

Body of missing Petaluma woman found

Updated Jan. 4 2pm:

El Dorado County sheriff's Lt. Pete Van Arnum said while there appears to be no foul play in the death of Petaluma resident Alyssa Byrne, the investigation is ongoing to determine how she ended up off the side of Pioneer Trail.

"There is conflicting information about this case. We aren't exactly sure what happened," Van Arnum said at a Jan. 4 press conference.

He said it's easy to become disoriented when hypothermia sets in, so that could be why she was in a location that would have been going away from the casino where she was staying. This is assuming she walked up Al Tahoe Boulevard from the SnowGlobe event at Lake Tahoe Community College.

Kim Miller-Byrne, mother of the deceased 19-year-old, had earlier told *Lake Tahoe News* that her daughter was not familiar with the South Shore. This could also have contributed to why she ended up between Al Tahoe Boulevard and Black Bart.

Van Arnum said it's also possible she left the college and trudged through the snow to get to Pioneer Trail. Her body was found about one-half mile from LTCC.

Search and rescue teams were expected today to comb the area where her body was found. It was an employee with South Tahoe Public Utility District in a truck who spotted the body and called authorities.

Van Arnum told *Lake Tahoe News* that it was frustrating to know that so many people drove by that spot since she was reported

missing three days ago. No one could see her because of the snowbank.

A forensic autopsy will be conducted in Sacramento this weekend. Toxicology reports take about a month to be released.

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By Kathryn Reed

The body of missing Petaluma teen Alyssa Byrne was found Friday morning just off Pioneer Trail.

Authorities say a utility worker discovered the body about 8:30am down a short embankment on the south side of the road.

A law enforcement official told *Lake Tahoe News* it appears the body had been there a couple days and that foul play was not involved. The body was fully clothed.

An autopsy will determine exact cause of death.



Law enforcement examine the area Jan. 4 where the body of Alyssa Byrne was found just off Pioneer Trail in El Dorado County. Photo/LTN

Byrne, 19, had been at the SnowGlobe music festival in South Lake Tahoe on New Year's Eve. She left before her friends did.

They were all staying at the Horizon hotel-casino in Stateline.

A friend had reported seeing her in the casino just past midnight on New Year's. However, officers began doubting whether it was actually Byrne who the friend encountered that night.

Law enforcement expect to have Pioneer trail blocked for the better part of the morning on the west end at Al Tahoe Boulevard and the south at Cold Creek/Black Bart.

The location is an easy walk from the music venue site at Lake Tahoe Community College, but would be the opposite direction of the casino had she walked up Al Tahoe Boulevard. Temperatures in the area have been below zero and hypothermia would set in fast.

Her father, Kevin Byrne, has been in town this week assisting with the search that has included more than 100 people, K-9 units and a helicopter. He was not answering his cell phone. The person answering the Byrne residence in Petaluma Friday morning said, "We are not taking any calls now."