

Pro cyclists expect to ride in snow on Sunday

By Kathryn Reed

Teams participating in this weekend's Tour de California bike ride have been taking to the roads in South Lake Tahoe to get acclimated to the elevation and familiarize themselves with the route of the first stage.

It's hard to miss all that lycra, especially as some groups take up whole lanes of Highway 50 to avoid the debris on the side and the wetness of the road from errant sprinklers.

Although the National Weather Service in Reno is calling for a 90 percent chance of snow on the May 15 start date, the race is still on. Overnight temps will be below freezing, with the high on Sunday close to 40 degrees.



Team NetApp
rides down
Highway 50 in
South Tahoe on
May 12.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

AEG President Andrew Messick told *VeloNews* Monday rider safety is his top priority if the weather turns bad. "We're not going to get too worked up about it. We'll make sure we protect the

safety of the athletes, that is always a top priority, as long as it is safe to ride, we'll ride."

Alternatives include shortening the first stage, but neither race officials nor Lake Tahoe tourism officials are releasing details about what happens if a blizzard strikes. Messick is already on the South Shore. Carol Chaplin with LTVA said a decision about alternatives would probably not be made until Sunday morning.

"The only problem is if we get accumulation (of snow)," Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority Executive Director Chaplin said May 12 at the South Lake Tahoe Lodging Association meeting.

"We're working carefully with all relevant public safety and weather forecast entities," Messick said in a statement Thursday. "We have developed a number of contingency plans, and when the Sunday weather forecast becomes clearer we will, in consultation with the teams, public safety organizations, and commissaires, make a decision which will represent the best and safest course of action."

AEG owns and operates the race.

Chaplin added that the professional riders are used to nasty weather – even if it's not something the average cyclist would want to endure.

As it stands, the riders will leave the South Shore at 10:30am Sunday from the Stateline area, make their way around Lake Tahoe (clockwise) 1.5 times before ending at Northstar-at-Tahoe. Stage two leaves from Squaw Valley on May 16, where there is a chance of snow for the start that morning.