

Bill would repeal sports book tax

By Howard Stutz Las Vegas Review-Journal

CG Technology CEO Lee Amaitis wanted to know the whereabouts of about \$9 million that Nevada sports book operators paid to the federal government last year through a tax on all sports wagers.

It seemed like a simple question.

Amaitis asked Rep Dina Titus, D-Nev., if she could find out.

The Internal Revenue Service took several months to answer the query posed by Titus' legislative director, David Rosenbaum.

The question seemed to perplex the agency. The IRS couldn't answer how the money was being used.

The congresswoman then devised her own response. She introduced a bill last month to repeal the tax.

"The IRS didn't even know it existed," Titus said. "The money just went into some black hole in the general fund."

In the grand scheme of the federal government, we're not talking about a lot of money.

Nevada sports book operators pay 0.0025 percent in a federal handle tax on every sports wager placed in the Silver State.

In 2013, based on the record \$3.6 billion wagered on college and professional sports, the amount sent to the IRS was \$9 million.

Read the whole story

Drill tests readiness of Tahoe's first responders



First responders contend with 47 injuries and a plane on fire during a drill at Lake Tahoe Airport. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

It was controlled chaos inside and outside of the airport in South Lake Tahoe on Monday as first responders and staff were put to the test in a mass casualty incident.

A C130J airplane carrying 47 people crashed while landing – at least that was the scenario for the Aug. 25 drill.

The city has a specialized fire truck stationed at the airport just in case of an incident like this. It can pump 1,500 gallons of water, while a normal fire engine has 500 to 700 gallons. Normally an engineer with the fire department would

operate this truck, though there are a handful of airport employees who are also trained to use it.

In addition to the water it has a foam substance that is used because it acts as a barrier by cutting off oxygen for the fuel. Purple K is a powder substance that the truck has for engine fires.



South Lake Tahoe Fire Chief Jeff Meston, standing, checks in at the emergency operations center.

While a complete debriefing is yet to come, the initial reactions from South Lake Tahoe Fire Chief Jeff Meston and City Manager Nancy Kerry is that it went well.

The biggest glitch was the technology breakdown in the emergency operations center. The Internet was down. Email wasn't working.

Staff was tasked with doing jobs they don't normally do. In the emergency center, which is where the City Council meets and in an actual incident would be off-limits to the media, there are predesignated groups in charge of specialized tasks.



Victims in the path of
a fire hose.

Lauren Thomaselli, who works in parks and rec, is handling logistics. She has to figure out where the chaplain can meet with family members. A bus has been ordered to take able-bodied victims to the Red Cross shelter at the city's recreation center.

Lts. Brian Williams and David Stevenson are working the law enforcement side. (Normally only one of them would be at the center.) They are making sure there are refrigerated trucks for the bodies. They have contacted the FBI in case this turns out to be a terrorist attack. The National Transportation Safety Board and Federal Aviation Administration are contacted.

People are constantly being interrupted to be updated with facts – number of those injured, killed, where they had been taken, that the FAA is on site, that the media needs to be briefed.



Paramedics lift a victim onto a gurney.

At various times the heads of each sector meet separately to assess how things are going, what needs to be done and what each will be doing going forward.

Hilary Roverud, who is in charge of the city's planning department, leads these meetings.

"Hilary did a bang-up job as planning chief," Meston tells *Lake Tahoe News*.

What Meston was initially most happy about was seeing the type of air support that is available to the city.

"I feel 1,000 percent better knowing that the military is a call away. They could have transported all the injured in their units," Meston said.

Chinook and Black Hawk helicopters were part of the training. The C130J – had it not been the training module – is also designed to ferry people. Inside it is like a flying hospital, where patients can be stacked three high in the center on suspended gurneys. Flight nurses are registered nurses and the medical technicians have at least their EMT, while most are at the LVN level.

"Because we are so isolated and have one hospital, to fly people out is critical," Meston said.

Still, the weather in Tahoe is not always conducive to flying.

That is why the fleet of ambulances was lined up on the tarmac as well. And with those vehicles come the paramedics whose job it is to assess the needs of those who are injured and get the most critically wounded to a hospital ASAP.

Just outside the danger zone is South Lake Tahoe firefighter/paramedic Mike Mileski. He has one of the more difficult jobs because he is coordinating the medical response.

People are yelling for tourniquets and backboards.



Ambulances are ready to whisk patients to Barton Hospital.

California Conservation Corps members are the victims. One has a foreign object sticking out of her shin; others have blood dripping from their faces. It takes personnel time to assess all the injured.

On the far side of the aircraft firefighters are putting out the “fire”, even getting some victims wet. South Lake Tahoe Capt. Mark WyGant is working along side firefighter Steve Pevenage of Lake Valley fire. It shows the cooperation that would take place in a real scenario.

While these two agencies often work together, others who were part of the drill are not always immediate partners. But they would be in situation like this or if there were another Angora Fire.

Some of the other agencies involved in the drill were, South Lake Tahoe police, Fallen Leaf Lake fire, Carson City fire, El Dorado County sheriff's, El Dorado search and rescue, CalFire, CareFlight, Air National Guard, El Dorado probation, Barton, CalStar, North Lake Tahoe fire, Tahoe Douglas fire, Meeks Bay fire and Truckee fire.

Kingman questioned after Harveys bombing



It was 34 years ago this week that a bomb blew up Harveys at Stateline. Photo/Western Nevada Historic Photo Collection

Aug. 27 marks 34 years since the Harveys bombing.

I was the chief engineer of KRLT, whose transmitter is atop Harveys.

Of course, the building was evacuated and the station was off

the air when the bomb was found. I was allowed to trek all the stairs to the roof the day after the bomb blast to check on our transmitter equipment. It was OK.

The building smelled like a wet, dark smoldering fireplace, and was pretty much hollowed out from the basement to the fourth and fifth floors. What a mess. The hallway on the sixth floor had an obvious bulge in the middle. Regardless, its concrete and steel structural integrity was such that the building was restored.

An FBI agent said I looked like one of the suspects and I was questioned.

This link is a terrific video by Chris Ronay of the FBI who investigated.

– *Bill Kingman*

Hail storm turns South Shore winter white



Rosemary Manning can't avoid

getting wet as she walks to
her vehicle at Blue Angel
Cafe in South Lake Tahoe
Aug. 25. Photo/Kathryn Reed

A fast moving storm dumped so much hail on the South Shore it looks like winter.

A flash food warning remains in effect until 9pm Aug. 25 from Stateline to Fallen Leaf Lake.

The National Weather Service in Reno is warning people who live near or are playing by Heavenly Valley Creek, Trout Creek, Taylor Creek and the Upper Truckee River that they should stay away from the water because it could rise quickly.



Pea-size hail looks like snow near Motel 6 in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/Susan Wood

Streets in South Lake Tahoe are a mess. Many storm drains are overflowing. Roads are covered in water. And where there isn't standing water, there is measurable hail that looks like it just snowed.

"It seems like the majority of the thunderstorm was small hail," Alex Hoon, meteorologist with the NWS in Reno told *Lake Tahoe News*. "This is pretty much it. We are not expecting much after this thing rolls through."

Hoon said temperatures dropped to the upper 40s when the storm came through early Monday evening. Temps for the rest of the week are expected to be in the upper 70s.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Early jail releases surge in Calif. after prison realignment

By Paige St. John, Los Angeles Times

Jesus Ysasaga had been arrested multiple times and ordered by the court to keep away from his ex-girlfriend. Two parole boards sentenced him to nearly a year in jail for stalking, drunkenness and battery.

But the Fresno County jail would not keep him.

Four times in the summer of 2012, authorities let Ysasaga go, refusing two times to even book him. The jail had no room.

Ysasaga's attorney, Jerry Lowe, said the parade of convicted offenders being turned away from the jail was common. "It became quite a joke," he said.

Across California, more than 13,500 inmates are being released early each month to relieve crowding in local jails – a 34 percent increase over the last three years. A *Times* investigation shows a significant shift in who is being let out of jail, how early and where.

The releases spring from an effort begun in 2011 to divert

low-level offenders from crowded state prisons to local jails. The move had a cascade effect, forcing local authorities to release their least dangerous inmates to make room for more serious offenders.

Read the whole story

Man floating at Sand Harbor identified

Washoe County sheriff's investigators have identified the man who was found floating in the water at Sand Harbor as Carl Strickland, 40, of Incline Village.

Students in a paddleboarding class discovered the body Aug. 22 about 10:50am near the boat docks.

Detectives said the instructor the body was tangled in some ropes affixed to a boat. The victim was pulled to the surface where he was pronounced deceased by emergency medical responders.

Detectives said they found evidence that indicates the man had been working on the boat and appears to have entered the water on his own volition. No foul play is suspected. The exact cause of death has not been determined.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Power temporarily cut to 2 LTUSD schools



A truck struck power line in South Lake Tahoe Aug. 25, knocking out power to two schools. Photo/Toogee Sielsch

A truck carrying trusses for the roof of a house clipped the power lines across from Safeway on Johnson Boulevard between Highway 50 and Fairway Avenue on Monday morning.

The accident knocked out power for most of the Liberty Utilities customers in the area for more than hour. This included putting students in the dark at Bijou Community School and South Tahoe Middle School. And this was the first day of school. The city's recreation center was also affect.

Ten customers are expected to be without power until about 5pm Aug. 25. This is because a transformer needs to be replaced.

A small fire erupted on initial impact. It was quickly put out by South Lake Tahoe police Officer Donna Kingman.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Zephyr Cove sewer district faces lawsuit

By Terri Hendry, KRNV-TV

Your right to know is at the center of a lawsuit filed against a small sewer district at Lake Tahoe.

The conservative group Nevada Policy Research Institute has filed suit in the Ninth Judicial Court in Minden, asking the court to order the Tahoe-Douglas Sewer District to disclose its employee compensation information.

NPRI is behind the website TransparentNevada.com, which posts salary and compensation information of Nevada public employees. "To date, more than 100 public agencies have provided NPRI salary information under the Nevada Public Records Act," Chief Legal Counsel Joseph Becker said.

The district is very small. It serves about 1,500 customers in Zephyr Cove and has five employees.

Read the whole story

Tahoe Tom's at center of MTBE issue – again

By Kathryn Reed

Years after MTBE was used in South Lake Tahoe it continues to turn up in well water.

The latest incident involves Tahoe Tom's gas station near the

state line. The former owners – Mohammad Ahmad and the Thomas E. Erickson Trust – have never fully cleaned up the contaminated groundwater even though multiple complaints have been filed against them dating to 1991.

Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board said samples taken from a well used by the Mark Twain Hotel on Park Avenue “revealed the presence of the contaminant MTBE (methyl tertiary butyl ether) at concentrations above the drinking water standard for taste and odor.”

Lahontan officials were not available for comment.

Cindy Black, manager of the hotel, told *Lake Tahoe News* their water is fine to drink or to shower with. She said the water is tested all the time.

“In the summertime there is more usage so the water level goes down so it looks like (MTBE) is higher,” Black said.

Several properties on the California side near the state line have individual wells. Others use Lakeside Park Association water. That water comes directly from Lake Tahoe.

MTBE is a volatile organic chemical that was added to gasoline starting in the 1980s. In the 1990s it was found to be contaminating groundwater. It has since been banned – from California in 2004 and Nevada in 2007.

It was such a problem locally that 13 of South Tahoe Public Utility District’s wells were put out of service because of the contamination. The district sued the oil companies, winning a \$69 million judgment in 2002.

“MTBE in aquifers has reduced over time, however the drought appears to be increasing groundwater concentrations of residual petroleum left in soil,” Lahontan said in a press release.

Lahontan, again, is going after the former owners. In 2009,

those parties were ordered to pay a civil penalty of \$412,900. They never did.

It is not known why Lahontan thinks any enforcement action now will make any difference or get a different result from the prior owners.

“The current owner has gone out of his way to help try to clean that up even though it is not his responsibility,” Mehrdad Javaherian, consultant for the owner Lake Tahoe Investments, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Historically the other operators released gasoline. That gasoline had MTBE. That is in the ground. The rate of migration of that gasoline depends on the direction and hydrologic gradient of the water. That can be impacted by drought.”

Lahontan has added Lake Tahoe Investments as a responsible party to the cleanup.

Napa vintners dealing with losses from temblor

By Ken Sweet and Ellen Knickmeyer, AP

NAPA — Winemakers in Californias storied Napa Valley woke up to thousands of broken bottles and barrels as a result of Sunday's earthquake.

The earthquake couldn't have come at a worse time for the region, which has just started harvesting the 2014 crop.

“It’s devastating. I’ve never seen anything like this,” said Tom Montgomery, a winemaker for B.R. Cohn Winery in Glen Ellen.

The epicenter of the 6.0-magnitude earthquake that struck Northern California, the strongest in the area in 25 years, was just six miles southwest of Napa, the center of California’s winemaking region.

B.R. Cohn lost “as much as 50 percent” of its wine, Montgomery said. The winery focuses on high-end, single estate wines that retail between \$40 and \$100 a bottle.

“It’s not just good wine we lost, it’s our best wine,” he said.

At Dahl Vineyards in Yountville a rack full of wine barrels was teetering and in danger of coming down. One barrel containing \$16,000 worth of pinot noir fell and was lost as a result of the quake. The owners were trying to save the rest, removing the barrels with a forklift. Elsewhere in the region, red wine stains were visible outside the doors of a warehouse – indicating there was damage inside.

As one moves further from the quake’s epicenter, other wineries reported more modest damage. In Oakville, Silver Oak Winery lost “a couple hundred bottles” of wine, said Ian Leggat, a spokesman for Silver Oak, as well as three barrels full of wine. Most of the product damaged at Silver Oak was single-vineyard wines the winery uses for testing. None of the wines sold to consumers were damaged in the quake, Leggat said.

Even the wine in barrels that wasn’t damaged by the quake may have problems, however, because wines aging in barrels are supposed to be kept as still as possible, Montgomery said.

Napa is California’s best-known winemaking region. While it produces only 4 percent of California’s total wine crop,

Napa's wines are considered among the best in the world and sell for a premium price. The Napa Valley does \$50 billion in economic activity a year, or roughly a quarter of wine industry for the entire U.S., according to Napa Valley Vinters.

The earthquake adds to what has already been a difficult year for California winemakers. California is in the middle of its worst drought in decades, and the earthquake comes just as winemakers in the region are getting ready to harvest the 2014 crop. Winemakers were reporting modest damage to equipment, which could affect harvesting