

Opinion: How to keep the fire department away at the holidays

By Tia Rancort

The winter holidays are a time for celebration with family and friends, and that means more cooking, entertaining, home decorating and an increased risk of home fires due to increased usage of cooking and heating equipment. Most home fires and injuries occur in the kitchen as reported by the U.S. Fire Administration.

Some simple and easy life-saving tips to remember during the holiday season:

Cooking fire safety:

- o The leading cause of fires in the kitchen is unattended cooking. Please stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling, or broiling food.
- o It's not a good idea to wear loose clothing (especially hanging sleeves) while cooking.
- o Please do not leave flammable materials, such as pot holders or paper towels near the stove.
- o If your clothes catch on fire, stop, drop and roll. Stop immediately, drop to the ground, and cover face with hands. Roll over and over or back and forth to put out the fire. Immediately cool the burn with cool water for 3 to 5 minutes and then seek emergency medical care.
- o Please create a "kid-free zone" by keeping young children at least 3 feet away from stove and cooking area.

- o Use back burner when possible to reduce the risk of spills and turn pot handles away from stoves edge and always use a pot holder or mitt when moving hot food or liquid.
- o If using a turkey fryer (remember these devices are not certified by Underwriters Laboratory because of the numerous safety hazards they present to consumers), please use outdoors away from buildings and items that can catch fire and never use in a garage or on a wooden deck.

Preventing Christmas tree fires:

- o Selecting a tree for the holiday – When buying a live tree, look for one that is not shedding needles. If needles fall off or branches snap when bent, the tree is already too dry.
- o Keep trees watered. A mixture of lemon-lime soda and water will keep a tree moist longer.
- o Keep trees away from all heat sources including fire places, stoves and room/space heaters.
- o When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the label “Fire Resistant”.
- o Secure the tree firmly in tree stand to keep it from toppling over.
- o When tree becomes dry, promptly discard it. Please consider using the IVGID Waste Not Free Holiday Tree Recycling Program. This service will be available Dec. 24-Jan. 25. For more information on this program, please call Waste-Not Hotline at (775) 832.1284.

Lights and candles:

- o Please do not use candles on a Christmas tree.
- o Place candles where they will not be knocked down.
- o Keep candles away from curious pets and children’s reach.

- o Be extremely careful with candles that have leaves, flowers, pine cones or other decorative items cast into them. These items can become wicks and ignite the candle in a way that the candle is not designed.

- o Keep lights or candles away from anything that could easily catch fire (NFPA reports that half of home candles fires occurred when some form of combustible material was left or came too close to the candle).

- o Please do not leave holiday lights or candles unattended.

- o Inspect all lights and cords before using them. Discard all lights with cracked or broken wiring and never overload circuits.

Holiday decorations:

- o Keep wrapping paper and ribbons away from heat sources. This includes candles, lights, fireplaces, stoves and heaters.

- o Wrapping paper and ribbon should be thrown away in trash containers, not fireplaces. Burning paper and ribbon could cause a chimney fire.

- o Put decorations high enough on the tree so your child or pet can't reach them. Children can choke or cut themselves on ornaments or ornament hangers.

- o Holly and mistletoe are poisonous. Keep them away from children.

- o Use only nonflammable or flame-retardant decorations and place away from heat vents.

- o If you are using a metallic or artificial tree, make sure it is flame-retardant.

Fireplace safety:

- o Check and clean the fireplace and chimney every year.

- o Always put logs and newspapers on a grate inside fireplace and use a fireplace screen.
- o Please do not use gasoline, lighter fluid or kerosene to start a fire and make sure the fire you build “fits” your fireplace (use an appropriate amount of newspaper and logs).
- o Place completely cooled ashes in a metal container. Keep metal container outside away from the house in a safe place.

Give holiday gifts that promote fire safety:

- o Smoke alarms. If a fire occurs, having a smoke alarm cuts the chance of dying by half.
- o Carbon monoxide detectors – helps detect carbon monoxide (CO), a colorless, odorless, poisonous gas.
- o Flashlights for emergency lighting instead of candles, to avoid the risk of fire from an open flame.
- o Sturdy candleholders to prevent tip-over when candles are lit.
- o Sturdy fireplace screen, to keep embers out of the room.
- o Gift certificates for chimney cleaning can reduce oily creosote build-up in chimneys that can be easily ignited.
- o Portable fire extinguishers, with clear instructions on how to use them.
- o Oven mitts for handling cooking equipment.
- o House address numbers – our local ordinance requires 6 inch for residential and 12 inch for commercial structures.
- o Stocking stuffers. Download fire safety information – including home escape plans from NFPA’s website.

Tia Rancort works for the North Lake Tahoe Fire Protection

District.

Opinion: First Amendment hijacked by moneyed interests

By Robert Reich

A funny thing happened to the First Amendment on its way to the public forum: It was hijacked.

According to the Supreme Court, money is now speech, and corporations are now people.

Yet when real people without money assemble to express their dissatisfaction with the political consequences of this, they're treated as public nuisances – clubbed, pepper-sprayed, thrown out of public parks and evicted from public spaces.

The Supreme Court's Citizens United decision last year ended all limits on political spending. Now millions of dollars are being funneled to politicians without a trace.

The limits were eroding even before Citizens United. For years, large corporations have been flooding Washington with lobbyists who bundle individual contributions into a formidable war chest, bankrolling more and more lawmakers' campaigns.

And a revolving door has developed between official Washington and Wall Street – with bank executives becoming public officials who make rules that benefit the banks before heading back to the Street to make money off the rules they created.

Other top officials, including an increasing proportion of former members of Congress, are cashing in by joining lobbying powerhouses and pressuring their former colleagues to do whatever their clients want.

Robert Reich Robert Reich, former U.S. Secretary of Labor, is professor of public policy at UC Berkeley and the author of "Aftershock: The Next Economy and America's Future."

Read the whole story

Opinion: Douglas County wrestling with declining revenues

By Steve Mokrohisky

Douglas County has faced significant economic challenges recently. Over the past four years, assessed property values have decreased by nearly \$1 billion, and sales tax, room tax, gaming and building revenues have all declined.

The general fund, including sheriff, district attorney, judicial, community development and general services, has cut over \$4 million in expenses. At the same time, the demand for public services and costs from the state of Nevada continue to increase. The state has increased its costs to the county by over \$500,000.



Steve
Mokrohisky

In order to manage the reduction in revenues and increase in expenses, positions have been eliminated, regional partnerships and privatization have been initiated, and employees have absorbed health insurance and retirement costs, as well as salary cuts. Over 65 full-time equivalent positions have been eliminated since 2008 and many more positions continue to be held vacant to reduce costs.

For fiscal year (FY) 2011-12, county employees took the equivalent of a 5 percent pay cut and will receive no merit increases. Additionally, it is the county's policy that increases in health insurance costs are borne by the employee, not the taxpayer.

The county has completed a five-year financial forecast of the general fund with the revenue and expense information currently available. The forecast projects an approximate \$3 million shortfall in the general fund for next fiscal year that would grow to \$5.8 million in FY16-17 if wages are restored to previous levels. If current wage reductions continue, next year's shortfall would shrink to nearly \$1.5 million.

With these early projections and no legislative session this year, we have begun work earlier than normal to identify solutions to fix the structural imbalance. Douglas County will need to continue to be diligent in implementing sound financial practices, reducing costs, stabilizing revenues, and using innovative solutions to eliminate the shortfalls and

provide the highest quality services possible to our residents.

Budget facts:

- Sales tax revenue has decreased 35 percent since 2006
- Room tax revenue has decreased 30 percent since 2006
- Building related revenue has decreased 67 percent since 2006
- 65 full-time equivalent positions have been eliminated since 2008
- Participation in recreation programs has increased 3 percent since 2006
- Sheriff calls for service have increased 8 percent since 2007
- Registered library borrowers as a percent of population is 72 percent – a 32 percent increase since 2006
- Social Service clients have increased 46 percent since 2006.

Steve Mokrohisky is manager of Douglas County.

Opinion: Looking for

substance in South Lake Tahoe

To the community,

A few days back, as my spouse and I were returning from Carson City, near the gondola site there were a few people with placards that said Occupy South Tahoe. The trouble is as Gertrude Stein said when asked about Oakland, "There is no there, there."

How true about the city of South Lake Tahoe after 46 years as a "city" there is no city hall, no civic center. But there is a huge



Bill Crawford

redevelopment debt. There is a city dysfunctional airport. There is redevelopment bankruptcy three times. And there appears to be a failure of the deal between the city and private management of the ice rink. And there are gigantic unfunded liabilities.

So, is there a there, a there called the city of South Lake Tahoe: It looks shaky at best.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe

Opinion: Tahoe food pantry expresses thanks

To the community,

Tahoe Community Church Food Pantry would like to say thank you for the generous donations to our Food Pantry from the community.

MontBleu casino and its employees continued their tradition of the last several years and generously donated 20 turkeys to our food pantry. This enabled us to feed 151 families in need this Thanksgiving, with a turkey and all the fixings.

The Carson City Salvation Army's turkey donation event gave us a generous 90 turkeys for this Thanksgiving Dinner.

Whittell High School students had their yearly canned food drive, and generously donated a large number of non-perishable canned and boxed foods to our food pantry.

Thank you Harrah's/Harveys casinos once again for the use of their freezer for turkey storage.

Thank you Cub Scout Troop 592 for being at our Thanksgiving Dinner giveaway and helping to carry all the food to people's cars.

Thank you to the members of Tahoe Community Church and various other individuals who donated food and funding for this holiday Thanksgiving dinner giveaway.

Thank you to all for your support, which helps us to continue to feed those in need.

Opinion: Learning from Magic Johnson 20 years after HIV announcement

Publisher's note: *Dec. 1 is World AIDS Day.*

By Chris Ballard, Sports Illustrated

For those of us who came of age in the late 1980s and early '90s, it was the closest thing sports had to a JFK moment. We can remember exactly where we were and what we were doing on the afternoon of Nov. 7, 1991. Some of us learned the news secondhand, in a dorm or classroom. Others watched live as Magic Johnson, the five-time NBA champion and the embodiment of class and charisma on a basketball court, stepped to a podium in a black suit, stared down the flashbulbs and said those words: Because of the HIV virus that I have attained ... I will have to retire from the Lakers.

In a moment our world shifted. Superstar athletes were supposed to be indestructible, especially one as transcendent—and wholesome—as Magic. I knew people who cried, as though they'd lost a family member. One friend swore off sex. Another scheduled an HIV test. After all, if Magic could get HIV, anyone could. We could.

And yet, somehow, Magic didn't seem scared. Here he was, essentially handed a death sentence – at the time, HIV was believed to lead to AIDS in nearly 100 percent of cases—and

yet he smiled and said, "I plan on going on living for a long time." He neither made excuses nor ran from his diagnosis. Instead, to his everlasting credit, Magic owned the moment, as he'd owned so many over the years. By doing so he elevated the discussion above mere sports or sex or race. Imagine how different it would have been had it been a less prominent or more polarizing athlete up there. How would we have reacted? How might the conversation have tilted?

Because it was Magic, though, we tried to understand, to empathize. It wasn't easy. When Johnson, despite being retired, was voted by fans to the '92 NBA All-Star Game, other players, including his former Lakers teammates Byron Scott and A.C. Green, said he shouldn't take part. After Magic was named to the Dream Team, the Australian national squad considered boycotting the 1992 Olympics.

It took all of 34 days for Magic to shelve his NBA comeback in the fall of '92, stung by the backlash over the prospect of his playing, including comments by Karl Malone expressing fear that Magic could transmit the virus through physical play. It took another four years for him to try again. When he did return to the Lakers in '96, beefier yet still effective, it was a powerful moment for sports but an even more powerful one for the HIV community. Here was an HIV-positive public figure who wasn't hiding, who hadn't wasted away but was instead competing against the best athletes in the world. Nearly five years after his diagnosis, Magic wasn't merely living with the virus; he was thriving. "It said to our community that you can continue to live your life and do the things you want to do," says Tom Donohue, founding director of Who's Positive, an HIV/AIDS awareness organization. "He's been a huge role model for so many of us who are positive."

Read the whole story

Opinion: Bread & Broth says thank you

To the community,

For most people in America, Thanksgiving was spent with family and friends sharing a huge meal, football games, and a nap.

But for some in our local community, they would have had nothing without the generosity of others to be thankful for.

Every Monday Bread & Broth (a local nonprofit organization) feeds a hot meal to anyone hungry in South Lake Tahoe. The Monday before Thanksgiving was a bit different. They served a traditional turkey dinner complete with all the trimming for those who would normally be alone and hungry.

Volunteers from Bread & Broth prepared for days for the event, which would not be possible without people and businesses in Lake Tahoe community.

Bread & Broth would like to take a moment of thanks for all those who made this holiday possible for so many in need:

Overland Meat

Bonanza Produce

Raley's

Safeway

Barton Mountain Café

Grass Roots

Blaise Carrig, Vail Resorts

Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care

Sugar Pine Bakery

Tahoe Daily Tribune

Lake Tahoe News

Local donations from the community.

David Smith, Bread & Broth

Opinion: Clear-cuts help keep forests healthy

By Daniel Tomascheski

Katherine Evatt isn't the only one who can't see the forest for the trees. It's not surprising that many people are alarmed to see good forest practices at work. A few acres of downed trees don't square with their notion of what a healthy forest is supposed to look like.

Ironically, it's what they don't see that tells the real story. They don't know that the robust stands of foothill conifers nearby, filled with wildlife and natural wonders, are themselves the product of decades of sound forestry practices – including commercial harvesting.

The debate over cutting trees has raged for generations, often without facts to back up either side. Few people had ever bothered to actually go into a forest to study it in place over time. But Sierra Pacific Industries has done that now for

nearly two decades – with rigorous monitoring and assessment of commercial forestry practices, water quality, wildlife habitat, archaeological resources and native plants.

As an example, SPI has maintained permanent water quality monitoring stations within Shasta County's Battle Creek watershed – following EPA-approved protocols and testing by an EPA-certified laboratory – taking measurements for temperature and turbidity every 15 minutes, every day for the past nine years. Independently verified data from those stations and testing for the presence of herbicides demonstrate that water quality there can support salmon, trout and other fish species.

Daniel Tomascheski, vice president of resources for Sierra Pacific Industries, is responding to the Nov. 29 guest column.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Defacing state park will not be tolerated

To the community,

The Washoe Meadows Community condemns the act of vandalism within Washoe Meadows State Park that was reported Nov. 29 by State Parks personnel. The described mutilation of trees is an abhorrence to those of us who are devoted to Washoe Meadows and who are dedicated to the defense of its natural gifts.

Our commitment to saving the park includes distress over the 1,600 trees slated to come down if the golf course is extended into Washoe Meadows, so the reported defacement is a terrible

offense to our cause.

Since 2006 our community members have been praised for our courtesy and respect during the technical and bureaucratic procedures to select the Upper Truckee River restoration design. While we advocate for Alternative 3 – to restore the river and keep the golf course – we remain steadfastly committed to civil processes and communication.

We disagree with State Parks' choice of Alternative 2, but certainly we are in accord with the state and other agencies in condemning any sabotage, dishonesty or misbehavior that undermine the aim to restore

the Upper Truckee River in the most environmentally ideal manner.

Lynne Paulson, Washoe Meadows Community

Opinion: Clear-cuts impoverish forests, economy

By Katherine K. Evatt

I spent a recent Monday on a Sierra Pacific Industries' forest tour outside the rural Calaveras County town of West Point. Sierra Pacific has clear-cut thousands of acres in Calaveras. It has removed nearly every tree on each site, scraped off and burned the surface vegetation, deep-ripped the soil and sprayed herbicides to kill leafy plants that compete with newly planted conifers.

Sierra Pacific, California's largest private landowner, is owned by Fortune 400 member "Red" Emmerson. The corporation

owns 1.7 million acres of timberland in the state and plans to clear-cut more than a million acres. Over the last decade or so, it has received the state's permission to clear-cut – or near-clear-cut – more than a quarter million acres of its land, nearly 391 square miles.

Much of this activity has occurred in the Mokelumne River watershed, where we took our tour.

Clear-cuts destroy existing wildlife habitat. They release massive amounts of carbon from the soil. Impacted roads release sediment into streams. And clear-cuts tear at the hearts of those of us who love the Sierra's forests.

Katherine K. Evatt is president of the Foothill Conservancy.

Read the whole story