

Lake Tahoe = white and cold

By Kathryn Reed

El Dorado County workers can sleep in – start time is 10am today. Backcountry skiers better think twice about strapping on skis or a board. All resorts are giddy about the snow accumulations. And the storms have only just begun.

County Supervisor Norma Santiago told *Lake Tahoe News* on Monday night that staff will meet to “assess how we are with power and computers. If it doesn’t look good, we may close the offices again.”



Highway 50 in
South Lake
Tahoe about
3:30pm Dec. 7.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

County offices were closed all day Monday.

Not much was going on in Placerville Monday afternoon when a *Lake Tahoe News* reporter drove through. Power was out – meaning no gas was available, no coffee, nothing.

The Board of Supervisors has moved today’s regular meeting to Thursday. Closed session will still begin at 8am, with open session at 9am in Placerville.

Santiago said parts of rural El Dorado County on the West

Slope received 1.5 feet of snow. This brought everything to a halt.

Trees along Highway 50 west of the county seat were bent in ways that would make a contortionist proud.

But the reality is the winds with the storm, and the snowload on trees and power lines meant the town was dark. Pacific Gas & Electric officials expected electricity to be restored Monday night.

"It's really hard on the rural roads. Some parts of (Highway) 49 have only one lane plowed. It's hard to get into the deeper county roads," Santiago said.

A Red Cross trailer was being hauled into Placerville about 1pm Monday. The county set up a shelter Monday at the town hall so people would have a warm place to spend the night. It's at 549 Main St. in Placerville.

For more information about what's going on in El Dorado County, go to www.edcgov.us (though the website has been down) or call 866.934.8771.

Other storm issues

In Nevada, Gov. Jim Gibbons shut down all non-essential government offices in Northern Nevada on Monday. Carson City, the state capital, received more than 18 inches of snow. That amount essentially cripples this part of the Sierra.

Slick roads are being blamed for Sunday's accident on Interstate 80 near Donner Summit that claimed the life of a 14-year-old boy from Orangevale.

All regional offices of AAA were closed Monday, though they are expected to be open today.

Schools are also set to open their doors after most called it a snow day Monday.

The Sierra Avalanche Center reports the danger is high above the treeline and moderate below it. It's always risky when light fluffy snow like what dumped in the last couple of days sits on top of a hard, deep slab. This is often prime condition for an avalanche.

"This one wasn't so much the water content. It was so dry to start with we piled up the snow efficiently," Mark Faucette, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Reno, said late Monday night. "It maybe was a little underforecast. We got a couple feet of snow at lake level."

Less water content makes for better skiing; more water content eventually fills parched reservoirs.

It's too soon to tell how freezing temperatures will affect crops. Citrus is the big concern this time of year. It can handle temps just below freezing.

What's next?

Some forecasts show snow for six of the next nine days for the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Even though the winter storm warning was canceled by the National Weather Service on Monday at 6:14pm, the snow was still falling for several hours afterward, especially in the South Lake area.

The overnight low for the basin was expected to be in negatives digits. This means roads this morning are likely to like an ice rink.

Several residential streets throughout the region never saw a plow on Monday

Highways in the area were closed at various times because of periods of heavy snowfall and spinouts.

Remember, four-wheel drive does not mean drive the speed limit

or faster in winter conditions, nor does four-wheel drive allow you to brake faster.

“(Tuesday) won’t warm up much at all. We are still mainly going to be below freezing as a high for a big chunk of the week,” Faucette said.

He said the storm moving in Thursday night into Friday will bring snow, but not the accumulations originally forecast.

It’s more likely a foot or two will arrive at lake level Saturday night into Sunday. More moisture will come with this storm – which means temperatures will be rising. Snow levels are expected to be below 6,000 feet.

An even warmer storm is farther out. Mid-next week snow levels may not drop below 8,000 feet.

Ski resort update

Resorts in and around the Lake Tahoe Basin received more than 2 feet of snow in 24 hours.

Kirkwood Mountain Resort, which is notorious for recording more snow than anyone else, boasted of 3 feet of fresh powder by noon Dec. 7. This means more terrain will open today.

With the storms rolling in all week, the resort that is about 45 minutes south of South Lake Tahoe, expects to have eight chairs operating this weekend, including the Timber Creek area, several other resort restaurants and amenities.

Prices today will be \$48 for adults.

Most all of the resorts will be open within 10 days. Opening dates: Dec. 12, Donner Ski Ranch; Dec. 17, Diamond Peak; Dec. 18, Granlibakken Resort, Homewood Mountain Resort and Tahoe Donner.

“This is the type of storm that sets us up for the winter

season,” Andy Chapman, tourism director for North Lake Tahoe Resort Association, said in a press release. “Resorts are open and the lifts are cranking, and with an abundance of deals and packages, there has never been a better time to ski and board North Lake Tahoe.”

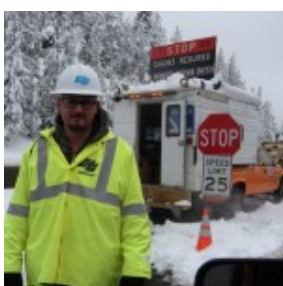
The same can easily be said for all the shores of Lake Tahoe.



Placerville is full of snow on Monday. Photos/Kathryn Reed



Red Cross helps out in Placerville.



No last name
Mike checks
for 4-wheel
drive/chains
just outside
of Placerville
on Highway 50.