

Study: 18% of premature deaths linked to obesity

By Melissa Healy, Los Angeles Times

The death toll of the nation's obesity epidemic may be close to four times higher than has been widely believed, and all that excess weight could reverse the steady trend of lengthening life spans for a generation of younger Americans, new research warns.

More than 18 percent of premature deaths in the United States between 1986 and 2006 were associated with excess body mass, according to a team of sociologists led by a Columbia University demographer. That estimate, published online Thursday in the American Journal of Public Health, is far higher than the 5 percent toll widely cited by researchers.

The new figures do not reflect newly discovered facts about obesity's effects on health. Rather, they emerged after the researchers applied a finer-grained approach to examining obesity across the U.S. population.

Using historical survey data, the study authors toted up differences in excess weight status across different gender, ethnic and age groups. They combined that data with existing "mortality risk" statistics to estimate how many Americans over age 40 who died during that 20-year period did so because of weight-related causes.

Read the whole story

American Fire consumes 3 outbuildings, 9,726 acres

Three outbuildings have been destroyed in the 9,726-acre American Fire.

Containment is at 37 percent.

Officials said on Friday the fire crossed the Foresthill Divide Road into the Whisky Hill area. Extensive spotting and rolling took place.

The cause of the blaze in the Tahoe National Forest is still under investigation. The fire has been burning since Aug. 10.

The Tahoe National Forest issued a closure order for the fire area. The Placer County Sheriff's Office has closed the Foresthill Divide Road beginning at China Wall OHV Staging Area, which is northeast of Foresthill.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Looking to curtail U.S. police militarization

By Radley Balko, *Huffington Post*

When the FBI finally located Whitey Bulger in 2010 after searching for 16 years, the reputed mobster was suspected of involvement in 19 murders in the 1970s and '80s, and was thought to be armed with a massive arsenal of weapons. He was

also 81 at the time, in poor physical health, and looking at spending the rest of his life in prison. Of all the people who might meet the criteria for arrest by a SWAT team, one might think that Bulger would top the list.

Yet instead of sending in a tactical team to tear down Bulger's door in the middle of the night, the FBI took a different approach. After some investigating, FBI officials cut the lock on a storage locker Bulger used in the apartment complex where he was staying. They then had the property manager call Bulger to tell him someone may have broken into his locker. When Bulger went to investigate, he was arrested without incident. There was no battering ram, there were no flash grenades, there was no midnight assault on his home.

That peaceful apprehension of a known violent fugitive, found guilty this week of participating in 11 murders and a raft of other crimes, stands in stark contrast to the way tens of thousands of Americans are confronted each year by SWAT teams battering down their doors to serve warrants for nonviolent crimes, mostly involving drugs.

On the night of Jan. 5, 2011, for example, police in Framingham, Mass., raided a Fountain Street apartment that was home to Eurie Stamps and his wife, Norma Bushfan-Stamps. An undercover officer had allegedly purchased drugs from Norma's 20-year-old son, Joseph Bushfan, and another man, Dwayne Barrett, earlier that evening, and now the police wanted to arrest them. They took a battering ram to the door, set off a flash grenade, and forced their way inside.

As the SWAT team moved through the apartment, screaming at everyone to get on the floor, Officer Paul Duncan approached Eurie Stamps. The 68-year-old, not suspected of any crime, was watching a basketball game in his pajamas when the police came in.

By the time Duncan got to him in a hallway, Stamps was face-

down on the floor with his arms over his head, as police had instructed him. As Duncan moved to pull Stamps' arms behind him, he says he fell backwards, somehow causing his gun to discharge, shooting Stamps. The grandfather of 12 was killed in his own home, while complying with police orders during a raid for crimes in which he had no involvement.

The Obama administration has begun talking about reforming the criminal justice system, notably this week, when Attorney General Eric Holder announced changes to how federal prosecutors will consider mandatory minimum sentences. If government leaders are looking for another issue to tackle, they might consider the astonishing evolution of America's police forces over the last 30 years.

Today in America, SWAT teams are deployed about 100 to 150 times per day, or about 50,000 times per year – a dramatic increase from the 3,000 or so annual deployments in the early 1980s, or the few hundred in the 1970s. The vast majority of today's deployments are to serve search warrants for drug crimes. But the use of SWAT tactics to enforce regulatory law also appears to be rising. This month, for example, a SWAT team raided the Garden of Eden, a sustainable growth farm in Arlington, Texas, supposedly to look for marijuana. The police found no pot, however, and the real intent of the raid appears to have been for code enforcement, as the officers came armed with an inspection notice for nuisance abatement.

Read the whole story

Portion of forest near

American Fire closed to public

Tom Quinn, supervisor of the Tahoe National Forest, has signed an emergency closure order effective Aug. 16 for portions of National Forest System lands within and adjacent to the American Fire.

The temporary closure is designed to ensure public safety during current wildfire suppression efforts and ensuing rehabilitation activities.

The American Fire has burned 5,420 acres since it started Aug. 10. It is 35 percent contained.

The closure area includes:

- The area south of the Foresthill Divide Road starting at Deadwood Ridge Road to Forest Road 43 at Robinson Flat.
- Forest Road 43, which is closed to Forest Road 44 (Cavanah Ridge Road), which is closed, to Forest Road 96 (Mosquito Ridge Road).
- North along Mosquito Ridge Road west to Section 26, Township 14 North, Range 11 East, Mount Diablo Base and Meridian.

The Mosquito Ridge Road is open to public traffic.

Once the fire is suppressed, rehabilitation activities may include trail bridge repairs, hazard tree felling, and heavy equipment use on roads.

For more info, call (530) 367.2224.

Mama bear, cub caught-released on same day

The black bear and cub that were caught in the Foothill Road area of Carson Valley were released tonight in the foothills of Douglas County near Kingsbury Grade by the Nevada Department of Wildlife.

The two bears were caught early Aug. 15. A trap had been set in the area 10 days ago because there were complaints of bears doing damage to beehives.

The mama bear wandered into the trap at about 2am Thursday. But her cub wanted nothing to do with that “den” and decided to stay in a tree with her eye on mom.



This black bear and her cub were returned to the wild tonight. Photo/Provided

NDOW officials tranquilized the female, dragged her out of the trap and placed her under the tree. The cub came down to check on mom. That’s when the little one was tranquilized.

“We’ve used that technique successfully before,” Carl Lackey, biologist with NDOW, said in a statement. “By luring the cub

from the tree, we can dart it without the bear falling out of the tree and possible getting hurt or killed.”

Lackey said the female bear was caught years ago in about the same area. She is estimated to be 14 years old.

“We performed aversive conditioning before and she stayed away seven years. We’ll do it again to her and the cub when we release them and they should get the message to stay away from human activity,” Lackey said.

In addition to capturing the two bears, Lackey also is working with the owner of the beehives to strengthen the electric fence that was already in place when the bears first started coming into the area.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Report: Severe weather threatens power grid

By Neela Banerjee, Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON – A decade after a vast power outage shut down the Northeast, the electricity grid remains “highly vulnerable” to blackouts because of extreme weather fueled by climate change, a report by the White House and the Energy Department concludes.



Sagging and downed power lines in Tahoe. Photo/LTN file

The Aug. 14, 2003, blackout occurred when an alarm failed in an Ohio utility control room, leading to a cascade of blackouts that affected 50 million people from Michigan to Massachusetts. More recent power outages have been caused by severe weather, such as storms in the East and wildfires in the West.

Between 2003 and 2012, 679 blackouts occurred because of weather events, each affecting at least 50,000 customers. Over the same period, weather-related outages cost the economy between \$18 billion and \$33 billion annually, depending on the number and severity of events.

[Read the whole story](#)

American Fire growing in

size, acres contained

The 4,958-acre American Fire is at 35 percent containment.

Smoke from this fire in the Tahoe National Forest continues to fill the skies east of Foresthill, including the Lake Tahoe Basin, Truckee and Reno.

The fire is about 10 miles northeast of Foresthill in rugged terrain. Because of the heavy fuels in the area and low humidity officials anticipate the fire could continue to grow.

The cause of the blaze that started about 4:30pm Aug. 10 is under investigation.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Man of interest sought in S. Tahoe murder case

South Lake Tahoe police officers want to speak to a man who was seen near the USA gas station just before the store clerk was murdered Aug. 6.

In the late afternoon/early evening of Aug. 5 a man was seen walking in the vicinity of the gas station. Detectives want to identify the man. He is a white male, with light brown or blond hair, wearing a light colored polo shirt.

Information may be provided to the police department at (530) 542.6100.

A reward for information leading to an arrest in this case has

been increased to \$6,000 because of contributions by local business owners.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Study: Climate change may help redwoods

By Paul Rogers, San Jose Mercury News

Climate change is melting glaciers, worsening droughts and raising sea levels around the world.

But when it comes to redwood trees – the ancient, iconic sentinels that scientists have worried may be at risk as the planet heats up – global warming may actually be helping, at least for now, according to research released Wednesday.

“We’re not seeing any evidence of declining growth rates,” said Steve Sillett, a forestry professor at Humboldt State and nationally known redwoods expert. “In fact, a lot of the sites are exhibiting increasing rates of growth over the last 100 years.”

It may be that the trees prefer warmer temperatures, or that they are benefiting from more sunlight, a longer growing season or even decades of fire suppression. Or they might even be responding well to higher levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

Nobody knows yet.

Read the whole story

But Sillett and other researchers working on an ambitious, four-year study found that growth rates of coastal redwoods and giant sequoia trees in California's old-growth forests increased during the 20th century, even as other parts of the Earth's environment – from polar bears to coral reefs – suffered from climate change.

Family hurt; suspected drunken driver arrested

A Pennsylvania woman and her two children were hospitalized Tuesday after the vehicle they were in was hit by an alleged drunken driver.

Dara Siev, 39, of South Lake Tahoe was headed west on Highway 50 in the left lane when the Dodge Durango he was driving drifted into the center lane. A Ford Escape was stopped in the center lane ready to turn left.

South Lake Tahoe police officers said Siev was going between 35 and 45 mph when his vehicle hit the Ford with the three of Pennsylvanians; whose names police are not disclosing.

The woman and her 4- and 8-year-old children were taken to Barton Memorial Hospital with what police say were not life threatening injuries.

The accident occurred about 4:45pm Aug. 13 near Blue Lake Avenue.

Siev was arrested on felony DUI charges.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*