

Garbage rates on South Shore increasing in 2011

By Kathryn Reed

Most South Tahoe Refuse customers can expect to pay a few pennies more a month for garbage service starting Jan. 1

The cost of living adjustment for South Lake Tahoe, El Dorado County and Douglas County is based on seven consumer price indices. Based on the franchise agreements STR has with the three entities this is considered a non-discretionary rate increase – meaning it's automatic even though each governing body will vote on it.



The City Council, after the three new members are sworn in Dec. 14 at 9am, is expected to approve this as part of the consent agenda. Douglas County commissioners have the increase on their Dec. 16 agenda. El Dorado County supervisors have not set a date.

For South Lake Tahoe, the 1.52 percent increase would equate to 35 cents more a month for residential customers. The 0.59 percent increase for one can pick up in Douglas County means 9 cents more a month, or 18 cents for two can pick up. El Dorado customers are likely to see a 1.9 percent increase.

The point of the COLA is to maintain operating expenses.

Every four years the refuse company can ask for a more substantive rate increase through what's called a general reset. That four-year cycle comes up next year. This means talks will start in 2011 and the adjustment would take effect in 2012.

"We look at the revenues of the company versus expenses and

adjust the rates,” explained Terry Trease, STR controller. “The last thing people want is a rate increase. We’ve been given our marching orders to do what we can, to max out diversion with the personnel we have.”

Even though the company is meeting the state mandate of recycling 50 percent of the waste collected, it wants to do more. But doing more could mean more trucks or some other expense on the bottom line. STR is weighing the cost-effectiveness of all of its programs, Trease said.