

Decision expected tonight regarding weather and Amgen

By John Schumacher, Sacramento Bee

With snow forecast for Sunday's first stage, and the tragic death of Belgian cyclist Wouter Weylandt still rocking the cycling world, Amgen Tour of California officials said safety would be their top priority.

Race director Jim Birrell said Friday a number of options were under consideration, including altering the opening 118.7-mile route from South Lake Tahoe to Northstar-at-Tahoe Resort if necessary.

Birrell said race officials would meet tonight and make a final decision Sunday before the 10:30am start.

"Safety is paramount," Birrell said. "We partner with Caltrans (California Department of Transportation) and CHP (California Highway Patrol). ... We'll be able to inform (riders) of the road dangers that will be out there. We take (safety) to heart."

A big concern is the climb over 7,200-foot Brockway Summit on Highway 267.

"If there's ice on the road, we'll have a reactionary plan to that," Birrell said. "If it's wet, it will be all systems go."

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