnitude 4.7 – occurred just after midnight Nov. 6 and Nov. 7.



Graham Kent, director of UNR's Seismological Lab, is studying the swarm of quakes in N. Nevada. Photo/LTN file

The thousands of earthquakes in the last several months is the strongest of the swarm-type sequences recorded in Nevada in recent history with its current count of 12 magnitude 4.0-plus events since it began in July.

The area being inundated by these temblors is in the Sheldon National Antelope Refuge about 40 miles southeast of Lakeview, Ore., 40 miles northeast of Cedarville, Calif. and about 250

miles north of Reno. Farm, ranch and grazing lands dominate the landscape.

“We’ve located about 1,350 earthquakes, but thousands more that are taking place just can’t be located because of the small number of seismic stations in that part of the state,” Ken Smith, seismic network manager in the UNR’s Nevada Seismological Laboratory, said in a statement. “So far there have been 112 earthquakes greater than or equal to magnitude 3.0. We’d have to go back to a similar sequence near Hawthorne in 2011 and the 2008 west Reno swarm for anything comparable.”

Additional instruments are being added to the area in order for scientists to gather more data. The goal is to have a better understanding of earthquake swarm behavior.

Scientists said there is a small increase in the probability of a larger event because of the swarm, but forecasting such an earthquake is not possible.

The Wells earthquake in 2008 was a magnitude 6.0, the largest event in Nevada in 42 years. Historically, Nevada can expect to have three magnitude 7.0 earthquakes per century and one magnitude 6.0 or larger every decade, according to Graham Kent, director of UNR’s Seismological Lab, said in a statement.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Nev. firms score well with

LGBT group

The parent companies of three Stateline casino companies this week received high marks from the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender civil rights organization.

The 2015 Corporate Equality Index is an annual report assessing LGBT inclusion in major companies and law firms across the nation, including six in Nevada.

Nevada rankings:

- Caesars Entertainment Corp. – 100 (parent company of Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Harveys)
- MGM Resorts International – 100
- Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas – 100
- Wynn Resorts Ltd. – 100
- Tropicana – 90 (parent of MontBleu)
- NV Energy Inc. – 70.

In total, 781 companies were officially rated in the 2015 CEI, up from 734 in the 2014 report. The report also unofficially rated 190 Fortune 500 companies that have yet to respond to the CEI survey about their LGBT policies and practices.

"When it comes to LGBT equality, corporate America is a leader, not a follower," HRC President Chad Griffin said in a statement. "At every turn, from advocating for marriage equality to providing vital support for transgender employees, this country's leading companies have asked, 'what more can we do?,' and they've worked tirelessly to achieve new progress. That kind of leadership changes countless lives around this country, and sets an important example to other companies around the globe."

Griffin cautions, however, that despite steady progress, LGBT workers still face major obstacles.

No election changes; LTUSD seeks member

El Dorado County Elections Department released updated totals on Nov. 20 and Nov. 21, which resulted in no changes to South Lake Tahoe contests.

The top three vote getters for South Lake Tahoe City Council are Wendy David, Tom Davis and Austin Sass. The three will be sworn in Dec. 9.

There are 31 votes separating Sass, who finished third, from fourth place Angela Swanson.

Michelle Sweeney beat Bob Grand by 33 votes for the Lake Tahoe Community College District 5 seat.

These are unofficial final numbers, but still need to be certified.

Newcomer Ginger Nicolay-Davis and incumbent Barbara Bannar will be sworn in to the Lake Tahoe Unified School District board on Dec. 9. Both ran unopposed.

Sue Novasel told *Lake Tahoe News* she plans to officially resign her LTUSD board seat Jan. 2. She takes the oath of office for El Dorado County supervisor on Jan. 6. Dec. 9 will be her last school board meeting.

LTUSD plans to appoint a replacement for Novasel at either the Jan. 27 or Feb. 10 meeting.

Applications are available at the district office on Al Tahoe Boulevard for what is now District 1. This is roughly the north side of Pioneer Trail from Christmas Valley to the state line.

Besides needing to live in the district, candidates must be 18 and a registered voter. The board will interview the candidates in open session, make a decision the same night and swear the person in the following meeting.

A deadline for returning applications has not been set.

– Kathryn Reed

Stateline casinos firing employees

By Kathryn Reed

Several Lake Tahoe casino workers are out of work and others are losing hours.

Less than a week after Caesars Entertainment – parent company of Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Harveys – announced it would be trimming its workforce by 1 percent, the ax came down. Some of the jobs were eliminated last week, some this week.

John Packer, spokesman for the local properties, did not respond to an email.

It is not known how many were let go or from which departments. One source told *Lake Tahoe News* 10 people were

laid off in facilities engineering from Harrah's. No one in table games lost their jobs, but other departments were affected.

"We had to sign documents," a now former employee told *Lake Tahoe News*. He would not discuss specifics of the separation.

There are also reports of layoffs in senior management in Las Vegas.

At MontBleu in Stateline hours are being cut.

"(They are) actively trying to cut down our hours in an attempt to perhaps increase the number of part-time employees," an employee of 15-plus years told *Lake Tahoe News*. "They have already changed the guidelines for full-timers from 30 hours per week minimum assessed by quarters to assessed yearly. (This) means if you do not actively self-monitor these numbers and how they are assessed, you might have only one quarter or three months to bring your numbers up. I understand these might be hard economic times for the casinos, but I wish they would be more forthright and less callous with their own employees."

Steve Ditchkus, general manager of MontBleu, did not return a phone call.

At the start of this year MontBleu eliminated health insurance for employees; instead opting to pay the \$2,000 penalty per employee as mandated by the federal government under the Affordable Care Act.

Employees don't know what will happen for 2015.

"I couldn't make a statement," a woman in human resources told *Lake Tahoe News* last week. "We haven't started open enrollments. I'm not saying yes or no (to whether we'll offer health benefits)."

Nevada Assembly speaker tilts state to far right

By Nia-Malika Henderson, Washington Post

Nevada Republicans won big this November, flipping the Nevada state Assembly and Senate from blue to red and winning every statewide office – including re-electing Republican Gov. Brian Sandoval in a landslide. So you'd think Sandoval would be happy, right?

Maybe not. Ira Hansen is very likely to become the next speaker of the state Assembly, after being put forth as the nominee of the majority Republicans. Hansen has written disparagingly about blacks, Latinos and women in the past, even using words like “negro” and “darkie.”

Republicans backed Hansen over a more moderate pick. And given the more moderate and pro-abortion rights Sandoval has often clashed with more conservative elements of his party, it seems quite possible Hansen could be a thorn in his side for the next few years – just as he the governor is primed to build more of a national profile.

Hansen's ascent also suggests that Nevada, a state that President Obama won twice, is headed the way of North Carolina, where Republicans in power for the first time in many decades used that power to pass some controversial bills – often to the detriment of Gov. Pat McCrory (R) and the still-successful campaign of Speaker and new Sen.-elect Thom Tillis, R-N.C.

Read the whole story

Scam artists calling South Tahoe residents

A South Lake Tahoe resident was scammed out of a large sum of money, according to South Lake Tahoe police officers.

The scammer told the victim he was stuck in customs and needed help getting out. The suspect convinced the senior citizen to send him a large amount of money. The scammers also called back and tried to convince the victim to give them additional money with an addition scam, saying he won the lottery, according to police.

The scammers are calling from a phone number with an 876 area code, which is Jamaica. Jamaica has been the source for a variety of international scams.

Officers warn people to never send or transfer money to people you don't know even if the caller reports to be from a legitimate business; never call back any number provided by the caller; do not to give out any personal information over the phone to anyone calling you unsolicited.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Thieves hit Truckee sporting good store

More than \$25,000 worth of ski equipment was stolen from Soulhouse Project Ski and Snowboard Shop in Truckee.

The Donner Pass Road business was broken into about 3am Nov. 20. The thieves triggered the alarm, but they still got away with about 40 pair of skis and snowboards.

The snowboards were all new, without bindings, made by Lib Technologies and Burton in various graphic designs and models. The skis were all Moment brand, unmounted, and will require a template to install any bindings.

"These items will likely show up on CraigsList or in a similar venue," officers said in a statement.

Anyone with information is asked to call 530.550.2335 or 530.550.2336.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Nev. outsourcing IT work to private sector

By Kyle Roerink, Las Vegas Sun

Their contracts with the state of Nevada are worth millions.

Their offices are based in places like New Jersey, Texas, California and the Midwest.

They are hired to converge government with a world that moves much faster: technology.

Gov. Brian Sandoval and the state's Board of Examiners last week approved up to \$100 million in 20 information technology contracts. According to the board's official announcement, the contractors will "provide assistance in a variety of information technology consulting and technical specialist levels on an hourly basis to state agencies."

The new contracts highlight a growing trend in state government: hiring the private sector to do public sector IT work.

Read the whole story

Nevada leads nation in unauthorized immigrants

A report from the Pew Research Center shows the number of immigrants who are in Nevada illegally has dropped by about 20,000 people from 2009 to 2012.

But Nevada still has the largest share of unauthorized immigrants of any state. Pew reports that about 210,000 people, or 7.6 percent of Nevada residents, are in the country illegally.

The study released Tuesday also found that nearly 18 percent of Nevada students have at least one unauthorized immigrant parent.

Pew says the number of immigrants in the U.S. illegally has remained steady at 11.2 million from 2009 to 2012, but trends at the state level have shifted.

Fourteen states have seen declines in their unauthorized immigrant populations, largely due to fewer new arrivals from Mexico and more people returning to Mexico.

– *Associated Press*

Caesars loses 2nd lender; restructuring eyed

By Howard Stutz, Law Vegas Review-Journal

Caesars Entertainment Corp. is considering placing its largest operating division into a real estate investment trust as a way of dealing with its gaming industry-high debt, according to a filing Wednesday with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Caesars, which has been in talks with banks and lenders in an attempt to restructure its \$22.8 billion debt, said the real estate investment trust – commonly referred to as a REIT – was one option being discussed.

The company made the filing after one of the lenders broke off talks with Caesars on Oct. 29, the second lender to walk away from the table. Earlier last month, a New York hedge fund quit the discussions.

According to the SEC filing, Caesars would place Caesars Entertainment Operation Co. into the REIT. This would include its Stateline properties.

The REIT would own the hotel-casinos and Caesars would operate the properties.

Read the whole sotry